

March 27

Pay in Road Camps Is Due for Increase

Money Saved by Men to Benefit Relatives Rather Than Be Spent in Camps on Men Them- selves, Minister of Lands Intimates

An increase in the rate of pay for jobless men working in Ontario Government road camps in the North was forecast in the Legislature yesterday afternoon by the Minister of Lands and Forests, Hon. William Finlayson.

"We hope this summer," he said, "to put these camps on a paying basis, and to make such provision that whatever money may be saved by the men will benefit the relatives back home, rather than be expended in the camps on the men themselves." He said he hoped to be able to secure consideration of such an increase in pay as would make this possible. Answering William Newman (Liberal, Victoria North), he said he expected the men would do better work if more highly paid.

The progress of the Trans-Canada Highway work was sketched by the Minister, who announced that the Pembroke-North Bay section would be ready for opening this summer, and that it was planned to let private contracts for the stretch between Fort William and the Manitoba boundary.

Compromise Route.

Of considerable significance was Mr. Finlayson's prediction in this connection that a compromise route for the disputed section of the highway would be reached.

"There has been," he recalled, "much controversy over the relative merits of the 'Northern' and 'Southern' routes proposed for the highway in Northwestern Ontario. I may say that there is now evident a marked improvement in feeling in this matter, and I have no doubt that there will be finally reached some compromise on the route, involving perhaps White River."

Mr. Finlayson strongly replied to charges of "slavery" conditions in Government camps. "I don't think," he said, "that anybody is living in slavery today who is in a good Christian home on an Ontario farm."

Some Complaints.

"And what we are doing in the North today for our unemployed is exactly the same thing. There have been, of course, some letters of complaint. Some of the municipalities from whom we drew these people for the North took the opportunity to unload their undesirables, and that type of person is just the same no matter where he is."

He told of the successful efforts made to encourage recreation and athletic activity among the men in camps, and said he ran across cases of groups walking twenty or thirty miles to attend their own hockey game finals. He paid a tribute to the Christian Service Camp League, a group of clergymen who volunteered to minister to the spiritual needs of the men. Rev. Dr. Cochrane of the United Church was a leader in this regard, he said, and all denominations had co-operated.

At the same time, Mr. Finlayson said, efforts had been made to study the abilities and training of the men with a view to eventual re-establishment into business life. Refuting charges of militarism in the camps, he declared that the only notable act he had seen was the keenness of the men to find tall poles on which they could unfurl the Union Jack every morning on rising.

Mr. Finlayson said it was gratifying to recall that from 1912 to the present date there had been not a single case of misuse of money in his department.

"Beer Under a Bridge."

Hon. H. C. Nixon, the Progressive Leader, smilingly interrupted to ask if he didn't recall "something once about some beer under a bridge." Mr. Finlayson said he recalled a joke along that line, but nothing which had been taken seriously.

Government endorsement was given the Federal District Commission Act, introduced by A. E. Honeywell (Conservative, Ottawa North), involving permission in Ottawa City for the taking over of certain lands and streets as part of a beautification scheme, subject to the approval of the Municipal Board.

On second reading, a bill to amend the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act was withdrawn by Wilfrid Heighington (Conservative, St. David's). It was intended to facilitate the distribution among shareholders of the capital of non-operative timber companies. Withdrawal followed the remark of Mr. Finlayson that he hesitated to agree with its provisions.

An alternative "way out" for defaulting or bankrupt municipalities thinking of going under a board of supervisors was explained in discussion of Colonel Price's bill to amend the Ontario Municipal Board Act of 1932. Under its provisions, an inspector would be appointed by the Municipal Board to advise and confer with the municipality, and to arrange public meetings to determine and crystallize public opinion before any drastic step be taken.

"There are many municipalities," explained Colonel Price, "which are not anxious to go under the supervisors. This must be viewed as a controversial question. This bill is intended to allow the board so to deal with the municipality as to make it unnecessary to go under supervisors. If we can give the board a chance to send an officer there to keep it from coming under the supervisors where such is not necessary, we will be doing something worthy of the support of the House."

Control of Debentures.

Discussing another phase of the bill, he said he admitted it was a drastic step to give the board authority to approve the issue of debentures, but he felt that such a step was defensible in unusual situations. He cited a case of a border municipality which had seized 40,000 unsaleable lots of property.

W. E. N. Sinclair (Liberal, South Ontario) said: "Four or five years ago we would have held up our hands in horror at such steps as this, but now, in view of the condition in which many municipalities find themselves, I have no quarrel with this measure. I am satisfied that they will not send a man out gunning for trouble, but will take action only when trouble threatens."

Hon. T. L. Kennedy's measure, which will provide subsidies for seed grain, aroused the ire of J. A. Sangster (Liberal, Glengarry). Labelling the measure, "a bill that has never been heard of before in Old Ontario," the member for Glengarry questioned whether there had been a demand for such legislation, and protested: "It's something to get the people away from the old standards."

A. B. Smith (Conservative, Essex South) and H. S. Colliver (Conservative, Prince Edward) declared, in answer, that the measure was greatly needed and approved by the agricultural areas of their ridings. The measure was carried without further debate.