

HOUSE COMMITTEE ISSUES WARRANT FOR ONE WITNESS

Fails to Appear Following Subpoena, and Police Seek His Trail

ROAD-MAKING CHARGES

Drama climaxed yesterday's sitting of the Public Accounts Committee, called to investigate Liberal Paul Munro's charges that highway payrolls had been padded, and that Government investigation had failed to disclose the irregularities.

On motion of Hon. Leopold Macaulay, Minister of Highways, and Mr. Munro, a warrant was ordered issued for the arrest of Henry M. Walker, an important figure in the inquiry, subpoenaed as witness in the Committee Room, but missing when he was called to testify.

It was Walker who precipitated the departmental investigation of payrolls prepared by James R. Gunning, Elgin County road foreman, and who subsequently was sued by Gunning on the basis of the allegations he made. When first sought as witness by Mr. Macaulay yesterday morning, Walker was "somewhere in the city." At that time he had not been formally subpoenaed, but had come to Toronto to testify. Served with the subpoena in the Committee Room on his appearance there, Walker was not present when required at the brief afternoon sitting. He was reported to be "somewhere in the buildings," and the committee paused while a search was made, without result.

Warrant Foreshadowed.

"Mr. Walker had better show up or I'll have a warrant issued for his arrest," proclaimed Mr. Macaulay. "He was here this morning, but this afternoon he got as far as the door and ran away. I move that a warrant be issued if he doesn't turn up within fifteen minutes."

The fifteen-minute interval ensued, and Mr. Macaulay, staring at his watch, declared: "We have waited the allotted time. On the strength of the charges made by this man, Mr. Munro has put himself in the position in which he finds himself today. He has put his seat in jeopardy," he added, in reference to the fact that Mr. Munro had made his charges on his responsibility as a member. "It is a serious matter for the department, as well. Walker was here this morning, and it looks as though he deliberately absented himself. Because his evidence is so vital to this inquiry, I am determined that he shall appear before the committee. I have conferred with Mr. Munro, and he agrees that all efforts should be made to bring him here."

Police Seek Witness.

Mr. Munro then seconded Mr. Macaulay's formal motion for issuance of a warrant. The committee rose until this morning, and an influx of Attorney-General's Department officials began preparation of the warrant, which was turned over to the Provincial Police for service.

A large number of Elgin County witnesses, called on the Liberals' request, attended the afternoon session of the committee. Mr. Munro doubted they could add much to the evidence presented at the morning sitting, but Mr. Macaulay insisted that some of them be heard.

J. A. Craig (Conservative, Lanark North) considered it "a shame" to call any more witnesses, on the ground that enough had been heard.

Mr. Macaulay agreed, but said: "I am conducting this inquiry, and am merely trying to bring out the facts. It is on Mr. Munro's responsibility that these witnesses have come so long a way. All we have heard is village tittle-tattle that has been magnified by the Board of Strategy, with the object of blowing this Government out of Queen's Park."

On the contrary, said Mr. Munro, it had been shown that wrong entries had been made, and wrong information given, by Highways Department employees.

George McLean, Talbotville, had travelled 145 miles to give his evidence, and insisted he should receive witness fees before he took the stand. Explanation of procedure failed to shake his refusal.

Rev. R. C. Copeland, a former pastor of Talbotville United Church, enlarged upon morning witnesses' explanation of payment of "team-hire" money to the church's Treasurer. The money had been paid in return for rental of a shed. He believed that the declaration made by John Brown in connection with this incident had been sworn under a misapprehension.

Wilfred Fife, the man to whom cheques for Gunning's truck were made payable, said that he had seen no wrongdoing under the circumstances, and had endorsed the cheques over to Gunning. Mrs. Gunning also was called, but added little to the evidence.

Engineer Testifies.

First witness at the morning sitting was H. E. McPherson, Resident Engineer on the stretch of road where Gunning served as foreman. Because there was much heavy hauling to be done, teams were slow and the department refused to supply a truck. Gunning had proposed that he himself buy a truck for use where necessary. This project was followed out, and the foreman was paid at the rate of \$1.10, or double the team rate. As an engineer, Mr. McPherson said, the arrangement had appealed to him as good business. "You have satisfied yourself that the truck was used as the payrolls indicated?" asked Mr. Macaulay.

"Yes, for honest work."

The statutory declaration of John Brown, Secretary-Treasurer of Talbotville United Church, found further mention. Mr. Macaulay said that Mr. Munro on Wednesday had stated he had never seen the declaration published in Friday's Globe.

"I didn't say that," answered Mr. Munro. "I said I didn't have it with me yesterday." The Minister pressed the point, and Mr. Munro conceded that he had had possession of the document when he made his allegations in the House on Thursday.

"Your memory's better today," commented Mr. Macaulay. "Well, we all make mistakes."

James Gunning, next sworn, described the arrangement whereby he had bought a truck for road work, and the departmental ruling whereunder, he said, he had entered truck time as team time on the pay-sheets. He was asked why he had not used his own

name on the sheets. "I should have asked Mr. McPherson," he conceded; "but I thought my name could not go down as both teamster and foreman. When his horses had been used, his sons' names were entered, but when the truck went into operation he made an arrangement with Wilfred Fife. As a result Fife had received two cheques, for \$44 and \$37.95, actually for the use of Gunning's truck. But "it seemed to bother me. I thought perhaps it was not right," said Gunning, and so he had referred the matter to Mr. McPherson. Subsequently, accounts for the truck went by invoice to the department.

"You have been charged with grafting," said Mr. Macaulay.

"Never one dollar," Gunning asserted.

"What's the trouble between you and Walker?" the Minister inquired.

Gunning placed before the committee the account of a disagreement which began, he said, with Walker's intention to lease a house from Mrs. Barnes, Gunning's sister-in-law. While negotiations were pending, Gunning himself entered a successful bid for purchase of the property. A

wrangle ensued for \$112.50, claimed by Walker, and Gunning, taking Mrs. Barnes's part in the dispute, had forced a settlement at \$50. "From then on, he didn't have much love for me," said Gunning. Then the foreman, having seen "the inside of Walker's character," refused to recommend his reappointment as traffic census-taker. "From then on he had still less love for me, and that fall he wrote to the department charging me with graft."

At that moment Mr. Macaulay made his first demand for Walker's testimony. The server said he had issued no subpoena to the witness, but was aware that he was in town.

"They're not at your hotel, are they?" he asked Mr. Munro, and won for himself the first laugh of the day.

Gunning was questioned on alleged payments to John Powell, who died in 1932. He said the payments, all made before Powell's death, had been for sand and for damage to a fence.

Mr. Macaulay impatiently scanned the back-benches. "Is Mr. Powell here?" he demanded, and the committee howled at his expense.

"That was the Angel Gabriel calling," said Mr. Macaulay, explaining that he really had wanted the dead man's son.

Remarking that the Powell incident had received "two-inch headlines in The Globe," Mr. Macaulay considered it worth while to press his questioning further. He established that Powell had received teamster pay for the sand and damage.

Paid as Teamster.

Next, Gunning was called on to explain the matter of John Brown, with whom he had been a church steward. The payments to this man,

\$5 every six months, had been for use of the church shed for storing sand and snow fences. He, too, had been paid as a teamster.

Questioned as to the slander action he brought against Walker, Gunning said he had settled it out of court and paid \$150 toward the defendant's costs. He explained that he was afraid the litigation ultimately would be beyond his means, "and I couldn't collect from Walker anyway." Asked why, he said: "Because he was financially irresponsible."

"Did you have any communication from me or any one else in Toronto about settling this case?" inquired Mr. Macaulay.

"No. I never saw you before the day before yesterday," was the reply. He added that he settled the case on his own responsibility.

Mr. Munro read Walker's declaration, made in connection with the slander action, setting out that the sworn statement of Fife was relied on.

Gunning declared he had made no profit from the time-sheet entries in question. He recounted, on Mr. Munro's questioning a long list of items, entered as payment for teams, but actually for gravel, sand, rentals, damage, stone, expropriation and labor. He thought there might be other items of the same type in the paysheets. He was questioned closely on payments for use of his sedan car while his truck was in a garage for repairs. The car had been used thus for only about two days, he said.

"Did either of your sons, between Jan. 1 and August, 1929, work consistently for one Glover, a farmer in the neighborhood?" asked Mr. Munro. Gunning knew William Glover of Fingal, but was unaware that his son had been employed by him.