

Patronage Charged In Naming Coroners

Roebuck Supports Bill to Give Power to Appoint Chief Coroners

CHARGES of political appointments to the office of Coroner were hurled back and forth in the Legislature yesterday as, in committee of the whole, the members debated the merits of Attorney-General Roebuck's bill to name Chief Coroners for each county, and finally reported the bill.

The personalities began shortly after W. A. Baird (Cons., Toronto-High Park) asked whether the bill would alter or affect the status of Dr. M. M. Crawford, Provincial Supervising Coroner, and was told by Mr. Roebuck that it emphatically would not.

Spoils System Charged.

"Does the Attorney-General propose to appoint himself a Chief Coroner?" asked Mr. Baird. Then Mr. Kidd, in evident indignation, charged: "In the last year you struck out five men as Coroners in my constituency alone—and they were all efficient Coroners, and some of them were war veterans. You have openly played politics with Coroners' appointments in about ninety constituencies in Ontario, including my own. And now you ask us to permit you to name Chief Coroners. I'm opposed to it."

"I'm sorry," Mr. Roebuck replied, "that my honorable friend has seen fit to introduce politics into this particular question for the first time since July of 1934. Nevertheless, I don't propose to withdraw the bill."

"I'm surprised at you," he told Mr. Kidd, "having the effrontery to talk in that way and in that tone. Do you pretend or suppose for one instant that one single Coroner was appointed prior to July of 1934 unless he was a Tory? And let me say that of all the Tory Coroners whom the old Government appointed, the vast majority are still in office."

"You're just copying the American spoils system, that's all," retorted Mr. Kidd.

"The Americans learned the spoils systems from you fellows," called out Hon. H. C. Nixon, Provincial Secretary.

"There were three Liberal Coroners in Toronto who were not displaced when we came into office," interjected Mr. Baird.

Passes Committee Stage.

Hon. Dr. J. A. Faulkner, Minister of Health, supported Mr. Roebuck with the assertion that the appointments were necessary. "There have been many complaints regarding the methods of holding some inquests," he said. "Many are held without justification, and in other cases are not held when they should be. I know of one Coroner who made a practice of holding inquests on his own patients."

But the party issue was not allowed to die.

"We appointed a Liberal Coroner in my constituency under the Tory Government," claimed J. F. Hill (Con., Hastings East). "He was one of the Liberals we could depend on." And T. P. Lancaster, Tory member for Peterboro', told how he had refused to allow the firing of a Liberal Coroner in his town.

Mr. Roebuck, in reply to a question, said there was a \$20 Coroner's fee for each inquest.

Colonel Fraser Hunter (Lib., Toronto-St. Patrick) wondered why Crown Attorneys or Magistrates couldn't officiate at inquests, but Mr. Roebuck explained how the routine duties of a Coroner called for medical rather than legal knowledge. The bill then passed committee stage.

COURT URGED FOR APPEALS FROM BOARDS

Right to Appeal Police Board Rulings Asked by Tory Member

THE appointment of a court or commission to hear appeals from boards and committees controlling the affairs of many vocations and professions was forecast in the Legislature yesterday by Attorney-General Roebuck.

Right of Appeal Urged.

The matter arose while the House in committee was passing an amendment to a 1928 bill which conferred on a board of funeral directors the power of admitting candidates into the profession by examining their qualifications, and the further power of issuing and renewing licenses to all practicing funeral directors.

Wilfrid Heighington (Conservative, Toronto-St. David) bitterly assailed the measure, claiming that it would give a board or Commission the power of "making or breaking a man in the profession," without any hope of appeal or redress from its decisions. It "opened the door to the requests of a dozen other vocations for similar privileges," he said.

Hon. H. C. Nixon, Provincial Secretary, concurred in this view, suggesting that in future the House "might well turn thumbs down on similar measures." This group, however, he said, had got its powers granted in 1928, so there was nothing much to be done about it now, and the legislation at hand did not add to the harm.

Leopold Macaulay (Conservative, York South) argued that a board such as that operating under the Funeral Directors Act had the power to destroy the life work of an individual without a public hearing. He urged that the Attorney-General study the problem of securing the right of appeal from such bodies' rulings.

Compensation Board.

"I agree," said Mr. Roebuck, "that some formula should be devised for the granting of an appeal from the ruling of such arbitrary boards as these, and some tribunal set up to which any and all persons penalized by such rulings could seek a public hearing." He intimated that he would give serious consideration to the proposal, but in reply to a question by Goldwin Elgie (Cons., Toronto-Woodbine) he said no early action could be taken.

"The time has come," protested Mr. Elgie, "when appeals should be permitted against decisions of the Toronto Police Commission and the Workmen's Compensation Board." Mr. Macaulay agreed, charging that the Police Commission was dealing with and disposing of more property rights per year than the Supreme Court, without any right of appeal being granted the affected persons.

Regarding the Compensation Board, Mr. Roebuck replied that the mass of work and cases handled by that tribunal, and the specialized knowledge involved, made it impossible to consider any board of appeal. Any appellant from the Compensation Board's decision could obtain an open hearing, he said.