

March 7

Dictator of Tax, Price Tells Croll

"Pork-Barrel" Legislation Seen in Levy Proceeds Distribution

INCOME-TAX DICTATOR" was the title bestowed upon Hon. David Croll, Minister of Welfare and Municipal Affairs, in the Legislature yesterday by Hon. W. H. Price, former Attorney-General.

Price Sees "Pork Barrel."

Charging that arbitrary powers were given the Minister for the distribution to Ontario municipalities of their share of the proceeds of the Province's new income tax, Colonel Price accused the Government of "pork-barrel legislation."

The issue arose when Bill 54, to permit the Provincial Government to reimburse municipalities for the funds lost through the abolition of local income taxes, was introduced for second reading, only to elicit a storm of Conservative protest that was still raging when Premier Hepburn moved adjournment until Monday.

"The amazing power thus given the Minister to apportion what should go to this municipality and what to that one," protested Colonel Price, "is a tremendous responsibility. Here we have a tax that should in part go direct to the municipalities, yet it trickles through the Minister's fingers by Order-in-Council."

"Practical Dictator."

"Look at the power that Minister has," said the former Attorney-General. "He handles all the relief now. He is a practical dictator. He handles the income tax with one hand, and the Diones with the other. It's the greatest pork-barrel legislation I ever heard of!"

"See with what great power the Government is aggrandizing itself! This was the Government that promised nothing was to be done without every member of the House expressing his opinion. I must say I'm thankful the Minister of Welfare is not handling Northern expenditures as well.

"I think that in some way the municipalities should get their hands on this money, without having to go to a Minister to have it ladled out. The rural municipalities are entitled to a share the same as anybody else. It annoys them to see it all going to the big centres.

"Then consider large municipalities like Hamilton, that are unable to set their estimates or strike their tax rate because they don't know how much of this tax they are going to get. Why should a man in Toronto or Hamilton, who, perhaps makes his income from all parts of the Province, pay a tax and hand it entirely to the big municipalities?"

J. J. Glass (Liberal, Toronto-St. Andrew) said he was annoyed at the remarks of Colonel Price, "who has overnight become the champion of the rural municipalities." What would the countryside be like if it weren't for the cities? he wanted to know. He paid oratorical tribute to the cities as the corner-stones of civilization and the heart of humanitarian progress. And he referred to rural municipalities as "havens for slackers who should be paying income tax, but have escaped to the small centres."

Croll Is Silent.

"Those municipalities won't lose anything," he reasoned. "Their taxing rights are not impaired. Their property taxes are still coming in."

Hon. Leopold Macaulay (Conservative, York S.) asserted the Minister of Welfare shouldn't ask the House to give him "a blank cheque with which to do something about which he hasn't yet made up his mind." "There is no ascertained principle," he said, "on which the sharing of proceeds will be decided."

Then, as Mr. Croll good-naturedly declined to be drawn into debate, Mr. Macaulay cried:

"We're willing to thresh this matter out on the floor of the House, and yet you sit there like a sphinx, with

what my honorable friend from Parkdale calls a pork barrel. Personally," he added, as the House roared, "I don't think you're the proper person to be handling a pork barrel."

The Minister of Welfare permitted this pointed reference to his race to pass with a broad smile.

William Duckworth (Conservative, Toronto-Dovercourt) was just gaining momentum in a further criticism of the bill, expatiating on the misfortunes of the farmer and the rural municipalities and on their need of a share of the tax, when Premier Hepburn moved adjournment of the debate.

There would be a night session of the House on Monday, he announced.