

Attempt to Cover Crooks' Activities Laid to Opposition

Threat of Suspension From Debate on Amendment Giving Securities Commission New, Wide Power Levelled at Ellis During Stormy Session

PREMIER'S CHARGE

Furious Conservative rebellion against a charge by Premier Hepburn that the Opposition was "trying to cover up a lot of crooks," stirred the Ontario Legislature yesterday to a fresh outburst of uproar and angry, turbulent debate.

At one time in the stormy session a threat was voiced by J. H. Clark (Lib., Windsor-Sandwich), Chairman of the Committee of the Whole, to report Arthur Ellis (Cons., Ottawa South) to the Speaker for imputing motives to rulings by the Chair.

Although no action was taken, such procedure could lead to a member being "named" by the Speaker, and, on the vote of the House, his being suspended from debate.

Conservatives Protest.

For two hours the Conservatives fought the Government's bill giving the Securities Commission new and powerful investigatory authority, and midway in the bill's passage the Premier interrupted the onslaught of opposition to declare: "I'm not surprised that my honorable friends are trying to cover up a lot of crooks."

An angry roar of protest greeted his remark and after a furious twenty minutes the Chairman of the committee ruled there was nothing in the Premier's remark that cast reflection upon any member.

The Premier argued that the very fact of continued opposition tended to protect crooks who would evade the law, but the Opposition howled in protest against the remark and demanded a retraction. None was given.

With clocklike regularity the House voted down six amendments to the bill, four of which were proposed by Wilfrid Heighington (Cons., St. David), and the other two by W. A. Baird (Cons., High Park) and Hon. Leopold Macaulay.

Allegation Denied.

When the House resumed at 3 o'clock Mr. Henry rose with a copy of an afternoon newspaper in his hand. He read from the report of the morning's proceedings and declared that the chief organs of the Government reported the Prime Minister as saying: "I am not surprised that my honorable friends are trying to cover up a lot of crooks."

"I wish to point out that when we were in Committee of the Whole House we sought to have the question referred to you, Mr. Speaker, for a decision," said Mr. Henry. "We were denied this privilege by a Chairman who is usually very fair, but who, on this occasion, ignored the words used by the Prime Minister and which are now published in the chief newspaper organ of this Government.

"We denied the charge, and the newspaper report quotes the Prime Minister saying: 'The shaft went home.'

"It would go home to any man who had feelings of honor and decency," thundered the Opposition Leader.

Premier Hepburn, in reply, said his day would not be complete without annoying the Leader of the Op-

position in some way. He reviewed what he had said earlier in the day, pointing out that he had emphasized the fact that the Government had secured much of its succession duties from estates because of fraudulent practices.

Premier Repeats Charge.

"I said that by opposing this measure the Opposition were putting themselves in the way of protecting crooks," said Mr. Hepburn.

"That's not what the . . ." began Mr. Henry, but the Premier interrupted him with the statement: "I am not responsible for what the press says, any more than I was responsible for what the Telegram said about my honorable friend from St. Andrew (J. J. Glass, Lib.) and for which they had to publish a retraction. I repeat, that by opposing measures of this kind the Opposition are placing themselves in the position of protecting crooks."

Mr. Henry said that the Premier's reference to the twenty-seven millions secured in succession duties, while speaking on an amendment to the Securities Act, gave the inference that much of the money was arrears due to fraudulent statements by the representatives of estates.

"How much of it was due to fraud?" demanded Mr. Henry.

"Put a question on the order paper and I'll answer it," was the Premier's reply.

"Third Degree" Legislation.

The row started following the introduction of the second amendment proposed by Mr. Heighington and Mr. Ellis, to restrict application of the bill to companies only and remove its application to persons.

Mr. Henry: "I think we should change the title of this bill to read 'An Act to Provide for the Third Degree.'"

Mr. Hepburn: "For crooks."

Mr. Henry: "My friend, the Attorney-General, agreed the other night that this is the third degree."

Mr. Roebuck: "I said nothing of the kind, but I do say that it is in the nature of police investigation."

Mr. Heighington: "I'll have the Prime Minister understand that the third degree does not apply even to crooks in this country."

The Premier's remark about the Opposition "covering up crooks," came as he reminded the House that his Government had collected \$27,000,000 in succession duties. Under that act, he said, investigations were launched only where fraud was suspected. The Conservatives had opposed the bill giving the succession duties office investigatory powers just as they were now opposing the present measure.

"I'm not surprised that my honorable friends are trying to cover up a lot of crooks," said he.

Heighington Takes Offense.

The Opposition howled in angry protest. Mr. Henry jumped to his feet. "I ask you to withdraw that if you have any manhood in you at all."

Mr. Hepburn: "Oh, you can't talk about manhood."

Mr. Henry: "Nor can you."

Mr. Hepburn: "You should be the last person to talk about manhood."

Mr. Heighington, Mr. Ellis and Hon. T. A. Kidd, former Speaker of the House, followed one another in protest and in demanding a retraction.

Mr. Hepburn: "That shaft went home."

Mr. Heighington: "I take offense at that remark. I ask the Prime Minister to have the graciousness to admit for once that he was wrong and withdraw."

Mr. Hepburn: "Mr. Chairman, I'm

prepared to follow your ruling. Their opposition to this bill places them in the position of protecting a lot of crooks."

Mr. Heighington again protested. The whole incident, and similar incidents, made the work of a conscientious legislator in the House seem futile, he declared. It almost made him feel like quitting altogether, he said.

Asks for Support.

Mr. Hepburn: "Mr. Chairman, I know there are hovering around these buildings a lot of Conservatives who are fearful that this bill will pass, because when it does we are going to collect a lot of money due to us."

Mr. Ellis: "I hope you do."

Mr. Hepburn: "Then stop this opposition and give us the power."

Mr. Ellis: "I insist, Mr. Chairman, that the Premier must withdraw the remark."

Mr. Hepburn: "I know that the Province has been defrauded of \$50,000,000 in the past five years. I know that when the Opposition throws up a smokescreen like this they are in the position of protecting a lot of crooks. We are entitled to their co-operation, not their opposition."

Mr. Heighington: "This thing is preposterous and insulting, and should never be allowed. I don't understand why we allow it to go on. It is a most disgusting and disgraceful thing."

Chairman J. H. Clark (Lib., Windsor-Sandwich) gave his ruling—that he interpreted nothing in the Premier's remarks that reflected upon any member of the Opposition. As he understood it, he said, the remark meant that the opposition to the bill placed the official Opposition in the position of protecting crooks.

Defeat Second Amendment.

Mr. Heighington demanded that the Committee of the Whole House rise and report the incident to the Speaker. Mr. Ellis seconded the motion, but it was defeated by a vote of the committee. Sam Lawrence (C.C.F., Hamilton) voted with the Conservatives.

Magistrates Are Rapped

Exceed Authority in Withdrawing Charges, Is Contention

A charge that Municipal Magistrates throughout Ontario were exceeding their authority by withdrawing charges against persons brought before their courts, was made in the Legislature last night by Wilfrid Heighington (Cons., Toronto St. David).

The allegation brought a prompt invitation from Attorney-General Roebuck to present the facts of any case in the privacy of his office. In one instance named by Mr. Heighington, the Attorney-General promised "someone will lose his job" if the charge was substantiated.

Only the Crown may withdraw charges. A Magistrate must either find a conviction or dismiss a case.

The Toronto Conservative also declared there were instances where men charged with arson had been granted parole against the advice of the Fire Marshal of Ontario. To this Mr. Roebuck replied that no such thing had happened during the term of the present Fire Marshal.