

March 4

PRE-ELECTION POWER CLAIMS ARE ATTACKED

Legislator Contends Hepburn's Stand Not Borne Out by White Paper

TWO MINISTERS IRKED

No truer words had ever been spoken than when Premier Hepburn, at Simcoe, during the last election, had publicly stated that there need be no concern about future power supplies, because "that power is in sight right now," William A. Baird (Cons., High Park), told the Ontario Legislature yesterday.

"I believe the Prime Minister had that power in sight, as he said," said Mr. Baird. "And it was the power afterwards purchased from Beauharnois and the other Quebec companies."

It was all right for the Premier to argue that, prior to the election there had been no negotiations with "the power barons," submitted Mr. Baird. "It was all right for him to blame Mr. King at Ottawa indirectly for the purchases of current that were made, almost as soon as the election was over. But, said he, the Premier's claims were not borne out by the White Paper which the Federal Administration had tabled in the House of Commons

Proof Alleged.

This paper proved beyond the shadow of doubt, said he, that as early as January, 1937, Mr. Hepburn had been informed by Ottawa and surely must have realized that the additional flow of water at Niagara and in the proposed diversion schemes which he required to increase power production domestically could not be obtained because of international complications.

If there was no shortage of power during the election campaign, as the Premier had repeatedly claimed, said Mr. Baird, then why

had it been necessary to go to Quebec or anywhere else for the 250,000 horsepower subsequently taken from Beauharnois.

Mr. Baird got into brief but spirited tangles with Hon. M. M. MacBride, Minister of Labor, and Hon. Eric Cross, Minister of Welfare and Municipal Affairs, when he condemned the former's conduct of the recent coal strike negotiations, and charged that the latter's department was "a political machine" and needed thorough investigating. Mr. Baird alleged that the Provincial Labor Department should accept some measure of responsibility for the increased prices to coal consumers resulting from the increased wages paid to the men following upon the negotiations in Mr. MacBride's office. The Labor Minister heatedly argued that his department could not control industry; had no right to fix prices; and that Mr. Baird wasn't familiar with his subject. What's more, in the final agreement arrived at by the coal industry, under the Industrial Standards Act, it had been specifically directed, said he, that there be no increase in the cost of coal to the consumers.

"That may be true," said Mr. Baird, "but I can tell you of a charitable institution that is paying 30 cents per ton more for coal than it did before the strike, and will have to pay that price for the balance of the season, just because, they say, of the agreement negotiated in the office of the honorable Minister."

Mr. Cross waxed indignant at Mr.

Baird's attitude regarding the Welfare and Municipal Affairs Departments. Mr. Baird, he argued, should not content himself with a mere blanket charge that politics were being played in his administration, but should make some specific allegation. Less than two years ago, Mr. Baird retorted, there were 70 Government-appointed and paid employees administering relief in York Township and 100 or more doing the same work in Windsor.

"I don't believe there were such numbers," declared Mr. Cross.

"That's why I say investigate," Mr. Baird shot back.

"I think you had better investigate your speech," put in Premier Hepburn.

"Oh," smiled Mr. Baird, "if I am causing the Prime Minister any perturbation I guess I'm doing all right."