

# Hydro Information Sought by Tories Denied by Liberals

## Revelation of Communications Not in Public Interest, Says Roebuck

**P**ERSISTENT Conservative attempts to delve into the history of the Hepburn Government's policy on Hydro contracts met with defeat in the Legislature yesterday.

Without a division, the Government was twice sustained in its refusal to divulge the desired data, following debates in which the Administration was charged with hanging the club of dismissal over civil servants' heads, and the Opposition was charged with pleading the cause of the opponents of public ownership.

Queen's Park Astronomer.

First the Opposition, through G. H. Challies, former Provincial Secretary, wanted produced all communication between the Government or its members or Hydro officials and the following engineering and legal firms: H. G. Acres, the Stone & Webster Engineering Corporation, J. C. M. German, James G. Harvey, McCarthy & McCarthy; McRuer, Mason, Cameron & Brewin; Long & Daly, Lewis Duncan, and R. S. Robertson, K.C.

To this question, Attorney-General Roebuck replied that the information was not in the public interest. Mr. Challies, he said, was like a backyard astronomer, who couldn't resist the temptation to focus on neighbors' windows. "If he will confine himself to looking at the stars, and not seek to peer in directions and realms that are private and intimate and that do not concern him, he will gain more knowledge for his pains, and will obstruct less the affairs of this House," chided Mr. Roebuck.

It was ridiculous, he added, to suggest that the Government reveal its correspondence to Mr. Robertson, who was its solicitor in the litigation with the Quebec power firms.

Mr. Challies wanted to know why the Hydro needed "so many lawyers to advise it."

"We have only about half as many as you had," retorted the Attorney-General and Hydro Commissioner. "There are five Hydro solicitors today. When we took over there were nine, including your patronage friend Lucas, who got \$10,000. We have reduced legal costs in Hydro more than a half."

Dismissals Said Just.

The Tory member then attacked Hydro policies in regard to employment, charging that men with fifteen years' service had been placed on the "temporary staff," working by the day and in constant fear of dismissal.

Just because an employee was listed as "not permanent on the rolls he was not necessarily working by the day," said Mr. Roebuck.

"What other categories have you got?" Mr. Challies wanted to know. There was no positive permanence about any Civil Service position, Mr. Roebuck explained. All were subject to dismissal if a just cause arose.

Hon. H. C. Nixon, Provincial Secretary, contributed the statement that more Hydro information had been honestly and fully revealed to the House and the Province during the Hepburn Administration than during the entire previous history of Hydro.

Mr. Henry said Mr. Roebuck had accused the Opposition of being the spokesmen of the enemies of Hydro, and he stoutly denied the charge. "I throw it back in his face," he shouted.

"I see no reason to agree with you," Mr. Roebuck replied. "Actions speak louder than words."

The words of the Attorney-General, said Mr. Henry, proved that he wanted every last Hydro employee under his thumb. And when Mr.

Nixon sought to interject a remark. Mr. Henry added that the Government was equally determined that no one but its own members should make a speech.

"Look what happened last week," he went on. "The honorable member for Parkdale (Colonel W. H. Price) made a trenchant speech, and the Prime Minister took a whole afternoon to stage a fiasco, seeking to answer him."

After T. A. Kidd, Tory member for Kingston, moved an amendment to the question and had it voted down, the House similarly voted down the original question.

The members then turned to the next question, wherein the Opposition sought all information regarding the purchase of the frequency-changer for the Chats Falls power plant which was purchased in Hamilton.

The motion for a reply to this question was also defeated without a division, after a brief and warm debate.

## COURT SUPPORT SEEN FOR LAWS

### Bennett Social Legislation Valid—Macaulay

When the Supreme Court of Canada brings down its verdict on the validity of social legislation passed by the former Bennett Government, "those laws will be found to be valid because they are in pursuance of a treaty," Leopold Macaulay, Conservative member for York South, declared in the Legislature yesterday.

The declaration came after Attorney-General Roebuck explained to the House his position before the court respecting the eight-hour day, unemployment insurance and other legislation on which the court heard arguments.

In the Labor Committee earlier yesterday, John Noble of Toronto charged that Ontario opposed the eight-hour day. Mr. Roebuck denied the statement then, and arose in the Legislature at the opening of today's session to make a second denial.

Except Ontario, all the Provinces arguing before the Supreme Court opposed the eight-hour-day legislation on various grounds, Mr. Roebuck said, but he upheld the right of the Dominion to legislate for the eight-hour day.

Reading from his brief before the court, Mr. Roebuck recalled that he had contended the Dominion had sufficient authority under the peace, order and good government clauses of the Constitution to effect this.

Accusing the Attorney-General of "splitting hairs," Mr. Macaulay said he could demolish his argument in two minutes. Mr. Macaulay charged Mr. Roebuck and his colleagues at the hearing with "harpooning" the social legislation.

For Mr. Roebuck, who had once run as an Independent Labor candidate in Northern Ontario, to stand up "splitting hairs" in that manner stood out "like a sore thumb," Mr. Macaulay continued.

Some labor men felt the Attorney-General let them down, the former Highways Minister went on, "and when we've debated this thing in full we'll show you did let them down."

## LICENSE FEE FOR EMPLOYERS IS PROPOSAL

A proposal for a licensing fee for employers in the building industry and a committee to regulate the industry was made to the Ontario Legislature Labor Committee yesterday by R. A. Phinnemore, Chairman of the Advisory Board of Toronto painting contractors.

The Labor Committee, at its first meeting, heard representatives of labor express their opinion on various problems affecting the worker. John W. Bruce, representing international labor, in the course of a general outline on the position of labor, declared revolution was imminent. "You've got to put people to work and give them a decent standard of living," he said. "If you don't, they will take it."

W. J. Fugler, Chairman of the Toronto Home Builders' Association, said building operations in Toronto were less than last year, and he attributed this largely to the Industrial Standards Act, passed at the last session of the Legislature. Because of this act, he said, the cost of a \$10,000 home was increased by 17 per cent.

Mr. Bruce urged the Government to set up a new Commission to investigate relief payments and have workers represented on it.

An unfair attack had been made on the Industrial Standards Act by one weekly paper, said Mr. Bruce, and it seemed to him as if this was an attack on officers of the Government.

"The spirit of the law is right, but we want its enforcement," Mr. Bruce declared.

The statement of John Noble, official of the Toronto Electrical Workers' Union, that farmers were "as great chisellers as anywhere in Canada," brought a heated denial from A. H. Acres (Conservative, Carleton), and the demand from Welfare Minister Croll for a withdrawal.

"I won't let this man or anybody else stand here and say the farmers of Ontario and Canada are chisellers," said Mr. Acres. "The farmer is the best friend of every Labor organization in Canada."

The Industrial Standards Act was characterized as a "spineless, week-kneed milksop act," by Walter Dawson, Vice-President of the Toronto Master Plumbers' Council. His organization had come under the act, but he protested against lack of enforcement.