

April 5

3 Unemployed And Ministers To Make Tour

His Answer to "Hunger Marchers" Alleging "Malnutrition"

TO FOREGO HOLIDAYS

2,000 Invade Queen's Park—Ten Are Heard

**PREMIER MITCHELL F.
HEPBURN, Attorney-
General Arthur W.**

Roebuck and Hon. David A. Croll, Minister of Public Welfare, will undertake a personal inspection tour of the homes of relief recipients in the area surrounding Toronto to ascertain if present food vouchers are adequate and if malnutrition exists.

Charge at Conference.

That malnutrition existed, was a charge voiced in the Premier's office yesterday afternoon by representatives of some 2,000 "Hunger Marchers" who invaded Queen's Park.

If necessary, the Premier informed the unemployed delegation, he would adjourn the Legislature at Easter, to work in the inspection tour, but he expected that the House would be prorogued in ten or twelve days' time.

"I'm ready to forego any Easter holidays," the Premier declared, "and make a personal inspection tour, if this delegation will select a committee of three to accompany us." The Attorney-General and Mr. Croll immediately agreed to undertake the inspection work.

While about 2,000 marchers waited at the north end of Queen's Park, ten representatives were received in the Premier's office. The conference lasted over two hours. No words were minced, and members of the deputation were permitted by the Prime Minister to give full rein to their feelings.

Want Higher Allowance.

The main demand of the delegation was a 50 per cent. increase in food-voucher allowance over the limit set by the Campbell report. It was said in no uncertain terms by the Premier and the Minister of Welfare that relief recipients in the areas around Toronto are now receiving the largest food voucher in the Province.

One definite promise was voiced by Premier Hepburn and that was that certain household necessities would be provided on a separate voucher. At present these necessities—such as soap, cleaning materials, pots and pans, have to be purchased out of the food vouchers. This request was advanced by Mrs. J. W. Shenton.

"As to the other request for increased food vouchers," the Premier declared, after a private conference of a few moments with Mr. Croll and Mr. Roebuck, "we cannot give a decision at the present time." He then suggested the personal inspection trip and agreed to adjourn the House if necessary.

Municipalities Evade?

Municipalities in the area around Toronto were charged by the Minister of Welfare with evading their responsi-

bility in regard to relief matters, and particularly in connection with threatened evictions.

Premier Hepburn maintained that some solution to the eviction question must be found, and asked the Minister to summon a conference between the Government and the Reeves of the townships and municipalities in an effort to reach a solution.

In strong terms Premier Hepburn informed the deputation that he resented any suggestion that the Ontario Government had in any way fallen down or disregarded the unemployed.

"We have taken up the slack," he declared, "when municipalities cut off all aid and the Federal Government greatly reduced their grants.

"Don't come here telling us we have ignored the unemployed," he said. "But there is a limit to the pocket of the Government. You people are on the highest level in the Province in regard to relief vouchers, and our first duty is to bring the other sections up to your level."

Wants Charges Withdrawn.

Rev. A. E. Smith, official of the Canadian Labor Defense League, asked the Attorney-General if some twenty-five men who are facing charges rising out of relief demonstrations could have their charges withdrawn.

"They aren't criminals in any sense of the word—they are really political offenders who are fighting for a cause," he said.

The Attorney-General took a definite stand, and declared he could not instruct a Magistrate or interfere with the regular course of justice.

"We would upset the whole applecart if we did that, and you people know it," declared the Attorney-General.

"Wait and see what the courts do," he said, "and if you think any hardship has been imposed come back and I will give the matter every consideration." Eleven of these cases come before the County Court today, and several of the deputation who visited the Premier are charged with offenses.

Mr. Smith strongly objected to the manner in which delegation members were questioned before being admitted to the Parliament Buildings to interview the Premier.

"That's the kind of treatment which should be meted out to persons who, as you did, demanded a hearing on the floor of the Legislature," the Premier declared heatedly.

The delegation of ten was led by

Ernest Lawrie, Communist candidate in the last Provincial election. He termed their demands as "miserable" in their size, and engaged with the Premier and Mr. Croll in several heated exchanges. He mentioned the assistance to the Dionne quintuplets, but the Premier objected.

"You can't draw a parallel," he declared. "Keep the Dionne babies out of this."

Charges of malnutrition were voiced, and the Premier declared that if the deputation would produce the information of any children going hungry the cases would be investigated and the situation remedied.

"Give us the names of fifty heads of families where members of the families are underfed and we'll investigate every one," the Premier declared.

"Your inspectors will come back and say that everything is all right," declared Mr. Smith, "because they are Government inspectors." The Pre-

mier shot Mr. Smith a rather unpleasant glance.

"There are children in the Lakeview area," maintained Mrs. Shenton, "whose ribs are showing through like washboards."

The Premier suggested that inmates of reformatories were being fed well at a very low figure.

"Are you going to give our children prison diet?" asked Mrs. Shenton.

"You're trying to draw a very long bow," declared the Premier.

Joe Derry rapped the Ontario Government's work camps, terming them "slave camps." The Premier resented the suggestion, stating the men were being paid 25 cents an hour.

"Did you ever try to find work on a farm?" asked the Premier.

"I wouldn't work on a farm for a couple of meals a day and a shirt and a pair of trousers," replied Derry.

"No, you wouldn't work if you had the chance. I know your type," retorted the Premier.

For well over two hours the Premier and his two colleagues and the

deputation members argued back and forth on the vexed question.

Mrs. Shenton charged Mr. Croll with being antagonistic toward the unemployed, but, at the same time, she declared that the Premier appeared to take the question of relief very much to heart and appeared to be striving for a solution to the problem.

"I'm not unsympathetic," declared the Minister of Welfare, "but I know just what the racket is with these people."

"We won't stand to be called racketeers," put in Mrs. Shenton heatedly.