

SUCCESSION LAW SCORED AS SNOOPING

Amendment Passes Committee Stage Over Conservative Protests

POLICY DEFENDED

The Hepburn Government's Succession Duties Act amendments passed committee stage of the Legislature yesterday—but only after Colonel Fraser Hunter (Liberal, St. Patrick), had warned that the people in his opinion would not support any administration which subscribed to the principle of such "snooping" legislation; and after Arthur Ellis (Cons., South Ottawa), had failed in a motion to have the bill referred back to the Legal Committee for consideration.

Joined with Colonel Hunter in Liberal opposition to the legislation was W. E. N. Sinclair, South Ontario, who claimed that such law should be legislated by the House and not by the officers of the Succession Duties Department, and who described it as so much "pin-pricking regulations."

A second amendment, moved by Wilfrid Heighington (Cons., St. David), was also blocked by the Government forces. This amendment would have provided for an appeal to the courts from Treasurer's decisions in respect of estates exceeding \$15,000, or where the duty involved was \$250 or more.

"The amendment," objected Hon. Paul Leduc, "might send hundreds—yes thousands, of cases to the courts and cause endless delays."

"The lawyers would get more out of the estates than the Crown," declared Provincial Secretary Harry Nixon, who was leading the House at the time.

Hon. Mr. Nixon could not see why the act should so suddenly become "so vicious" when for years, under Conservative administration, very little criticism had been raised against it. Was it, he wondered simply because a Liberal Government was administering it at the present time?

"That's the very reason," interposed Opposition Leader Henry. "Because you people have had charge of its administration for the last two years."

The Opposition, said Mr. Henry, was solidly behind the Government in its attempts to collect back duties where fraud had been practiced, but it was just as determinedly against the present policy which had made of the Succession Duties office "a persecution office to hound the widows and dependents of deceased persons, going into all their private affairs, even seeking to include in estates gifts of a few hundred dollars in value given for purely personal adornment.

"It seems to be," said he, "a policy of getting the last dollar out of every estate, whether in justice or not."

"I won't accept that remark," cracked Hon. Mr. Nixon. "It's not true. Those who make fair and proper returns have no cause to fear this law, but those who try to circumvent this law—employing the best possible advice in some cases to attain their ends—are not going to get away with it. The slipshod methods which obtained in the day of my honorable friend (Mr. Henry) as Treasurer no longer obtain, I can tell you."

Outside of Hon. Paul Leduc, Minister of Mines, who sponsored the amendments, John J. Glass, St. Andrew, was the only Liberal to

address the House in support of the Minister. Colonel Hunter claimed that the bill, in principle, was "thoroughly wrong." It allowed officers of the department to "snoop into private affairs," and it actually, in his belief, set up one class against another. "Any one, apparently, who wants to make some savings, is regarded under this law as a criminal," he declared, heatedly.

Wilfrid Heighington (Cons., St. David) charged that the primary tendency of the legislation was to "soak those who showed any symptoms of thrift in their makeup" and to penalize those who contributed largely to the build-up of Ontario's industries.

SAYS PREMIER IS CONFUSED

More Interpretations Than Lawyers, Says George S. Henry

The separate school question raised its head in the Legislature last night when Opposition Leader George Henry charged that there were more interpretations of last year's legislation "than lawyers in the Province."

In the closing fifteen minutes of a two-hour address, Mr. Henry plunged into the school issue and pictured the Premier as confused and not knowing which way to turn to get out of the "morass in which he finds conditions."

"Joker" Denied.

Hon. Paul Leduc, Minister of Mines, who guided the separate school legislation through the House, was accused of trying to insert a "joker" in the bill on the last day of the session. This was a clause which would have had the effect of compelling all Roman Catholics to support separate schools whether they wanted to or not.

The charge was indignantly denied by Mr. Leduc, who asserted there was no compulsion. The Minister shook his head vigorously as Mr. Henry repeated the accusation.

"No one knows who drafted the bill," said Mr. Henry. "I do not think the law clerks had anything to do with it. In any case the draughtsman was never proud enough to show his face. There have been dozens of appeals against the act, and yet the Government stands by and does not seek to clear the air."

"In fact, when law officers of the Crown attempt to interpret the statute, they are told to keep quiet on pain of losing their heads