

March 1.

SLUM REBUILDING MEETS APPROVAL OF GOVERNMENT

Heighington Suggests Capital to Be Invited to Take Over Property

GARDEN AREAS VISIONED

Government approval of the principle of slum abolition and rebuilding was invoked on the floor of the Ontario Legislature yesterday. Moving "that in the opinion of this House, the Government should be authorized in making regulations for distribution of moneys under the Unemployment Relief Act, to consider any special application from a municipal corporation of a town or city for the use of Government grants toward the abolition of slum areas and the development of those areas under new housing schemes," Wilfrid Heighington (Conservative, St. David's) initiated a lengthy discussion almost unanimously in favor of his proposition. The resolution, after receiving the Premier's qualified blessing, was carried unanimously.

Dominion Involved.

After the session, Mr. Henry explained that not only the Province but the municipality and Dominion were intimately concerned with the principle raised by Mr. Heighington. Any relief work of such a character required Federal contribution, while a Municipal Act amendment would be necessary before such a proposal became possible of enactment.

The details of the slum abolition program were only sketched by Mr. Heighington. Referring to the unfortunate subdividing activities of Victorian landlords, he charged that there existed in Toronto, and in the southern part of his riding in particular, areas which were "unpleasant, unsanitary, and insecure." Mr. Heighington proposed that capital should be invited to take over whole blocks of these slum areas, lending sufficient money or first mortgages to rebuild them, substituting "attractive workers' dwelling", garden areas, wider streets and modern sanitation."

Compensation for Landlords.

Expropriation with adequate compensation was suggested in cases of landlords' opposition. The member proposed to relegate full management and control and a remunerative return to private capital, and to limit activity to the Government superintendence of the scale of rents and the rates of interest and accompanying details. He believed the Government would not be involved financially to a

great extent, but suggested the Province should by statute stand behind such ventures, providing for ultimate liability in the event of loss in any particular venture.

Prefacing his appeal with praise of the Government's relief work, the member for St. David's credited the Government with "quiet courage," and honesty of purpose and administration. Improvement in general conditions, he contended, had not as yet been sufficient to bring any extensive relief to the ranks of labor. He asked how much longer the distribution of unemployment relief could continue, pointing out it was a burden to the taxpayers, and "one neighbor is bearing the burden of maintaining another."

Gains Claimed as Result.

Mr. Heighington advanced two immediate gains which he claimed would result from his motion. "Labor is entirely dependent on the building industry," he said, contending an organized and extensive building boom would end years of depression. He based his second argument on the thesis that "we have made about all the demands that are possible on our Governments." The result of "further financial whirls" by the Governments in private or corporate fields would stultify business and economic growth and endanger the stability of the financial structure, he claimed. He deplored the tendency to tie up money in Government bonds, declaring that until capital is released into private channels recovery will be indefinitely postponed.

Public Works Detailed.

The Premier, speaking on the motion just before it was put to the House, detailed Government activity in the line of public works, and pointed out the Government had assisted municipalities in works designed for municipal betterment until the spring of 1932, when direct relief, except for the Northern road camps, was adopted.

Referring to the recent program of Dominion and Provincial subsidies for public works, Mr. Henry stated that proposals involving between seven and eight million dollars had already been approved. It had also been agreed, he explained to extend the Dominion-Provincial agreement from the end of March to the end of the year; it has been intimated at Ottawa that any incomplete work begun before the year's end would qualify for the subsidy.

"In Accord With Motion."

"Outside the problem of railways, I don't think there is anything of greater importance than something that would stabilize the building trade," the Prime Minister said. He declared that the stabilization of construction would prove one of the biggest steps in general advance. "I am quite in accord with the motion, and, if the municipalities are interested, I think some provision should be made so they can function," the Premier said, in closing.

Members' Comments.

Half a dozen members also added their comments to Mr. Heighington's suggestion. T. P. Murray (Liberal, Renfrew South), said it was "the first move to aid lumber since I have been in the House," adding that such construction would make Toronto and other cities, "healthier and more respectable places to live in." William Morrison (Conservative, Hamilton East), Harry Price (Conservative, York West), A. B. Smith (Conservative, Essex South), F. W. Wilson (Conservative, Windsor East), and T. A. Blacklock (Liberal, Halton), were also heard, approving the motion.

Criticism of the measure developed from three different sections of the House. J. A. Sangster (Liberal, Gleggarry) advised the House not to be "overzealous." George Shields (Conservative, Woodbine), although promising support to any scheme of indirect relief, pointed out obstacles. The ire of William Baird (Conservative, High Park), said: "We have always regarded Toronto as a city of homes," he contended, submitting that slums were non-existent and suggesting construction on vacant property.