

## ABUSES ARE SEEN IN PLACING NAMES ON PENSION ROLLS

Minister Argues Ontario  
Control of Old-Age  
Applications

WOULD BE RETROACTIVE

A hint that if the Government ultimately took over the whole payment of old-age pensions it would abolish the local boards and handle the applications itself was offered in the Provincial Legislature yesterday by Hon. William G. Martin, Minister of Public Welfare, who spoke to the second reading of his bill to amend the Old Age Pensions Act.

Stating as his reason for urging that local boards should be deprived of their power, and that power given to the Commission, Mr. Martin declared that the responsibility "for the references to abuses in old-age pensions in the press" should be laid on the shoulders of the local boards. Many names not entitled to have a place there were, he said, placed on the rolls by the local boards.

### Shirking Responsibilities.

"Many sons and daughters, children of pensioners, have been shirking their responsibilities, have been allowing their parents to become charges on the State," Mr. Martin had earlier said. He cited an instance of a pensioner who had three sons, each a Canadian Pacific Railway conductor, and of another with a daughter owning a \$2,000 house. Another pensioner, Mr. Martin elaborated the theme, transferred his farm and property three months before filing his application, and yet a fourth applied to have his name inscribed on the pensions rolls only four months after transferring property worth \$5,000.

"When the inspectors go up," Mr. Martin explained the principle of his bill, "they will examine the bank accounts. Henceforward every applicant must sign a statement giving access to his bank accounts and other securities." The Minister stated that this regulation would be made retroactive, "in order that we may see what has happened in former months, to a reasonable degree."

### Progressive in Favor.

"I think it's a very good move," said D. J. Taylor, Progressive M.P.P. for North Grey, in support of the Minister's bill. "The abuses of the act to political ends have not been confined only to municipalities." He declared that "in almost 100 per cent. of the banks, outside the large towns, there were deposits from old-age pensioners." After stating that the pensions roll was "not supposed to create a nest egg for dependents," Mr. Taylor stated that he knew of cases where such a procedure would seem the case.

Asked by Mr. Martin for names, Mr. Taylor said that it was not the business of banking institutions to tell the amount of deposits.

Mr. Martin—Is there any objection to their putting away, perhaps \$4 a month, in the bank?

"There is no limit today for demands for paternalistic legislation," he went on, saying that the critics of the Government are "those who join deputations to Queen's Park to urge that larger sums of public money be spent."

Mr. Nixon queried whether this was meant to infer that he had joined such a deputation.

### Demand Repayment.

"In many cases we demand repayment in full," Mr. Martin answered the question of George Shields, Conservative M.P.P. for Toronto Woodbine as to what steps were taken in the case of pensions found to be fraudulently obtained.

## Team Play Always Helps

The important—the vital—thing about the investigation which Mr. Justice Middleton has undertaken into two Hydro transactions is that its conduct and its conclusions shall carry public confidence.

It is true that for some unexplained reason—some fear of its finding out and furnishing the facts—Premier Henry and his Government have curtailed and cut down the inquiry. Queen's Park manifestly is terrified over something—something that may be discovered and disclosed if the Beauharnois payment of \$125,000 to John Aird Jr. is subjected to a judicial inquisition. So it defies public opinion on this transaction, and sits stolidly on the lid.

But public opinion has scored a partial victory. It has forced Queen's Park reluctantly to grant a Royal Commission on the two other transactions upon which people and press demanded light. It is essential now that the investigation be such as to ensure complete confidence.

It is accordingly important that there shall be no shadow of suspicion as to the impartiality and freedom from entangling alliances on the part of those who are to be entrusted with bringing out the facts before the Commissioner.

The Globe is receiving many communications protesting against the course of limiting the counsel at the investigation to the one man who has been nominated for that duty. Attention is called to the fact that the official House of Commons records of the opening session, on June 23, 1931, of the Parliamentary Committee on the Beauharnois project chronicle the statement that Mr. Tilley was the senior of three counsel appearing for the Beauharnois Company. It is pointed out also that, according to statements published on the front page of the Toronto Conservative organ in its issue of July 21, 1931, a member of Mr. Tilley's law firm "had been specially retained by the Ontario Hydro in connection with the matter" of the Beauharnois-Hydro contract.

While Mr. Tilley, under all conditions, would seem to be a strange choice, he is an eminent counsel of recognized ability and integrity, and no protest against his participation in the inquiry would be justified.

At the same time, in view of all the surrounding circumstances, it would seem imperative, if the fullest public confidence is to be assured, to further strengthen the counsel staff of the Commission. If Mr. Tilley represented the Beauharnois Company, and a partner of Mr. Tilley represented the Ontario Hydro—as has been stated publicly—it would seem to be a wise and prudent act on the part of the Government to ask the Commissioner to authorize the appointment of some other outstanding counsel to co-operate in representing the people of Ontario at the inquiry.

"Is it the intention of the Government," W. E. N. Sinclair, the Liberal Leader, asked, "that the municipalities shall pay the costs of administration done by the Central Commission and not by local boards?"

"Except for their mileage in going to board meetings, that rests with the municipalities," Mr. Martin replied.

Mr. Sinclair—I am very glad to know he thinks he is getting outside what is termed patronage. It seems to me that it will take a little more watchfulness to eliminate that factor from the picture.

No suggestion of abuse had ever been made in the case of the Mothers' Allowances Act, Mr. Martin said, and it was expected that there would be no complaints after the Old Age Pensions Act had been put on the same basis.

"It seems," opined Mr. Nixon slightly later, "pretty like as though the Minister can't get on his feet without giving a back slam to the member from Brant." (Mr. Nixon himself.)

### Sees No Connection.

Mr. Martin—I cannot see the connection between the argument and the member from Brant.

"Is the amount received by the pensioner a mortgage against his estate?" Mr. Nixon queried. "If so, should it not be signed up as a liability?"

"I most certainly and emphatically condemn the department for its action or non-action in this matter," he concluded. "And has not the Dominion Government also a right to its proper share of proceeds from the late old-age pensioner's estate?"

Wilfrid Heighington (Conservative, St. David) noticed with regret "the growing tendency to move and pass more legislation giving authority to the committees to pass regulations." He stated that it was embarrassing for private members that rules, of which they knew nothing had been made.