

Premier Declines To State Salaries Of Hydro Officers

Engaged in Commercial Undertaking and Such Information Not in the Best Interests of Commission's Work, Henry Tells Nixon

PROGRESSIVE CHIEF OBJECTS TO REPLY

The refusal of Premier Henry to make public the salaries of executive officers of the Ontario Hydro-Electric Power Commission, as asked under inquiries tabled in the Ontario Legislature, brought a vigorous protest from Progressive Leader Nixon after the House adjourned yesterday. Mr. Nixon proposes to move that no further moneys be voted to Hydro until the information is forthcoming, he told *The Globe*.

The questions were by W. G. Medd (Progressive, Huron South) and asked for the salaries of F. A. Gaby, W. W. Pope, I. B. Lucas, K.C., and of several other engineers and heads of departments.

Arising in the House, Premier Henry stated that it would not be in the best interest of the work entrusted to the Commission, or of the municipalities, to give this information. Mr. Nixon at once objected to Mr. Henry's stand and said he would debate the matter some other day.

"It was commonly repeated that Mr. Gaby's salary was increased from \$25,000 a year to \$35,000," Mr. Nixon later stated to *The Globe*. "I propose to move after the Budget address, that before any money is voted to Hydro that the House assert its right to have this information. For years the Province carried it in the estimates and in the public accounts and answers have been given by the Ferguson Government on the higher salaries of the Hydro officials. Now that the information appears to be embarrassing, we do not propose to allow the Government to hide the facts."

"The salaries paid to the officials of the Hydro-Electric Power Commission are wholly within the control of the Commission, which, under the power of the Commission Act of 1927, may distribute and apportion such salaries, and its decision shall be final," stated the Premier to the House. "The Hydro-Electric Power Commission is engaged in a commercial undertaking, and the Legislative Assembly having given these powers to the Commission, the Government does not believe it is in the best interests of the work entrusted to the Commission, nor in the interests of the municipalities, publicly to disclose the salaries of its employees."

"I am giving notice that I am objecting to that kind of an answer and I will debate it on a later occasion," said Mr. Nixon.

When the same answer was given to the second question, Mr. Nixon stated he was also objecting to it. The questions also sought to find when the officials received their last increase and what it amounted to.

The number of permanent employees of the Commission, exclusive of the Dominion Power and Transmission Company, was 2,613 for 1930,

2,782 for 1931 and 2,656 for 1932; while the number of temporary and occasional employees for 1930 was 3,613; for 1931, 1,587, and for 1932 it was 1,057. The total wage bill of the Commission was \$8,979,000 for 1930; for 1931, \$8,170,000 and for 1932, \$6,270,000, the Prime Minister stated.

In reply to a query of Dr. L. J. Simpson (Liberal, Simcoe Centre), Hon. J. R. Cooke, Chairman of the Hydro Commission, stated that the total cost of the short-wave experimental radio stations of the Hydro was \$1,597 for the fiscal year ending 1932, this including the operation costs as well as the fixed charges, interest and sinking fund.

"The Commission maintains a central technical staff constantly communicating with the field staff and supervising operation. Hence it is necessary to provide some means of communication between the administrative office and the field plants," said Mr. Cooke. "In most cases the private telephone system used for operation is connected with the administrative office, but this is not practicable for Cameron Falls and Bar Falls, due to their remote location."

"For this reason short wave radio stations have been established at the generating stations mentioned above and a corresponding station at the administrative office in Toronto. At Bar Falls, the nearest telegraph station and railway station is 70 miles distant. There are only two mail deliveries per week between the railway station and the postoffice nearest to the power house, and for some weeks during spring and fall there is no mail communication whatever. Should the operators at the plant require repair parts technical advice or instructions, service might be seriously affected if means of communication were not available."

"At Cameron Falls the nearest telegraph station is at Nipigon, but there was no telegraph operator at that station when the Commission's radio station was installed. Communication by mail to the Toronto office is slow, due to the distance (800 miles) and to the fact that there are only three mail deliveries per week from Port Arthur to the power house," explained Mr. Cooke.

The total cost of the Forestry Branch of the Hydro Commission was \$86,384 for the past fiscal year, Mr. Cooke said in reply to a question of R. A. Baxter (Liberal Oxford South). There were 46,584 trees pruned, and the trees were spread out over 1,070 miles. There are 15,771 miles of line under the Commission's charge, and tree-trimming and right of way work are necessary. The work of the branch is not new work, it being done formerly by line maintenance gangs, he said.