

EVASION OF LAWS IS CHARGED FREELY IN HOUSE SPEECHES

Sweatshops in Toronto, Halton Member Alleges, in Legislature

PACKERS ARE CRITICIZED

Combine Claimed—Waterways Treaty Brief Reference

Evasion of minimum wage laws charged from both sides of the House, and a combine alleged among Toronto packers—these were important features of yesterday's continuation of the debate on the Ontario Speech from the Throne.

Husbands and wives worked side by side in the tobacco fields, but only the wives' names appeared on manufacturers' payrolls, said William Morrison (Conservative, Hamilton East); sweatshops flourished in Toronto, said T. A. Blakelock (Liberal, Halton). "My firm conviction is that packing-houses in West Toronto have a combine, and farmers going there don't get a square deal," said Clifford Case (Conservative, York North).

Cost of Hay.

Mr. Case's speech, interrupted by adjournment yesterday, further charged that farmers were required to pay \$30 a ton to the stockyards for hay selling elsewhere at \$10. On another tack, he claimed that Mitchell F. Hepburn, Liberal Leader, in attacking the Sun Life Assurance Company, actually was "attacking the life savings of policy-holders and of widows and orphans whose money was bound up with one of the strongest financial institutions of which Canada is rightly proud."

In a reference to the St. Lawrence waterway, Mr. Blakelock advised all caution, collection of further information on the project, and a suggestion that the Hudson Bay route might provide the outlet required from interior Canada.

"Building Doctors."

He would go further than Mr. Nesbitt, said the Hamilton member, and tell about "building doctors," efficiency experts, who obtained the management of contracts on agreement; they would receive a commission on what they saved the owner. The "doctor" then chiselled down sub-contract figures to a point far below cost. "It shouldn't be allowed," shouted Mr. Morrison.

As for a minimum wage for men, he had been told by a Trades and Labor Council official that "we're against it because it would become the maximum." The skilled mechanic, said Mr. Morrison, did not care about the laborer's position, but thought only of himself, actuated by greed and selfishness.

Abuses, he knew, had crept into employment of women, and the minimum wage law for them was being disregarded. In one factory, girls were hired for a certain time, and then, when they became experienced at their work, were discharged, to be rehired later at the old low rate. Tobacco companies, he said, had husband and wife laboring in the fields, and yet the husband's name never appeared on the company's payroll. Certain companies were working twenty-four hours on a two-shift basis; "why not on a three, or even four, shift basis?"

Some few firms—and he cited the Hydro-owned Hamilton Street Railway—had reduced hours to keep their payrolls intact but organized labor seemed to have had no hand in it. "What have the labor unions ever done?" he demanded. "I'm told that if the railway running trades reduced their week to twenty-four hours, every one of their members would have a job."

Alternative to Tories.

Warning against the C.C.F. as of the political type that fostered dictatorship and instability in the European style of government, Mr. Morrison exclaimed: "Elmore Philpott and Agnes Macphail think they have Divine inspiration. I say, if you don't vote Tory, choose the lesser of two evils and vote Grit."

Turning to juvenile crime, the Hamilton member thought the low age average of the penitentiaries offset the general decrease in wrong-doing, as instanced by statistics. Idleness was a strong factor in youthful offenses. Boys and girls of 18 to 22, unemployed, had nothing better than to roam the streets. "If a boy has no ambition, he becomes a bum; if he has ambition, it grows perverted and he becomes a gangster." He was encouraged by diminishing of crime in hard times, an excellent indication of the high moral spirit of the Province.

Advent of Mitchell F. Hepburn to the leadership of the Liberal Party marked a revolutionary change in that group's attitude toward Hydro, said Mr. Morrison. Mr. Hepburn he labelled "the private interests' representative."

In reviewing the last few years' investigations of Hydro, Mr. Morrison was quizzed by T. P. Murray (Liberal, Renfrew South). "Do you think the Government did right in paying John Aird Jr. \$50,000? As a Labor man, do you think he labored hard enough for it?" asked Mr. Murray. Mr. Morrison refused to be drawn.

The member's comment on Liberal Leader McQuibban's statement of opposition to the St. Lawrence development under the present Administration was: "If they got \$720,000 on the Beauharnois deal, how much would they expect to get from the St. Lawrence seaway if it went through under other than the present regime?"

In closing, he said the Conservatives were solidly behind the Premier. "Our Leader may not have Howard Ferguson's personality, his magnetism and his political ability," asserted Mr. Morrison, "but he has got one or two things: honesty and business ability."

Sweat-Shops Alleged.

"Sweat-shops exist in Ontario and right here in the City of Toronto," T. A. Blakelock charged, contending that such conditions thrived in spite of the law and the Minimum Wage Board. The member for Halton claimed that at "piece work" employees are required to produce double the number of garments at anywhere from 50 to 60 per cent. less wages than those of four years ago. The public, he stated, were labelling employees striking in times like the present, as "foolish," without stopping to consider the conditions under which they were laboring.

As a concrete case, the Liberal member mentioned the recent strike at the "Ontario Boys' Wear Limited." An investigation, he said, finally disclosed ground for charges to which the company pleaded guilty. One of these, he stated, claimed falsification of the company books to show that 80 per cent. of the employees received the minimum wage, and on this charge the fine was \$20. "What would have been the verdict if it had been an employee who falsified the books and stole the company's money?" Mr. Blakelock asked.

The Minimum Wage Board, he claimed, would prove inadequate if it seriously attempted to investigate conditions in existence.

Tory Rule Blamed.

The Liberal member charged that, "had it not been for Tory rule, burdening our people with taxation until the load became unbearable," municipalities would have escaped default. Farmers are losing their farms; homeowners, their homes; and thousands are surrendering their insurance policies," he said. "I don't care whether you talk Hydro, Mitchell Hepburn, the present House Leader or the last House Leader, the people that are interested in what we say are the hundreds of thousands who are out of work and wondering where the next meal is coming from."

Mr. Blakelock urged that the municipalities should be relieved of the construction and maintenance cost

of the King's Highway. The motorist's dollar, he argued, should be utilized for highway purposes, and the burden of the rural taxpayer relieved.

The public debt of Canada was coupled with the question, "How can we expect prosperity in any branch of industry, throttled as it is by the present burden of direct and indirect taxation?" The member for Halton charged that, with his taxes tripled and his machinery almost doubled, "the farmer is having a greater struggle for existence today than ever before in the history of the country." He mentioned the retroactive restoration of salaries increasing the taxation burden by \$100,000 a month, commenting that "this figure does not include employees of Hydro and the Liquor Control Board, two departments the finances of which the Government in its wisdom does not see fit to make public."

Mr. Blakelock also criticized the expenditures for county agricultural representatives, charging that the service was an "overlapping" one.

Seaway Problem.

An appeal for a serious, non-political consideration of the St. Lawrence waterway was made by the Liberal member. The questions of its cost to the Canadian people, the length of the annual season, the number of vessels and what commodities it will carry, and its effect on the railways, must be asked, he said. "I believe if we face the proposition with an open mind we shall at least come to a conclusion honestly," he contended, stressing the need for "proceeding cautiously."

In answer to the Tory taunts, the member for Halton asked why they had not accepted Mitchell Hepburn's challenge to debate. "If they ever summon up sufficient courage to appeal to the people for re-election, Mr. Hepburn will be here," he said. "But will my honorable friends be here to greet him?"

Liberals Assailed.

The charge made by Clifford Case followed a general denunciation of Liberal attitudes and praise of the Conservative program. Mentioning a visit made to the West Toronto stock yards for the purpose of observing the conditions under which the farmers marketed their goods, he definitely stated: "It is my firm conviction that the packing houses of West Toronto have a combine, and that when the farmer goes down there he doesn't get a fair deal."

The member for York North claimed that the company buyers knew what price they would pay before the farmers arrived at the yards. If he refused their offer, the farmer was obliged, Mr. Case explained, to either take his stock back his farm or pay the stock yards of West Toronto \$30 a ton for the same hay which the member claimed was selling at a market price of \$10.

"It is time the Government in Ottawa did something to investigate the combine in West Toronto, for the farmer has not received a square deal," Mr. Case stated before launching again into an appraisal of the two political parties.

Lauding Hon. T. L. Kennedy, Mr. Case referred to the milk problem as one demanding careful consideration. The low ebb on the cheese market, he stated, made it obvious that farmers of the eastern counties would have been glad to ship milk to Toronto at lower prices than the York County and Central Ontario farmers were receiving.

The member for York North concluded with the avowal that "Hydro is an institution sponsored by the Conservative Party, conceived and born by the Conservative Party," and with an attack on Mitchell Hepburn. He adjourned debate, holding part of his speech for the session on next Tuesday.