

PRIVATE MEMBERS CONTINUE DEBATE IN LEGISLATURE

Ontario Leaders, Except
Hon. Charles McCrea,
Are Silent

MINISTER IS OPTIMISTIC

Political attacks and contrasting views of public conditions were volleyed back and forth across the floor of the Ontario Legislature yesterday as members of the Government and Opposition alternated with speeches on the Budget. It was, aside from a speech by the Hon. Charles McCrea, Minister of Mines, a day in which debate was almost completely relegated to the rank-and-file membership, Ministers and the Opposition Leaders even refraining to a great extent from interjecting comment or contradiction.

The Conservative banner was also upheld by A. C. Calder (Conservative, Kent West), who predicted the dawn of a new day of social legislation, by C. A. Seguin (Conservative, Russell), who as one of the handful of French-Canadian members, compared the finances of Ontario and Quebec, and by F. V. Laughton (Middlesex, North).

On the Liberal side, J. A. Sangster, Liberal member for Glengarry, opened the fire with an explanation of his Hydro charges, and comments on Provincial finance delivered in an inimitable style. D. C. Campbell (Liberal, Kent East) analyzed the financial record of the Conservatives during the last ten years, and T. A. Blakelock (Liberal, Halton) drew contrasts between Drury and Conservative finances, and cited errors in government administration.

Farm Prices.

J. A. Sangster, the Liberal "Man from Glengarry," opened his speech on the Budget with a request to the Speaker that, if he should vilify anybody or anything, "you just call me down." Beginning by citing the bacon statistics for September, "you know that's the season of the year when the little pigs are just getting on," the 73-year-old veteran claimed that Canadian conditions had done much to influence the price, mentioning the advisability of holding the large buying houses down to some reasonable basis of profit.

"Government expenditures should be cut down," the member for Glengarry declared. Reminding the House of power from Gatineau, he again cited more favorable Quebec rates. The difference was not great, he admitted; still, on the one side were these private corporations, and on the other a public utility. But, the man from Glengarry insisted, "it was wrong to say I was trying to make any comparisons; it wasn't right and proper."

Terming the Budget "a question that we should pick up," Mr. Sangster enumerated the major items of revenue, pausing to comment, in reference to the total income of \$2,676,000 from lands, forests, and "those blessed mines," that there was something wrong. Mr. Sangster stressed the preponderance of liquor control and highway receipts. "As far as the Liquor Control Board is concerned, I don't know much about it," he admitted, "but they are switching the money collected from the highway to other purposes." The high price of gasoline came in for criticism, and a comparison with allegedly lower prices south of the international line. "The 'gas' companies are bleeding the people of Canada," he said, "to some extent."

"There's surely something wrong in the Lands, Forests and Mines business," the member declared. "I see the Ministers winking over there; \$2,676,000 is not enough."

Minister of Mines Speaks.

Mr. McCrea's speech opened with an analysis of Canada's progress during the depression, dwelling on the happy outlook for the Ontario mining industry, and closing with the prophecy that a wider prosperity was coming to the Dominion. He credited the people's sanity with seeing the country through the storm of hard times, and coupled with this the efforts of the Dominion and Provincial Governments. He recalled the "rebuff" which had met Right Hon. R. B. Bennett's original efforts to arrange Empire preferences, and the vastly changed situation little more than a year later, when statesmen from every unit of the Empire had come to Ottawa eager to arrange trade agreements. With the then adverse trade balance of Canada and every other British country, he asked, how long could the Empire have lasted?

The Mines Minister read the report of a speech by J. C. McRuer, K.C., appearing in a 1930 paper and commenting on the "ghastly failure" of Mr. Bennett's trip to the Old Country. Hindsight was clearer than foresight, said Mr. McCrea, but he was willing to wager that Mr. McRuer today would give anything he had for a political reputation that did not contain the 1930 speech. For Mr. Bennett's visit to England had been the forerunner of a "clarion call to every part of the Empire," and of one of the greatest agreements in the Empire's history, setting up preferential tariffs among all the Imperial countries. "Today, those who have ears to hear and eyes to see are lauding Mr. Bennett for the wonderful commercial effect of those agreements," said Mr. McCrea.

Concluding, the Minister noted the ever-increasing wealth coming from Northern Ontario since the higher price of gold went into effect. Not only the mines, but every business connected with Northern endeavor felt the benefit of the present mining boom. Moreover, such conditions brought into the community men of courage and capacity. "A wider prosperity is coming," said Mr. McCrea.

Debt Criticism.

Admitting the present difficulties confronting the Government, D. M. Campbell, by his own confession, "baby member of the Legislature," went back over a ten-year record of Conservative financing to lay the foundations for a criticism of the Government debt. "In each and every year they have spent more than they have collected in revenue," the new Liberal member declared. In 1925 and 1926, and again in 1928 and 1929 the excess of expenses over income was approximately 25 per cent., he pointed out; in 1930, it was 45 per cent.; in 1931, 50 per cent.; in 1932, 53 per cent., and in 1933, 39 per cent.

Commenting that this practice had persisted through years of fair prices, high prices and low prices, Mr. Campbell made the deduction that "debt increase must be the policy of this administration or else they must admit that the affairs of this Province have them completely baffled."

The Conservative claim that increase in debt has been caused by the acquisition of revenue-producing assets was considered and the member surmised, "Now if such were the case to the extent that they would have us believe it is, I would think that after ten years of this policy the revenue would be pouring into the Provincial Treasury." The condition of the Province, he contended, could be gauged by the general credit of its most important industry, agriculture, and from this line of reasoning the Liberal member drew no cheerful conclusions.

Taking up the financing of Gov-

ernment bonds and in particular the recent \$40,000,000 flotation, Mr. Campbell argued that under prevailing conditions the interest rates of new bond issues are too high and should be cut. A Government bond, he reasoned, should be attractive only from the angle of security, and when, as today, the bonds were attractive because of both security and high interest rates, "the flow of money will be from industrial enterprises." This, in turn, he claimed, means the closing of industrial doors, an increase in unemployment and eventually a greater charge on the Provincial Treasury for relief.

The man of means, the Liberal member said, was realizing his responsibility as "his brother's keeper," and would be willing to do his bit by having his interest rate lowered.

Analyzing, in conclusion, the present debt of the Province, Mr. Campbell admitted that about half of the \$592,000,000 is or should be revenue-producing. In reference to another \$250,000,000 spent on highways and public buildings, he declared that while such expenditures were of public value, no income or revenue is directly available for repayment of the public debt. "In some cases," referring to highways, he claimed, "the second pavement is laid and, as far as I can see, very little, if any, provision made for paying for the first one."

The Liberal member commented that counties had paid their share of the financing of highways either in cash or in comparatively short termed debentures. On the other hand, he charged that of the present highway revenue of \$20,000,000 only \$3,000,000 went to the credit of the highways. In these figures he was countered by the Premier, who named other lines of disbursement.

Mr. Campbell compared the Provincial financing with the records of cities, towns and townships, endeavoring to finance their municipalities in a safe and sane manner. "I think the Government has erred considerably," he declared, "for I cannot find that it has done much systematically to reduce these highway expenses."

T. A. Blakelock, who made the last Liberal contribution to the Budget debate last night, began with a paragraph twitting the Conservatives, who "in 1926 sallied forth as a 'political Moses,' and modestly acclaimed that the Province had been rescued from the precipice of insolvency," and "in 1929 again came out in their tally-ho with trumpets sounding and more liquid refreshments."

The member for Halton reminded the Conservatives that four years of the world's worst depression had changed the public into serious minded citizens, who in the struggle for necessities are anxiously searching for a solution that will better their condition.

Figures Are Quoted.

Opening the body of his speech with an itemized contrast between Drury and present Government financing, the Liberal member pointed out that the Department of Lands and Forests had produced greater revenue, operating at a lower cost of administration in 1922 than in 1933.

The same thing was found true in the Department of Game and Fisheries, he pointed out, while a marked increase in educational administration costs could be explained by increases in salaries not offset by a decrease in rural grants.

"So we might proceed with department after department," Mr. Blakelock commented, although denying that he was holding any brief for the Drury Government.

The member for Halton drew the attention of the House to several instances of situations which he felt should be remedied. Chief of these was the practice of a middleman's sale between farmer and Government, which, the member said, he had understood was being carried on in the purchase of live stock for the abattoir at the Guelph Reformatory.

Critical of Papers.

Political patronage exemplified in Government advertising in friendly county papers was criticized, and the member remarked on the ability of a Conservative supporter to obtain a good Governmental job.

Particular criticism was directed at the third highway through the counties of Halton and Peel, the member predicting that the County Councils would hear no more about the highway before the election.

Remarking that we must soon face "our masters, the people," the member for Halton charged the Government members had followed their leader like sheep. When the ballots are counted, he predicted, the mantle of leadership would fall on the shoulders of Mitchell Hepburn.