

# Relief Rolls Cut By 123,079 Folk, Is Claim of Croll

## Optimistic Address by Welfare Minister Gives Credit to Hepburn for Work Increase

**O**NTARIO relief rolls reduced by 123,079 persons in fourteen months; 28,432 more people at work in Ontario last month than in February of 1935; Northern bush-working population increased by 13,000; 60,000 workers placed under forty fair-wage agreements.

### Many Jobs Found.

These and other equally striking and significant achievements of Departments of Welfare and Labor were announced to the Ontario Legislature last night by Hon. David Croll, in his annual review of conditions as Minister of those departments.

Seasonal jobs have been found for 8,000 men on farms, as part of a one-year campaign, the Minister also announced.

Continuity of employment this year has been assured more than 3,000 lumber workers in the Thunder Bay district; the apprenticeship system has been revitalized, with one new trade alone providing openings for 5,000 young men within the next few years; renewed activity in many branches of Ontario industry has been achieved through sound financing and administration.

In an address permeated with optimism, but tempered with modesty, Hon. Mr. Croll outlined to the House the far-reaching and untiring efforts made to improve labor and industrial conditions in the Province, and the results that had followed those efforts.

To the Government and its Leader, Prime Minister Mitchell Hepburn, Mr. Croll gave much of the credit, when he said:

"In Ontario re-employment is progressing more actively than elsewhere in Canada. Why? I am inclined to think that it is due in large measure to the firm confidence which the public in general has placed in this Government and particularly in my honorable Leader."

### Healthy Situation.

Mr. Croll spoke of "a new and healthy situation reflected throughout the North," and said the industrial areas of the Province were "rejoicing in a gradual increase of employment throughout the major portion of Ontario."

From the outset of his address Mr. Croll spoke with a directness and bluntness that kept the House in an absorbed silence, broken only by the frequent outbursts of sustained applause.

"Every move made by the Government," he said, "has been in the direction of a restoration of internal confidence in governmental sincerity of purpose and courage of accomplishment."

"We have defied big business, but only to advance the lot of the average citizen; we have introduced taxation, but we have imposed it where it belongs; we have effected economies, but we have applied them where most needed."

"My honorable friend and leader is the common man's Premier. He has won the common man's trust. And I think this is reflected today in the increasing employment, and in the declining relief which I have just mentioned. As the Province fully expected, we are restoring the unemployed to gainful occupation."

"Unemployment is not an act of God. It is a problem of industry. That has been the basis of our policy. It coincides with our Leader's expressed determination to restore the unemployed to gainful occupations. I have just demonstrated that we are succeeding. It is a long task, and one which the Provincial Government cannot hope fully to accomplish by itself. But what we can do is keep whittling away at the relief lists and so reduce the burden on the taxpayers."

"We have now reached the point in our approach where we can say that our problem is gradually shifting from relief to re-employment. The peak of relief is past. We have learned to handle effectively and economically the distribution of the necessities of life to the unemployed. And we have reduced the cost to a point where the Province can cope with it from current revenue."

"Further, I think that our task now," continued Mr. Croll, "—and it is a heavy task—is to restore the unemployed to their proper places in industry. But we must not lose sight of the fact that fewer than 300,000—the lowest number on our rolls in any single month since January, 1932—are still tossing in the whirlpool of distorted economics."

Mr. Croll related how, when he took over the Department of Welfare, he found that relief was being administered in "crazy-quilt fashion." Uniformity of standards and methods in the administration of relief was unknown. It seemed, he said, a case of "the loudest howl getting the best results." The old Government, he said, spurred by these howls, had embarked on a "needless, wildly extravagant program of road-building."

Then the Minister detailed the reforms and changes introduced into the relief and welfare field under the Hepburn Administration.

In 197 municipalities, increases in relief allowances were granted. In

many centres local relief labor schemes were sponsored by the Government. The cash relief system was introduced. And on these points the Government now stood firm.

Next, he said, the Government had brought relief "into the open, bidding farewell to a policy of secrecy and shame." Every step in the Government's relief policy was made public knowledge, and in this connection the Minister paid tribute to the press of Ontario. Prosecutions were launched against "cheaters," but Mr. Croll uttered the following caution:

"The public must see that the only hope, for a Provincial Government at any rate, is to nibble at the relief rolls, taking off a few here and a few there, gradually reducing the bulk, but not aspiring to eliminate all at one gulp. The public," he said, "must not expect too much too quickly. But they have a right to expect intelligence."

### British Way.

The Government, he said, had two alternative methods of approach to the problem—the British way, and the United States way. The British sought to adapt their laws and economic methods to a new situation. The Americans tried "prosperity by purchase," spending untold millions in an effort to "buy their way out of the depression." And the Hepburn Government whole-heartedly and emphatically chose the British way.

First, relief allowances were standardized. The purging of relief lists of "cheaters" was begun, and the municipal channels of relief administration retained. Maximum grants to any municipality were fixed. And here, Mr. Croll said, the main difficulty was with the "pampered, inefficient and cry-baby supervised municipalities."

He spoke of "people who have made relief a career, who have refused jobs, concealed their earnings." These, he said, were being slashed from the relief rolls. And with them went full-time workers unable to earn enough to keep their families. This, said Mr. Croll, was the Government's way of combating the exploiting employer who paid small wages and told his staff to draw partial relief.

### They Want Work.

A word for the majority of relief recipients was spoken by the Minister when he said: "The fact remains that the average man in receipt of relief detests his dependence upon public assistance. He wants to be out at work, to maintain his family by his own endeavors. You do not live on relief. You merely exist." He warned the public against maligning the average relief recipient.

Mr. Croll pointed out that this year the Government has increased its contribution to municipalities for re-

lief purposes from 66 2-3 per cent. to 75 per cent.—an increase which in the case of Toronto alone would this year cost the Province \$220,000.

Last year, he showed, the Governmental cost of relief was \$28,000,000, with the Province paying about \$21,000,000. This year, with a reduction of 25 per cent. in relief rolls, the total cost would probably be \$21,000,000, of which the increased Dominion grant would pay \$12,600,000. Toward its share of this \$21,000,000 total, the Provincial Government was budgeting \$12,600,000—leaving a safety margin of more than \$4,000,000 for emergencies.

At this point Mr. Croll referred scathingly to the "Pied Piper methods" of the Henry Administration, saying that "Piper George's whole approach to our economic problems was mythical."

The age-old system of apprenticeship, Mr. Croll said, offered one avenue of solution to at least a part of the unemployment problem. Yet apprentices were growing fewer and fewer in many trades where, in the course of time, thousands of replacements would be necessary due to old age. The Government was assisting in the setting up of apprenticeship structures in a number of trades, and before long would have included many new vocations under the Apprenticeship Act of 1928.

The Minister recommended increased use of the Employment Service. "If they would hire exclusively through that service," he said, "we would be given a far more effective check upon our recipients of relief. We are at the point of definite campaign to that end."

"Industry must also be encouraged to level out its production and avoid the peak periods," he said. "We look to industry for this co-operation, decent wages, a fair continuity of employment, and a candor about the men they are taking on and the wages they are paying. We have hesitated to legislate toward this end to any great extent. We preferred to think that industry will continue to give co-operation with the utmost willingness. Should it not, then we are quite pre-