

FOREST ARSON IS HINTED IN LEGISLATURE

More Fires Under Tories,
C. W. Cox, Port Arthur,
Suggests

"I MAKE NO CHARGE"

Firefighters in the Northern forests could find it profitable under William Finlayson's Lands and Forests administration to earn big firefighting money by setting fires, C. W. Cox, Liberal member for Port Arthur, suggested in yesterday's Legislature.

Conservative Protests.

The charge drew instant Conservative protests that Mr. Cox was charging arson and should name the alleged criminals.

The Port Arthur member refused to make his charge in that form and was sustained by the Government.

The Legislature crisis started when Mr. Cox said he wished to tell the members something about the fire racket "because that has proved to be one of the best mediums of patronage for the Conservatives and their friends. I trust I will be allowed to reiterate that the expense of the Forestry Branch constituted a most reckless, wasteful and useless expenditure of Provincial funds."

"After the Liberal Government took over there was a lack of fires in the North country," said the Port Arthur member. The Forestry Branch members had been dismissed.

"It's not worth while having one gang stop it while another starts it."

"Did the Department of Lands and Forests have a gang of men setting fires?" flared former Premier Henry.

At \$2 a Day.

"I wouldn't put it just that way. I would just like to know what inducement there was to work on the dusty highways for \$1 a day when you could put out fires at \$2 a day."

Mr. Cox explained that the difficulties in prosecuting arson cases in the North woods were almost insurmountable, but there had been convictions at Port Arthur.

"I know farmhouses where farmers would go out in the bush and start a fire and all the farmers would get out their teams and put out the fire."

"Do you mean that farmers are so crooked that they would start a fire and get out their teams to put it out?" asked William Duckworth.

"I wouldn't say they are now, but I say they were."

"The same farmers!" Mr. Henry roared.

The Port Arthur member charged that incapable men had headed and made up the personnel of the firefighting forces—"friends of the party were sent out in the woods and men who couldn't tell jack pine from spruce."

"I'll tell you another way you could make money—"

Baird's Protest.

"I say this is arson and shouldn't be mentioned in the House," W. A. Baird protested.

A few minutes later Mr. Cox made the charge that if men were being paid \$135 for aeroplane hire to put out fires, they were going to make fires to put out.

Former Premier Henry asked if he was saying that men in employ of the Government and operating aeroplanes were deliberately setting fires.

"That's a criminal charge," shouted the former Premier. "I ask him to name the men and the company."

"I made no charge against any person," Mr. Cox said after a privilege argument had been knifed by the Government. "But I suggest with fire charges of \$200,000 under the old Administration and \$72,000 in the same district under the new Administration—doesn't that indicate something is wrong?"

Long-Pending Attack.

The charges were only a part of the Port Arthur member's speech, in which he made his long-pending attack on the timber and pulpwood leases at the Head of the Lakes and called for their rescindment.

The Port Arthur member scored lease after lease by name as he flayed the administration of the Crown timber lands from 1916 to 1934.

Limits, he said, had gone overripe when they were withdrawn from public use and consigned to timber companies. The companies, he charged, had not built the mills and employed the men as they were obliged to do as part rent for the Ontario properties.

In scoring the leases and the making of the leases, the member bore down heavily on the Conservative Party. In case after case he enumerated the profits made under Conservative regimes by leaseholders—"favored friends of the Conservative Party."

"These resources," he said when he summed up, "were disposed of under most questionable circumstances and

no attempt has been made by the original grantees or their successors to carry out their obligations under the agreements of sale. In the circumstances I maintain that there is only one honorable course for this Government to follow, and that is to rescind the agreements and return the resources to those to whom they rightfully belong, the people of this Province."

Mr. Cox insisted that his recommendation did not suggest action which would disrupt the active paper and pulp industries.

The Port Arthur member's hottest charge was laid against William Finlayson, Lands and Forests Minister in the Henry regime. During the lifetime of that regime, he charged, a timber company holding a limit had reported that the limit was burned and that they required more timber.

"It had not been depleted, and had not been burned, no matter what they may say," said the member.

Mr. Finlayson, he said, had given them 205 more square miles without a call for tenders. He had reduced dues on the whole area to the rates for burned timber. The company had filled its contracts without cutting a stick off the new limit.

"If the original dues had been paid," charged Mr. Cox, "the Province would have received \$341,599, but it received only \$56,369, making a saving to this company of \$285,229 at the expense of the Province."

Claims \$25,000 Donation.

"You might quite properly ask why any one should receive these extraordinary concessions. I think that you will comprehend the reason when I tell you that, although the recipient was not even a Canadian citizen, he was a staunch supporter of the Conservative cause, having donated as much as \$25,000 at a time to influential members of the party."

"You are saying the timber was not burned?" asked former Premier Henry. "I presume on your responsibility as a member?"

"I do," answered Mr. Cox.

"Political Manipulations."

Records of the Forestry Department, he said, were not the history of a trust faithfully performed, "but rather they revealed a story of political manipulations for the benefit of a favored few, carried out with a daring and utter disregard for the rights of the common people."

Limits disposed of since 1917 with little or no return, he said, represented nearly 16,000 square miles, or half the size of the Irish Free State. It

would take 7,000 men 70 years to cut the pulpwood on the area alone.

This, he said, would have represented gross business of \$2,000,000,000. If the Government received dues amounting to \$2 a cord on the standing timber alone it would represent the sum of \$100,000,000 to the Treasury of Ontario, Mr. Cox said.

"A large part of the timber on these areas is overripe," he went on, "and should have been cut long ago. The appalling feature of the situation is that, during the past twenty years, limits were sold, and until the present day not one of the conditions of sale has been carried out, and previous to last spring not one woodman's axe had as yet felled a single tree in the areas referred to."

HENRY MEMORY MADE TO RHYME WITH 'PLENTY'

Dr. Roberts Says Tory
Leader Was 'Philan-
thropist' to Bankers

THERE once was a man named
O'Henry,
Who was blessed with a very
poor memory.
Of bonds he knew all,
John Aird he couldn't recall,
But he came back from the Canyon
with plenty."

Thus did Hon. George S. Henry, former Premier, hear himself described in the Legislature yesterday by Dr. A. D. Roberts, Liberal member for Sault Ste. Marie, during resumption of the debate on the Speech from the Throne.

That wasn't the only sally against the former Premier in Dr. Roberts' address. He accused Mr. Henry of being "the biggest philanthropist of all" when he "called in four bankers to advise him how to float a loan and gave them \$40,000 for their advice," and of announcing a mythical surplus of \$200,000 two years ago when actually his Government of the day was facing a \$30,000,000 deficit.

A guarded allusion to the separate school issue was made by Dr. Roberts when he said that the British Empire had been founded and had grown on the foundation of just and fair treatment of conquered minorities. "Shall we in this Province," he said, "not rise to the occasion now and treat minorities with justice and equity?"

Spies Hinted.

Replying to criticism of the Department of Health voiced the previous day by Russell Nesbitt (Conservative, Toronto-Bracondale), Dr. Roberts said, presumably in reference to some of the departmental data quoted by Mr. Nesbitt: "There are in the Government service today persons not much better than third-rate spies. Some of them are handing out information for the sole purpose of trying to embarrass the Government."

Contrary to the claim of Mr. Nesbitt, he told the House, from June 30, 1934, to Jan. 31, 1936, the total staff in the Health Department had dropped from 2,411 to 2,303, while, at the same time, the hospital population had increased by 10.3 per cent.

He explained several retirements, cited by Mr. Nesbitt, as due to physical infirmity or advanced years, claimed that they had been accompanied by marked economies, and presented considerable other data to support his claim that Hon. Dr. J. A. Faulkner was efficiently administering the Department of Health.