

# Mr. King Will Void Hydro Legislation, Ellis's Prediction

## Conservative Holds Roebuck's 'Honest Blundering' Is Responsible for Power Crisis

### ATTACKS THREE BILLS

By his "honest blundering," Attorney-General Arthur Roebuck had caused the present Hydro crisis in the Ontario Legislature, Arthur Ellis (Cons., Ottawa South) charged yesterday in a brief, bitter denunciation of Mr. Roebuck and the legislation he had introduced to give Hydro Crown rights.

He had sufficient faith in Prime Minister Mackenzie King, the Conservative member declared, to believe that he would exercise the rights of the Federal Government to disallow this piece of legislation.

His hour-long speech was marked by several sharp clashes with members of the Government, particularly Mr. Roebuck and Acting Premier Harry Nixon. Once the Conservative member was ruled out of order for debating a previous ruling made by the Speaker.

#### Predicts More Suits.

Mr. Rosebuck's "maladministration and his muddling" of Hydro affairs had resulted in legal actions against the Hydro Commission claiming more than \$5,000,000, said Mr. Ellis. He predicted there would be still more suits against Hydro.

"That's your hope," said Mr. Roebuck.

"Mr. Attorney-General," retorted the Ottawa member, "do not think that every one has a dishonest mind. I have not. I hope no such thing. In spite of all the errors and blunders you have made, I still believe they were honest blunders."

Mr. Roebuck: "I didn't use the word 'honest'."

Mr. Ellis: "No, you couldn't, when speaking of a political opponent, but I can."

J. A. Habel (Lib., Cochrane), interrupted Mr. Ellis, and the Conservative swung on him. "You," said he, "vote as you are told, not as you think. You always vote as you are told."

#### Legislation Termed "Bad."

Then he launched a further attack on the legislation before the House. "I think it is bad legislation. You must have been driven pretty close to desperation to have brought this in," he said to the Attorney-General.

The clause in the Power Commission Act and the clause in the present legislation which gave Hydro the right to refuse any action against it without the consent of the Attorney-General was bad legislation, he declared. He did not care, he said, what Government had first adopted the measure.

"I came into public life because I was a great believer in public ownership, and I still am; and I shall not retire before the Attorney-General. There is no one today doing more desperate damage than the present Commission and particularly the Attorney-General," Mr. Ellis declared.

#### Bills Held "Outrageous."

He decried Mr. Roebuck's legislation as "outrageous," and declared: "Surely the Hydro should pay its honest debts, and surely it should not be given the power to override the courts of the Province. In all my enthusiasm for Hydro I cannot believe that it should be placed in this position and I do not

believe that any public enterprise should be given extraordinary powers that a private corporation has not," he declared.

Mr. Ellis declared that the legislation had been introduced contrary to the rules of the house, and that no notice of motion had been given.

Major James Clarke (Lib., Windsor-Sandwich), was in the chair and he rose to halt the member for Ottawa. He pointed out that the Speaker had already ruled the legislation in order, and he said: "Any insinuation that the Speaker made rulings contrary to the rules is deserving of the most severe censorship."

#### Ruled Out of Order.

Mr. Nixon: "The Speaker's ruling is not debatable. The member is out of order."

Mr. Ellis: "There is no intention in my mind to say that the Speaker did not make what he believed to be an honest ruling, but I want to draw the attention of this House as to whether this bill is not proper and legal—"

"The member is out of order," declared Mr. Nixon. The chair upheld him and Mr. Ellis switched his argument to declare that the Dominion Government would give very serious consideration to disallowing the legislation.

"I have sufficient faith in Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King that I think he'll disallow this bill," he declared, as Mr. Roebuck taunted him that the former Conservative Government, under Mr. Bennett, had not disallowed the Power Commission Act of 1935.

Claiming that it was not the policy of the Hepburn Government to shut the door to any one—that even Communists, on occasion, had been known to bring deputations to the seat of Administration—M. M. MacBride, Independent Liberal, Brantford, asked why the power people of Quebec had not approached Queen's Park if, as reported, they had some new proposals to make in regard to the power situation.

"Why don't the companies come along if they have something open and above board to propose?" he asked. "Why have somebody write editorials for them instead? Let the Government, and the Legislature and the people of the Province know what, if anything, the power interests are prepared to do."

#### Protection for People.

In emphatically supporting the trio of power bills now before the House, Mr. MacBride indirectly referred to recent judgments handed down in actions brought against Hydro by the power companies "Judges," he said, "are just human like any one else, and just as liable to error. Perhaps they didn't understand the legislation we passed in 1935. If so, let's put it on the statute books for all to understand."

The first duty of the Legislature, submitted Mr. MacBride, was to protect the property of the people. What about the contracts? No contract, he said, was a just contract unless it stood the test of

analysis. The power agreements had been planned by shrewd sharp, keen business men, he said, who had sought to "get as much of the best of the deal as they could." It was the bounden duty as well as right to correct the wrong that had been done. "A most powerful and influential morning paper" in Toronto, he said, had recently

published an editorial, stating that while it was not aware of what the future might hold out in type of government, the affairs of Hydro, it believed, were safer in the hands of an honest judiciary than in the hands of any set of politicians with expediency as their chief purpose. Before any more such editorial were written, said Mr. MacBride, he would suggest to the writer thereof he study the philosophers of old "He might realize," said he "that we are various men, that the good Lord doesn't make a' two of us alike. We all have an opinion on various questions and we in this chamber are quite as honest in our opinions as those with whom we may differ are honest in regard to theirs."

#### Agreement With U.S.A.

Hydro had experienced no difficulties, said the Brantford member, until the Quebec power interests had entered the picture. At the time the first 60,000-horsepower Gatineau purchase was announced, the then Premier Ferguson had stated, said Mr. MacBride, that it was just to take care of Eastern Ontario's special needs until such time as the proposed St. Lawrence development could be gotten under way. Then more Quebec power than was ever needed, more than possibly could be sold, had been contracted for, and the St. Lawrence

idea had been abandoned apparently. Why had it been thrown overboard? he asked.

Was it not correct, asked Wilfrid Heighington, Cons., St. David, that during the regime of Right Hon. R. B. Bennett that an agreement with the United States to develop the St. Lawrence had been reached, and that the Senate at Washington had killed it?

"Is that an answer or a question?" asked Mr. MacBride.

"That's my question to you," Mr. Heighington shot back.

"Well, if that's the case, I never heard of it," said Mr. MacBride.

"You'll find it's right," said Mr. Heighington.

"Then we had better annex the United States and get along with the St. Lawrence," smiled the Brantford member.

#### Regarded as Duty.

Mr. MacBride said he found it difficult to believe that when Hydro had bought huge blocks of Quebec power back in 1929 and 1930 they weren't aware, to some extent at least, of the depression that was in store for the country as a whole. In his City of Brantford the assets of the local Hydro System amounted to \$1,714,000. Those assets, he said, had to be protected. The people who bought City of Brantford bonds had to be assured that the principal and interest of those bonds would be paid on their due dates, and the city's credit would be maintained.

"I don't know how I possibly could go back and face my supporters and friends," declared Mr. MacBride, "unless I voted in this Legislature to protect their property and interests."

#### "Bootlegger of Power."

As the Legislature member who, in 1931, had first criticized the Hydro-Quebec contracts, Dr. George A. McQuibban (Liberal, North Wellington) claimed that if Governments had stuck to a policy of developing Ontario's own resources, not a single horsepower would have been required from Quebec. "But our great enterprise," he said, "became ringed by private companies and Hydro became almost a bootlegger of power."

In 1928, Hydro had generated twenty-eight times as much power as it had bought; in 1929 it generated six and one-half times as much; 1930, four and three-quarter times as much; 1931, three times as much; 1932, twice as much; 1933, one and one-half times as much. However, in the year 1936 the whole procedure had been reversed by the present Commission and Hydro was now developing six times as much power as it purchased.

When the Beauharnois Company was considering its development in Quebec, it went to the Federal Gov-