

March 25

# "It Is My Duty To Forestall Religious War"

—Premier Hepburn

**Charges Rowe and Drew  
Already Threatened  
"Bloodshed" in Has-  
tings Campaign**

## APPLIES CLOSURE

**Legislature, With  
Crowded Benches and  
Galleries, in Unpar-  
alleled Uproar at Mo-  
mentous Session**

By a division of 80 to 0 on second reading, the Government and Opposition joined forces in the Legislature last night to repeal the schools tax law amendments of last session. This restored Section 65 of the original Assessment Act to exactly where it was in 1886.

The vote came after Premier Mitchell Hepburn, taking his political life in his hands, had bluntly and courageously announced to the House that he would repeal his amendments.

Admitting that the law was unworkable under present-day conditions—that it was "a failure"—that it had failed to bring to the minority group in this Province the equity of justice which had been done to the minority groups in two other Provinces of Canada, the Prime Minister, speaking in soberly serious tones, and not unmindful of the course of action he was pursuing, told Hon. George S. Henry, Leader of the Opposition, that he was prepared to accept his motion for repeal. The Conservatives banged their desks for a solid minute over the Prime Minister's admission, but were halted in short order when the latter rebuked them sharply for their part in the recent East Hastings by-election, where he charged they had "opened up religious and racial sores which will not heal in the lifetime of this country."

## Commends Laurier's Stand.

He commended to Conservative House Leader Hon. George S. Henry Sir Wilfrid Laurier's refusal to seek to open the door to office with the "bloody key" of religious animosity, and accused Hon. Earl Rowe, Conservative chieftain, and Colonel George A. Drew of "threatening bloodshed" over the issue in the Hastings campaign.

"I say, Mr. Speaker," continued the Prime Minister, in tones which fairly electrified the crowded galleries, "that it is my responsibility now to forestall at whatever cost, the possibility of a religious war in this Province. I am man enough to stand up in this Legislature and swallow what is a very bitter pill. I want in this respect to commend the Toronto Star for its fairness. At least it has been manifestly fair, and I think I should even go out of my way to commend The Globe and Mail for pointing out the dangers of religious warfare in Ontario."

Faulty drafting, as Mr. Henry implied, said the Premier, may have had something to do with the bill's inability to function as anticipated, but the real reason why it had not "remedied the grievances" that had been set for it was "the extraordinary financial structure of the present time."

In delivering his one-hour, carefully prepared enunciation of new Government policy Mr. Hepburn carefully reviewed the many angles of the controversial question, and laid particular stress on the East Hastings campaign, where he accused Hon. Earl Rowe, Conservative Provincial Leader, and his chief organizer, Colonel G. A. Drew, of insulting the intelligence of the people, and "of not only threatening bloodshed, but complete elimination of the separate school system itself."

## "No Religious Bias."

Mr. Hepburn said that former Premier Ferguson of Ontario had shown sympathy toward the minority cause and had plainly intimated during the 1929 Provincial election that something would be done subsequently to provide a greater measure of equality for separate schools than had obtained up to that time. But Mr. Ferguson's appointment as High Commissioner to Britain had intervened, and under the reign of his successor in office, Mr. Henry, nothing had come of the original plan, although Mr. Henry, on the eve of the 1934 election, had announced his intention to submit the whole question to the Privy Council for decision.

"I have no religious bias in my soul," declared Mr. Hepburn amid the plaudits of his supporters, "and consequently I lack the political sagacity which would permit me to view the question in the eyes of a religious bigot."

"It seems to be my unfortunate lot on many occasions to be in a position not envied by any one," said Mr. Hepburn at the outset. "It is with a certain amount of trepi-

dation, tempered with regret that I do so. It is my concern that I am unable to discuss purely economic problems because of the fact that the Opposition, through the press and on the platform, have decided to make of it a religious controversy.

"I want to state that I have not caucused the members of my party or asked any member to follow me with regard to the bill of my honorable friend the Leader of the Opposition," continued the Prime Minister. "I feel obligated to discuss some of the events leading up to what has become a bitter religious controversy.

"After the 1934 general election, two delegations waited upon me. The first represented themselves as spokesmen for the public schools of the Province. They took the position of wanting to hold on to everything they had. The second delegation represented the separate schools. They put their claims before us and to me, they seemed to be reasonable. One point which