

IMPROPRIETIES LEAD TO AMENDING BILL, PRICE TELLS HOUSE

Licensing of All Collection
Agency Companies Is
Thought Desirable

SINCLAIR'S BILL READ

Giving many instances of collection agencies, with their head offices in Ontario, using high-handed, high-pressure and improper methods to collect honest debts, Attorney-General W. H. Price yesterday explained the reasons for the bringing in of an amendment to the Collection Agencies Act, so as to allow proper regulation, control and licensing of all such agencies operating in the Province. At the present time those agencies having their head offices outside of the Province are so controlled, but the amending bill, which was given its second reading, will make the act inclusive.

In a session which lasted just an hour, the Legislature attended to its knitting and got down to real business. Second readings were also given to the bill, sponsored by Wilfrid Heighington (Conservative, St. Davids), to conserve and improve the valley of the Don River; to an amendment to the Bills of Sale and Chattel Mortgages Act; to an amendment to the Deserted Wives' and Children's Maintenance Act; and to an amendment to the Mechanics' Lien Act. There was no discussion on the bills, the sponsors merely briefly explaining them.

Operations Investigated.

In speaking to the amendment to the Collection Agencies Act, the Attorney-General stated that during the past year certain features of the operation of some companies had been investigated by the police and Crown Attorneys. The Attorney-General cited instances in which he stated action had been taken.

"Some of us have had personal experiences," interposed Hon. H. C. Nixon, Progressive Leader, with a smile.

"Then all should support this bill," returned the Attorney-General.

In view of such tactics, it was thought better that all such companies should be licensed, he said. The fee was but a nominal one of \$2, excepting to those companies outside, with head offices outside the Dominion of Canada, the fee for which would be \$50.

The only bill which affected Toronto particularly was the Don Valley bill, and it received its second reading after Premier Henry had approved the principle of the development, although stating that there might be certain features which would have to be "ironed out" in committee. It was referred to the Municipal Committee.

Another important bill to be given its second reading was that concerning the Deserted Wives' and Children's Maintenance Act. "Judges of the Juvenile Courts and Domestic Relations Courts have been finding difficulties in defining what constitutes cruelty," commented the Attorney-General, explaining that the present act provided that a wife should be deemed deserted if she left her home because of cruelty.

"What Is Cruelty?"

"I have had letters from all over the Province about this. The question is 'What is cruelty?' A great number of decisions have been made, and it takes up much of the time of the courts in defining it. This bill is to help those who are examining such cases," he explained.

"Would the passing of this bill affect the workings of the Mothers' Allowances Act? Would it not widen its scope?" questioned D. J. Taylor, Progressive, Grey North.

"I do not think it would affect it at all," replied Colonel Price.

Colonel Price stated that the amendment to the Bills of Sale and Chattel Mortgages Act was to allow the County and District Judges to exercise the same powers with respect to the registration of renewal statements as they had in connection with the registering of chattel mortgages. This would allow a longer period of time for the filing of the registration, he said.

"I suppose there is no harm in the legislation, but there is not the same emergency in connection with renewals as there is with chattel mortgages," interposed W. E. N. Sinclair, Liberal House Leader. But he did not oppose the bill's second reading.

The amendment to the Mechanics' Lien Act was merely to give greater ease in bringing actions to trial, said the Attorney-General. There had been some doubt as to whether one Assistant Master might try a mechanics' lien action if he was not the officer to fix the date of the trial, and this doubt is being removed to avoid delay, confusion, and recurrence of unnecessary costs, it was stated.

The bills introduced by W. E. N. Sinclair to amend the Elections Act so as to provide for compulsory voting; to the Highway Traffic Act, to compel pedestrians to carry lights at night; and to the Municipal Act, Board of Education Act, and Assessment Act, were all given their routine first reading.

The amendment to the Municipal Act would allow any city to elect a Board of Control; that to the Board of Education Act would make a by-election necessary should a Trustee resign a month before the usual election date; that to the Assessment Act would allow any one whose name was on the assessment list to have it placed on the voters' lists. Mr. Sinclair's proposed amendment to the Jurors' Act would have the effect of abolishing Grand Juries.

Mr. Sinclair's bill favoring compulsory voting would provide for a fine of \$20 and disenfranchisement for seven years as a penalty for those who failed to exercise their franchise. Those who were unable to do so by reason of illness or physical disabilities would be exempted.

The bill would also provide that employers must allow employees time off to vote. No employee who absented himself from his work in order to vote could be penalized by reduction of wages or compensation on account of taking such time off, it stipulates.