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Power Opportunity Wasted, Says Roebuck

Ontario's "golden opportunity" to settle its interprovincial difficulties with Quebec and its international difficulties with the United States over the use of boundary waters has been utterly wasted by the Hepburn Administration's attitude toward Prime Minister King and President Roosevelt and by its refusal even to consider the situation on the St. Lawrence, former Attorney-General and Hydro Commissioner Arthur Roebuck charged in the Legislature yesterday.

Willing effort toward the solving of these problems would have achieved success, Mr. Roebuck stressed, but nothing could be hoped for from "a do-nothing policy or from an attitude of antagonism." And now, he added, opportunity for a major development—the development of another million horsepower at home, in conformity with Queen's Park's once-avowed policy of public ownership — had been "thrown away" by the extension of the Gatineau and the Maclaren contracts until 1970, and of the Beauharnois agreement until 1976.

Reversal Called Shocking.

"Public ownership in the production of power in this Province has been deferred for many, many years to come," Mr. Roebuck warned. "From a constitutional standpoint, this reversal of policy on the part of the Government is most disturbing. In the recent general election the Government submitted its policy of public ownership to the people in terms which could not be misunderstood and asked to carry out the very program of which I have been the chief advocate. That policy and program was overwhelmingly endorsed. But the electors had hardly reached home from the polls ere their policy was reversed and their mandate repudiated. Those of us who still hold to the well-proved forms of British democracy are shocked at this flouting of the principles of responsible government."

"Hear, hear," Opposition Leader Macaulay approved.

After the first revision of the Gatineau and Maclaren contracts—and these were on a ten-year basis—Hydro, said Mr. Roebuck, had embarked upon a program of supplying Ontario's needs from its own resources. "We acquired control of the Trent River from the Dominion Government," he added, "and we purchased two privately owned plants on the river to augment our Eastern supply. We had commenced work on the Madawaska, for which the former Government paid \$1,800,000, and upon which we have been paying interest charges ever since. The work is now stopped.

"We had a plant under construction on the Muskosh River for supplying the needs of the Georgian Bay System, and in Northern Ontario we acquired the Crystal Falls plant from Abitibi. We installed units at Ear Falls and Rat Rapids. We added 150,000 horsepower to the capacity at the Abitibi plant, and we were improving the water reserves at the Canyon.

Understanding Said Near.

"In the Niagara System we completed an agreement with the Dominion Government for the carrying of water through the Welland Canal for a development at Decew Falls. We had completed the surveys for the Ogoki River diversion, and we had commenced work on the Long Lac diversion. We had carried on negotiations with the power authorities of the State of New York for the use of additional water from the Niagara and we had found them very ready to reach some equitable understanding with respect to the Ogoki and Long Lac diversions and with respect to the future use of the waters of both the Niagara and the St. Lawrence. for submission to the Governments of the United States and Canada.

"Never perhaps in the history of these two countries have both Governments been more favorably disposed toward some mutually advantageous arrangement with respect to the use of boundary waters than those headed during the past few years by Mr. King and Mr. Roosevelt. But the golden opportunity has gone—has been thrown away deliberately by the Government in Ontario."

Mr. Roebuck expressed his keen disappointment over the "miscarriage of plans" for which he claimed always to have fought with "obvious risks" to himself, and which, in his opinion, would have meant so much to the industrial welfare of the Province.

Hits Conservatives as Well.

"And I regret to say," he continued, "that I can find no grounds for hope from the Conservative Party. It is at least equally responsible for what occurred. It was a former Conservative Government which was guilty of the first great betrayal and in terms more flagrant than the recent capitulation. Both in and out of the House, leaders of the Conservative Party have fought for the private power interests every step of the way. They have sought to justify the price of \$15 per horsepower and the purchase of large blocks of unwanted power, even when the cost was ruining Hydro, and they engaged in an alarmist campaign, during the last election, misrepresenting a pending power shortage in the hope of driving the Government into the suicidal course it has now adopted of sacrificing public welfare to private gain."

"At least we didn't get an election verdict on false pretenses," Mr. Macaulay chimed in. "You'll grant us that, I hope."

"Of course I will," said Mr. Roebuck, "but your party's public espousal of a renewal of the cancelled contracts is probably accountable for the poor showing it made at the polls."

Since the Legislature assembled, declared Mr. Roebuck, he had heard

no criticism from the Conservatives of the new contracts themselves, but only of the manner in which they had been brought about. "It is all very discouraging," he said, "for it does seem as though the Leaders of both the Government and the Opposition have been tarred with the one stick."