

# Long War on Hydro Abandoned by Houck

## Niagara Falls M.L.A. Drops Tax Measure in Return for Concessions to His District

W. L. Houck's year-old fight with the Ontario Hydro-Electric Power Commission has ended.

The Niagara Falls Legislature member is reported to have obtained from Hydro for the municipalities of Niagara Falls and Stamford Township certain compensatory concessions to which he believes them entitled and for which he has been persistently pressing. In return, he is expected to abandon a special bill (now before the Legislature), which provides that power undertakings acquired by Hydro, which were subject to municipal taxation before their acquisition, shall continue to pay taxes to municipalities, notwithstanding their Hydro ownership.

Over the week-end, Hydro spokesmen are said to have approached Mr. Houck and to have effected the aforesaid compromise. Premier Hepburn and his Cabinet are alleged to have since given their blessing to the arrangement.

Mr. Houck's bill, had it been put to a test in the House, undoubtedly would have cut clean across party lines. Mr. Hepburn and Hon. David A. Croll were reportedly two members of the Cabinet who were in favor of it. The greatest Government opposition to it came, as to be expected, from Attorney-General Roebuck and Hon. T. B. McQuesten, the two Hydro Commissioners. So great was the difference of opinion on the bill that both factions have been doing considerable lobbying.

The measure was seconded by Fred Avery, Liberal, St. Catharines, who has long been advocating a greater measure of compensation from Hydro for Grantham Township than that municipality now enjoys. Efforts are said to have been made last week to have Mr. Houck and him withdraw their legislation, without any guarantee that their demands would be met, but both members refused to budge. As a result Hydro is said to have had to go to them.

## BILL DELAYED BY ARGUMENT

### Retroactive Feature of Succession Duty Amendment Opposed

### PARTY LINES DIVIDED

Assailed not only by the Opposition but by some of its own followers as well, the Government had a difficult time yesterday making progress through second reading of the amendment to the Succession Duty Act, 1934. The Committee of the Whole House dealt with the amendment for nearly two hours and adjournment took place before this stage was completed.

A retroactive feature of the legislation, which would enable the Government to go back as far as 1892 in searching an estate in connection with gifts, was violently opposed by members on both sides of the House. Hon. Paul Leduc, who guided the legislation through the House, was subjected to a cross-fire of questions, interjections and criticisms from members across the floor, at either side of him, and from behind him.

Colonel Fraser Hunter (Lib., St. Patrick) saved the lengthy discussion from being entirely a "lawyers' battle." He denounced the amendment in plain language, supporting the previous protests of Wilfrid Heighington (Cons., St. David) and W. E. N. Sinclair, K.C. (Lib., Ontario). The latter made his initial contribution to the present session's debates in the form of a brief but pungent attack on the bill and some of its provisions.

#### Called "Wretched."

Mr. Heighington, who opened the attack on the bill, described as "wretched and humiliating" the practice of going over "with a fine-tooth comb the dealing of a man with his property for the past forty-five or fifty years."

"If we intend to follow this almost piratical practice, wouldn't it be fairer to put in the year 1932 instead of 1892?" asked Mr. Heighington. "Such a change would not only reduce the practice to something capable of being defended, but would fall in line with public opinion which is definitely against some of the present methods of taxation."

The member of St. David referred to the "alarming" discretionary powers possessed by Treasury officials. No matter how honorable they may be as individuals, he said, they should not be allowed to act as judges of disputes between them and the taxpayers.

"The practice of digging the Governmental nose into the affairs of thrifty people for forty or fifty years prior to the date of death can hardly be called a respectable practice and I am definitely of the opinion that the public does not believe in it," he asserted.

On concluding his argument, Mr. Heighington moved an amendment which would give a person, firm or corporation the right of appeal to a court against the decision of the Treasury officials in the matter of succession duties.

#### Causes Stir.

Mr. Sinclair caused quite a stir when he rose to speak on the legis-

lation. He confessed that he had spent two nights trying to understand it and had been unable to make much headway. It was a "patchwork business," he believed, and suggested that the whole bill be reprinted.

"I am not criticizing the Government," said Mr. Sinclair. "I am speaking on behalf of the lawyers and executors of the Province, who are vitally concerned in this matter. I am speaking for the good of the people and for the good of a Government that needs the good-will of the people and which must go to the country before many years are past."

"The bill is not a great credit to whoever drew it up," bluntly declared Colonel Fraser Hunter from his back bench seat on the Government side of the House. "It doesn't seem fair to me that the Government should be able to go back for many years in this fashion. I have had considerable experience with estates and I know that estates can't be closed when this kind of legislation keeps coming up. It leaves an estate at the mercy of merciless lawyers. It is a very obnoxious type of legislation."

J. J. Glass (Lib., St. Andrew) came to the defense of the Government and, after expressing support for the bill, asked Mr. Sinclair just what his objection was to the measure.

"I object to retroactive legislation like this," declared Mr. Sinclair warmly. "It may be passed fifteen or twenty years after I am dead and it allows them to open up my grave, take up my body and remove my gold teeth."

There was a storm of Opposition applause and Mr. Leduc jumped into the breach, aided by Attorney-General Arthur Roebuck.

## LABOR BOARD FOR ONTARIO

### Will Consolidate Administration of Laws Affecting Employers and Employees

Scattered operations of the Ontario Department of Labor will be brought together under an "Industry and Labor Board" which will be created by a measure now before the Legislature. Hon. David Croll, Minister of Labor, yesterday introduced a bill which will consolidate administration of all labor laws affecting relations between employer and employee.

Under the provisions of the bill, the new board will deal particularly with the Industrial Standards Act, the Minimum Wage Act and the Apprenticeship Act. It has long been felt that one supreme body was necessary to administer the various labor and wage laws.

The new board will be composed of five members, and it will replace the present Minimum Wage and Apprenticeship Boards. It will be empowered to hold public inquiries into labor conditions and to hear complaints of any industry or labor group.