

# Papers 'Suppressed' In Roebuck Recital, Price Tells House

## Beck Letter on Power Purchase and Hydro Commission Minute of Engineer's Approval Cited by Former Attorney-General—Roebuck's Indignant Denial Accepted

### SIR ADAM FIRST CONTEMPLATED QUEBEC PURCHASING, IS DEFENSE

**N**OT Cooke—not Magrath—but Sir Adam Beck first considered purchase by Hydro of Quebec private power, according to Hon. William H. Price's analyses of Hydro documents and history in the Legislature yesterday.

#### Alleges Suppression.

Former Attorney-General Price, the first member of the Conservative Party to reply to Attorney-General Roebuck's assault upon the ethics and legalities of Hydro's power purchasing, alleged that Mr. Roebuck's indictment of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday last had been built on "suppressed documents."

#### Offer for Eastern Power.

The former Attorney-General cited a letter from the Commission headed by Sir Adam. It contained a qualified offer for Eastern power, and Colonel Price maintained that if Sir Adam's offer had been accepted—"there would have been a deal."

"Sir Adam talked \$15 horsepower," he said. "Magrath got it."

Either men had suppressed this letter or not brought it to "your attention," he told Hon. Arthur Roebuck.

The Attorney-General struck back when Colonel Price charged that another document—a Hydro Commission minute—had been deliberately suppressed by the Attorney-General and the Hydro Commission.

The minute told how engineers had approved of Eastern purchases which, it had been previously stated, had been made without their advice. There was a splitting of hairs, and Mr. Roebuck maintained that he had mentioned this minute—but only in part.

#### Defends Accused Men.

In his running battle with the Government contentions Colonel Price moved to clear those men mentioned in Mr. Roebuck's speech. A reference to "near-criminality" was deprecated.

"A chap like C. A. Magrath, a near-criminal?" said Colonel Price. "God forbid. Sir Adam Beck had a worthy successor in C. A. Magrath."

"Cooke? Nobody can say he was near criminality."

"Gaby can go out, a dismissed official, but be elected head of the Electrical Association of Canada."

To Mr. Roebuck's statistical charges, Colonel Price threw back the argument of possibilities if power demand increased. He described himself as an optimist. Steam power was labelled "that hoary old chestnut."

The former Attorney-General was only half-serious when he struck whimsical veins of his speech. Arthur Slaght, K.C., was a target, while the Government benches grinned; Hon. Harry Nixon and Prime Minister Mitchell F. Hepburn crossed an occasional sword with Colonel Price, but the combatants went at these tilts in high humor.

#### In 1923.

The former Attorney-General went back to 1923 to trace Hydro history leading to Sir Adam's Eastern negotiations.

In those years Sir Adam had declared that there was a power crisis. Colonel Price quoted him as saying that the maximum capacity of Queenstown would be exhausted by

1926—that steps must be taken to prevent a serious stoppage of industries.

The Colonel referred to a Hydro report. It had named as a prime essential the ownership of transmission lines and franchises. The ownership of the production agency was a matter for Commission discretion.

In 1923, he declared, power from the St. Lawrence was barred by international complication; from the Ottawa by Georgian Bay agreements. If there had been small parcels of power available, it was argued, Sir Adam Beck would have developed them.

"On Dec. 10, 1924," the former Attorney-General read, "a letter had been authorized by the Commission (Sir Adam was then Chairman) to C. G. Gale, stating that—provided the Commission could obtain a sufficient supply of power in the Ottawa district to warrant the construction of a high-power tension transmission line to Toronto—it would be prepared to offer \$15 per horsepower per year as set out in standard contract."

"Sir Adam Beck started negotiations for the purchase of power from the Province of Quebec," the former Attorney-General averred. These negotiations didn't start in 1926—they started months and months before, when Sir Adam was alive."

#### Magrath's Efforts.

"Gale wanted \$18 a horsepower," Colonel Price continued, "and Sir Adam wouldn't have it. Magrath became Chairman of the Commission and took the matter up where Sir Adam left off."

Magrath, it was stated, did not think he could take the \$18 price and was considering abandonment of his anti-steam power policy. If Gale had accepted Sir Adam's \$15 offer, Colonel Price held, there would have been a deal. Graustein had considered that steam plants might be built and had made it \$15.

"Not Cooke—not Maguire—but Sir Adam talked \$15 horsepower," the former Attorney-General declared. "Magrath got it."

Colonel Price exhibited anger at what he labelled the suppression of this first Commission letter.

"Either men suppressed the letter or didn't bring it to your attention," he told Mr. Roebuck. "If you had it before you, you should have brought it to this House."

"There is no use giving half-facts. I don't care who is responsible. The letter of Sir Adam Beck was on the files."

Another alleged suppression was mentioned by Colonel Price.

"You can't marathon me now," Colonel Price shot at Mr. Roebuck. He repeated this charge in the following words: "I charge that the Attorney-General and the Hydro Commission deliberately suppressed this

very important minute in the speech which he delivered in this House last week."

The Attorney-General jumped up again, but his words were drowned out.

#### Is Allowed Explanation.

Speaker N. O. Hipel took a hand. "There has been a charge made against the honorable the Attorney-General," he declared, "and I think it only fair that he be allowed an explanation."

"An explanation, yes, but not a speech," put in Colonel Price. "I've listened to his speeches long enough."

"Have I not the right to deny that I deliberately suppressed something?" the Attorney-General asked; and then made an attempt to continue, but was drowned out again. Both he and Colonel Price were talking at the same time, and the Speaker called for order.

When the House quieted down, Colonel Price said: "If the honorable the Attorney-General says he didn't suppress it, I accept what he says."

"I referred to the minute in my address to this House," Mr. Roebuck declared.

Cries of "No, no," followed.

"I referred to the last paragraph," Mr. Roebuck said.

"Oh, just the last paragraph, eh?" came back the former Attorney-General.

There was loud desk-thumping from the Opposition, and when quiet was restored Colonel Price declared he would accept that the Attorney-General didn't "suppress the minute deliberately."

"This whole minute," he maintained, "should have been revealed. If any action were taken to break those contracts, the minute would be the first thing produced."

#### Why No Reference?

Prior to his charge against Mr. Roebuck, Colonel Price asked why no reference was made by the Attorney-General to the recommendations of the Hydro engineers.

"Why?" asked the Attorney-General. "Because they didn't recommend these purchases. The minutes do not support the contention of the honorable member from Parkdale."

"I'm glad to be able to tell this House that the records of the Commission show that the engineers did favor the purchases," Colonel Price said amid vigorous desk-thumping.

In brief order Colonel Price concluded opening amenities. The charge was laid down that the Government had permitted a three-day Hydro debate "without effective reply going out to the public." Such presentation had been not in the public interest.

"That was not in the best interests of the Province," said the former Attorney-General. They had been better served by a speedy delivery and opportunity to place the other side before the public.

It looked to him, he suggested, as if some one who held inside information might manipulate the market.

"Has any one had inside information?" the former Attorney-General asked. "I don't know."

"Why suggest it?" spoke up Hon. Arthur Roebuck.

"You're the last man to say that," was the return. It would have been done much more quickly, the Colonel declared, if he or many another man had been dealing with such a question.

"The speech of the Attorney-General," he said, "seemed to be calculated to inflame the public against these contracts. It sounded to me like a partisan attack, not a reasoned proposition. I say it was calculated not to give all facts, but what facts would support a political argument."

The Government, he suggested, might have consulted the companies—calling for contract revision, getting contract revision. Then they would be in a position from which to review the matter rather than disturb the bond market.

"They put the cart before the horse," said Colonel Price. "They hung the credit of the Province in the balance."

There was the letter from Arthur Slaght, K.C., holding, the former Attorney-General read, "a subsisting, valid contract" between Hydro and Maclaren-Quebec.