

# "Political Heeler" Appointed to Hydro By Tories, Is Claim

## All Conservative Appointments to Commission Were Political, Roebuck Charges in Legislature

**C**ONSERVATIVE appointments to the Ontario Hydro Commission were purely political, and one went to "a mere political heeler-about-town, of whom the less said the better," Attorney-General Arthur Roebuck charged in the Legislature yesterday.

### Commissions Compared.

This charge featured an afternoon devoted mainly to a debate on what details of Hydro administration were of public interest and what should not be revealed. The result was the repeated refusal of the Government to divulge data and records demanded by the Opposition.

Mr. Roebuck's outburst followed criticism of the present Hydro Commission by several Tory members. The present Commission, he said, could not be compared to any previous Commission, for in the past the members had been named "for political patronage solely." One recent Commission, he went on, had been composed of the Conservative Leader in the Senate and a "mere political heeler-about-town."

"They were paid at \$10,000 per year, while we (himself and Commissioner T. B. McQuesten) get nothing," he said.

The Hydro debate began when Mr. Roebuck replied unfavorably to a Conservative notice of motion calling upon the Government to table a full and detailed report of all messages, memoranda, discussions or negotiations regarding purchase of power for the Hydro from companies other than Gatineau, Beauharnois, Maclaren-Quebec and Ottawa Valley. The tabling of such information was not in the public interest, he said.

### Scores Government.

George H. Chailles opened the Tory attack by terming the Government attitude "very unjust and very unfair." The Opposition was being handicapped, he said. He demanded to know if the Government had recently purchased outside power for Campbellford.

Mr. Roebuck wasn't sure, but said that if such a purchase had been made, it concerned a very small amount.

Mr. Chailles deplored the absence from the Hydro Commission of any "representative of the municipalities." The Attorney-General replied that he and Mr. McQuesten filled that role.

He added that the Government was ready to announce details of completed deals, but not of unconsummated negotiations.

The people of Ontario were becoming alarmed at the need for power, and hearing rumors at the same time that Ontario was seeking power from New York State.

Premier Hepburn asserted that this Government was more free and open in the production of information than its predecessor. And he wanted to know when any Hydro Commission had had a special member representative solely of the municipalities.

Arthur Ellis (Cons., Ottawa South) said it was quite obvious that Hydro was to be kept under complete political domination. He asked if Chief Commissioner T. Stewart Lyon had been consulted in connection with the question at hand.

### "How Did You Vote?"

Hon. H. C. Nixon, Provincial Secretary, said the Maguire-Meighen-

Cooke Commission was more politically controlled than any other one in Hydro history. When W. A. Baird, Toronto Tory, joined the discussion, Mr. Nixon asked him pointedly how he had voted when the then Liberal Opposition had sought Hydro data from the previous Government.

"Never mind how I voted," said Mr. Baird. "I'm talking now as I see things from the Opposition." The resolution was then lost.

When a second resolution, seeking the full record of negotiations with the Quebec companies, was debated, it met the same fate, and it was then that Mr. Roebuck hurled his charge at the former Maguire-Meighen-Cooke Commission.

If the municipalities were entitled to know every detail of Hydro affairs, why not admit the press to the Commission meetings, he wanted to know. Then everything the Commission did could be spread all over the Province, as the Opposition seemed to want.

"Is it a fact," asked Leopold Macaulay, "that the Government negotiated for blocks of power in New York?"

"The Government," replied Mr. Roebuck, "has nothing to announce in that connection." Mr. Henry interposed that the people of Ontario would never tolerate the importation of foreign power when Canadian power was available.

J. Lewis Duncan, the recently repudiated Liberal legal counsel to the Government on Hydro contract matters, had overreached himself. Mr. Macaulay commented.

### Meighen Defended.

Former Premier George Henry stoutly defended former Commissioner Meighen as highly qualified for that office. He was not appointed to the Senate until he had held the office for a considerable time. As for former Commissioner Maguire, he was a Liberal before he gave up politics.

"You consented to Mr. Meighen's appointment to the Senate while he still carried on in the Commission. You knew, of course, that that would require his absence from the city for about five months a year?" asked Mr. Hepburn.

"I knew nothing about that at all," returned Mr. Henry.

"You should have," shot back the Premier. "Because I understand that you sought a senatorial appointment yourself."

A third resolution asking full data and surveys relating to the Quebec contracts since July, 1934, was killed after Mr. Roebuck pointed out that such information would be invaluable to Hydro's competitors.

The discussion ended with a demand from Mr. Baird for the full text of Arthur Slight's "plea for Gatineau" at the meeting when the contracts were let. It must have been an eloquent address, he thought.