

DR. ROBERTS DENOUNCES HIS LEADER

"Utter Discourtesy, Cheap
Autocracy" Charged in
Legislature

M.L.A. FROM SAULT

Attacks Premier for Allow-
ing Financier to Make
Announcement

Smouldering resentment over what he termed "utter discourtesy and cheap autocracy," on the part of Premier Hepburn, burst like a bomb shell in the Legislature yesterday when Dr. A. C. Roberts, Liberal member for Sault Ste. Marie, took the Prime Minister to task for allowing "a private financier to announce Government policy while the people's elected representative—sat idly, but not supinely by."

Dr. Roberts was referring to the announcement made at a Sault Ste. Marie banquet some weeks ago by Sir James Dunn, of a two-cent bonus on iron production which the Government had authorized. The Liberal member denounced the action of the Prime Minister in allowing Sir James to make this announcement instead of delegating this task to "one who for two years loyally supported a supposedly democratic Government."

Prime Minister Absent.

Premier Hepburn was not in the House when Dr. Roberts made his sensational attack. He was in conference with Prime Minister W. L. M. King in his private office, but he came into the Chamber a few minutes after the Northern Ontario member had let loose his blast—an attack which many Liberals felt was sufficient to have him read out of the party.

Premier Hepburn announced later that he would make a statement on the situation to the House today.

Dr. Roberts read a telegram which he sent to Premier Hepburn on Feb. 16. The reading of it caused a murmur of excitement to pass through the House. It ran as follows:

"Premier Hepburn, Parliament Buildings, Toronto.

"Was astounded to hear private financier announce Government policy of future while the people's elected representative who for two years loyally supported a supposedly democratic Government whose policies will not be announced and I trust not dictated by financial interests. I am discouraged but not defeated by such discourtesy and cheap autocracy."

From the very outset of his remarks it was apparent that Dr. Roberts was leading up to an unusual climax. It seemed as though the rank and file of the House suspected something was in the wind, for there were few empty seats. The Sault Ste. Marie member talked about scraping the barnacles off the ship of state and of the duty of every member to oppose error "regardless of whether it is in his own party or not." He deplored "blind, unreasoning loyalty" to a party and said there came a time when an individual had to make a decision, whether party or principles were to come first.

"If humble back-benchers like myself are loyal to a political party it should be reciprocal," declared Dr. Roberts. "It should not all be one-sided. If members of Parlia-

ment are not going to be free to talk as freely as they wish and vote as they see fit, they will be mere puppets, pawns in a chess game. The electors expect their representatives to show independence. That is why they elected them.

"I have supported the Reform party for many years," he continued. "I feel I have been very loyal to my party and Government. I wish to make this clear as I do not wish to be accused of being disloyal or treacherous to my party because of anything I have said, or will say.

Recalls Announcement.

"Recently there was a banquet at Sault Ste. Marie, at which Sir James Dunn, the financier, was present. Sir James got up and said he was authorized by Premier Hepburn to make an announcement regarding a two-cent Provincial bonus on steel production at Algoma.

"But I, the people's representative, their elected member, sat idly by while a private financier told of future Government policy," declared Dr. Roberts.

"I was amazed and outraged. What could I do but sit there, saying nothing? When the Premier, some days before wired and asked me if I could come to Toronto and sit in at a conference with Sir James and himself, I did so. I even went to Ottawa and I knew, after the discussions, just about what would be done. But I didn't think Sir James Dunn would be authorized to announce Government policy.

"Much as it hurts me to do it—it has caused me much worry—I feel I must make this clear," said Dr. Roberts. "If members are to sit by and allow this sort of thing to go on, well, it is rather a pathetic state of affairs."

Hits Two-Party System.

During the reading of the telegram sent to Premier Hepburn there was utter stillness in the House. Hon. Harry Nixon, Provincial Secretary and his Cabinet colleagues looked straight ahead, while Dr. Roberts made public his accusation against his leader.

At the outset of his remarks the Sault member—considered one of the best speakers in the Legislature—talked of some of the evils of the two-party system; of the unreasoning partisanship which made everything done by the opposing political party, wrong; and everything done by the partisan's party, right.

"No party is right all the time," Dr. Roberts said. "Loyalty to principles should be placed ahead of loyalty to party."

"Was my honorable friend loyal to his principles when he voted for the amendment to the Assessment Act?" asked William Duckworth (Cons., Dovercourt.)

"There is one thing about the school bill," replied Dr. Roberts. "It gave members like my honorable friend something to talk about."

"You haven't answered my question," persisted Mr. Duckworth.

"No, and I don't intend to," was the reply.

Personal vilification and abuse against one's opponents might better be replaced by discussion of issues. The continual imputing of impure motives and base desires to political opponents was one of the evils of the present political system, he believed.

Prepared to Resign.

"Many people were coming round to the belief that democracy began and ended on election day. I wonder if democracy would be any worse off, if Canada would be any worse off if every Provincial Legislature were eliminated," the northern member remarked.

"We are frightfully overgoverned; we have enough Governments for 100,000,000 people, let alone 10,000,000. I would be prepared to resign tomorrow if this Legislature were eliminated."

"Will you introduce a bill?" asked Mr. Duckworth.

"Will you second it?" queried Dr. Roberts.

"Yes, I will," came the answer.

Dr. Roberts turned to Dominion affairs and voiced criticism of the apparent ability of Parliament to obtain all the money it wanted for what he termed "war purposes," while finding it difficult to get the money to spend on the needy masses. He mentioned the \$197,000 which will be spent in sending Canadians to the Coronation and said that while he did not take second place in his patriotism and loyalty to the Crown, it seemed as though this was an example of the ease with which money could be found for certain purposes.

Writ Is Promised.

W. A. Baird, (Cons., High Park), charged that dissension existed in the ranks of the Liberals, that the Government was doomed, and that Premier Hepburn was "absolutely afraid" to bring on a by-election in the vacant riding of North Wellington. "There is no reason for the delay," said he, "but the Prime Minister will delay issuance of the writ for that by-election the same as he delayed the Separate School bill for two years."

"You must be proud of yourself," put in Provincial Secretary Nixon, who was leading the House.

"I am," said Mr. Baird.

"I say that remarks regarding the Premier's courage are not anything to be proud of," declared Mr. Nixon. "My honorable friend will have his writ for North Wellington in due course, and we'll continue to have a member for that riding sitting with us in this House."

"I wonder," smiled Mr. Baird.

"I'll cover anything you want to put up," clicked Mr. Nixon. "The next member in the House for that riding won't support the Separate Schools legislation either," returned Mr. Baird.

NEW BOARD TO ENFORCE SCHEDULE

Regulations Will Affect
400,000 Male Workers,
Croll Estimates

\$18 BASIS RUMORED

Government Action Needed
to Keep Peace in Indus-
try, House Told

For the first time in the history of Ontario, a minimum wage for men will be placed in Provincial statute books.

Yesterday, in the Legislature, Hon. David Croll, Minister of Labor, introduced an amendment to the Minimum Wage Act, designed, the Minister told the House, "to protect workers from one distressing phase of man's inhumanity to man." He emphasized that the greatest task of the Provincial Department of Labor was to maintain peace "and the price of peace is fair wages."

The basic minimum for workers not engaged in domestic or farm work will be set at \$17 or \$18 a week, it was rumored.

Predicts Disturbance.

"It takes no prophet to predict that without Governmental action, 1937 will be a year of industrial disturbance," said Mr. Croll in explaining that the newly created In-