

Ottawa to Pay Total Relief, Croll's Hope

Ontario Ready, He Says, on
Twenty-four Hours'
Notice

"PARADES" ARE SCORED

Minister Blames Councils
for Siding With
Jobless

THE hope that, in the near future, the whole question of unemployment relief would be regarded and taken over as a Federal responsibility, rather than a municipal burden, was expressed before the Ontario Legislature last night by Hon. David A. Croll, Minister of Public Welfare.

Premier Praised.

Mr. Croll paid a high tribute to the Premier for his "inherent liberalism" in his (the Premier's) selection of himself as Minister of Public Welfare. He was, the Minister declared, a member of a "minority group" in this country as far as race is concerned.

Should the Federal Government, Mr. Croll declared, decide to take over the entire responsibility of relief in all centres, Ontario will be found ready on twenty-four hours' notice.

Recent demonstrations concerning relief in several municipalities were roundly scored by the Minister.

"I am well aware that these parades and make-believe sieges were covertly organized by two-cent revolutionaries—revolutionaries who visualize themselves as Lenins, Trotskis or sometimes Kerenskis.

"These Lilliputian Lenins who weave their little plots—they are not good, hardy radicals, with a broad vision of a better world, but niggardly obstructionists with delusions of personal grandeur. Whether an enactment is good or bad, they will do what they can to damn it merely because it is Governmental. They have learned that by consistently damning any Government they can get quite a name for themselves among the vocal firebrands—not that they actually accomplish anything, but they damn just the same."

Continuing, Mr. Croll declared: "But here is a strange thing about these outbreaks. They have been occurring in the municipalities where the relief allowances are the most generous in the Province and in the municipalities where the Province is paying the greatest percentage of the cost—places where municipal government has substantially collapsed. I refer to the Toronto suburban municipalities, Niagara Falls, the Border Cities—localities where we are directly responsible for the administration of relief and other functions of municipal government. For these outbreaks I hold the present Municipal Councils directly responsible."

The Minister asked the Legislature to realize that, except for those who

were truly unemployable and would be paupers under any circumstances, it was no happy fate to be on relief. "For men and women in the flush of youth and strength what a hard, a heart-breaking lot. It's a hopeless sort of existence."

Although in Ontario there had been a very marked revival in industry and business, Mr. Croll said that the hopes that the relief rolls would be substantially reduced, had not materialized. "Our experience forces upon us the conclusion that we have on our hands, perhaps permanently, a very large number of men who normally would be considered employable, but who are, in fact, now not employable."

The Minister turned to the relief situation in New Toronto, one of the municipalities represented in the "Hunger March" of the afternoon. He charged that the Council of that centre "took sides" with the unemployed, "and had the audacity of asking me to come to New Toronto for the purpose of meeting the imported mobsters and agitators who had intimidated the Council.

"New Toronto," continued Mr. Croll, "was hopelessly in default. For two years it had been raiding the Public Utilities and Sinking Funds, until the cupboard was bare. In spite of that, on Nov. 1, 1934, just as municipal elections were drawing near, members of Council increased the scale of relief another 14 per cent., raising the schedule to 39 per cent. above the Campbell report. This was nothing less than an outrageous bribe of the municipal electors, with the Province called on to pay the major portion of it.

Assistance Asked.

"A month later the Council came to us for assistance, and we held a consultation of the Council and the unemployed. I told them they had to bring their food schedule in line with the rest of the Yorks. The Council agreed to do this if we would take over the administration of relief, because they could no longer pay for any part. They returned to New Toronto and made the required reductions. We then proceeded to administer relief in accordance with the maximum for the Province. But, once we had taken over the administration, the Council immediately passed a resolution asking that we increase the allowance to its previous scale. Mind you, I attach no blame to the unemployed."

The former Government, Mr. Croll charged, had felt that an unemployed person could not be properly trusted to do anything for himself. Various doles of specified kinds had been handed out and the Minister charged that the effect had been to pauperize the people.

"Any real control must be national. Society is sick. It may be a major operation is indicated, but no municipality nor the Province can perform any such operation. Provincially we can find no cure, only palliatives."

Housing Situation.

The housing situation, the Minister said, was becoming acute. Because of the almost complete stoppage of low-priced house building during several years, a real lack of accommodation was developing. The department had provided for payment of rentals to landlords, and in some cities, to safeguard interests of both landlords and relief tenant, had established a minimum rental allowance. Buying and price of fuel had been standardized, "with the result that within the year we shall have been able to save the Province and the municipalities close to \$100,000 while giving better heating service."

In connection with clothing, standards for purchases had been set up and Ontario manufacturers had submitted tenders from which purchases would shortly be made. "Close attention has been given to quality and price, and every precaution is being

taken to ensure that there reaches us no product of sweated labor or foreign manufacture."

Fostered Sweat Shops.

That the former Administration fostered "sweat shop" practices was charged by Mr. Croll, who referred to the charter given the Veterans' Salvage Corps in 1933 enabling them to tramp from door to door picking up discarded articles for resale to municipalities among relief recipients. He charged that conditions under which these veterans worked were "slavery conditions."

"The Government," said Mr. Croll, "not only permitted municipalities to purchase these articles procured under conditions almost as bad as slavery, but actually gave the Veterans' Salvage Corps a grant of \$1,000 a month for seven months prior to the election.

"This money from the taxpayers of the Province was not passed on to the poor veterans who were tramping the streets in order to earn their daily bread by honorable methods, but was split up among the directors of the corps who sat in their offices and figured how best they could grind a little more work out of a returned soldier for the miserable pay they were receiving."