

March 19

Theatres Break Faith, Hepburn Hears

is found—according to the Premier's statement to the House—that operations of the Liquor Control Board dumped \$10,500,000 into the Treasury coffers during the year that is ending. And from the two branches of governmental activity, whose administration figured so prominently as talking points in

the October general election, namely, Lands and Forests, and Succession Duties, Treasurer Hepburn collected \$4,500,000, and \$20,000,000 respectively.

Bush Enterprises Revived.

"The reductions made by the Government in stumpage prices," said the Premier with regard to the first department, "played no small part in encouraging bush enterprises, re-creating a spirit of thrift and saving the morale of legions of anxious workers who had previously become disheartened. Optimism displaced pessimism, hitherto rampant in many small communities. Notwithstanding stumpage concessions, the revenue accruing to the department was the highest in eight years.

"The record of collections of succession duties," he stressed, "constitutes an arraignment against former officials of the Treasury Department and reputedly reputable lawyers of this Province, some of whom undoubtedly connived for the sole purpose of cheating and chiselling in the most flagrant and indefensible manner the Treasury of this Province. It redounds to the credit of this Administration which has had the courage to bring taxpayers to time and to compel by legal methods these same people to disgorge to the extent of nearly \$20,000,000, all of which revenue has been used to maintain the social services of this great Province. May I assure you further, Mr. Speaker, that this work has only begun; and the efforts of this Government to bring even more of these tax-dodgers to task will be redoubled, and I can say without fear of being charged with exaggeration that the \$20,000,000 collected is only a very small portion of the moneys which former Treasurers have let these tax-dodgers get away with it. If I never discharge another public duty in my life, I pledge my word that I will see this public duty carried through to its finish."

Gas Tax Nets \$17,600,000.

From the gasoline tax this year was collected \$17,600,000, which places this levy, as a revenue producer, second only to succession duties. This \$17,000,000, together with the tax from motor vehicle licenses, will amount, the Premier said, to about \$26,000,000. The policy of the Highways Department for 1938 would be, the Premier added, "to continue with the same aggressiveness the policy that has applied in the past." A sum of \$14,000,000 would be provided for this purpose.

"Added safety on highways will continue to be our slogan," he said. "Engineers will be instructed to exercise the greatest possible care in all work they undertake, satisfying themselves that the finished road is as nearly fool-proof as possible."

The death toll on the highway system in Ontario, said he, had convinced the Government that the saturation point of traffic had been passed, and that there now remained "practically no margin of safety" in so far as traffic on major roads were concerned.

Immediate investigation of complaints that Ontario theatre-owners in many cases have failed, in spite of promises, to pass on to their patrons the benefit of the Government's total abolition of the amusements tax, was forecast by Premier Hepburn during his budget presentation to the Legislature.

"The revenue from the amusements tax this year amounts to only \$227,000, whereas last year it amounted to nearly \$2,000,000," Mr. Hepburn said.

"Before this tax was cancelled last June, I had a conference with the principal theatre owners of the Province and received from them their solemn promise that, if we abolished the amusements tax they would pass the benefit on to their patrons, and in no case would they increase the price of admissions to their places of entertainment.

"Reports have reached me that this promise has not been honored, and I propose to take steps to institute a very careful investigation to ascertain whether the charges of lack of faith are warranted.

"Unless theatre owners keep faith with the people, they need not be surprised if this Government takes some appropriate action in this matter."

Succession Tax Drive Nets Another \$900,000 While Hepburn Speaks

Premier Mitchell Hepburn drew thunderous applause from the Government benches yesterday afternoon when, while he was discussing the subject of revenue from succession duties, a letter was laid on his desk informing him that settlement had been reached that day in an estate under investigation, and that \$900,000 had been paid into the Treasury as a result.

"Members of the Opposition were skeptical when I forecast a revenue of \$19,000,000 from this source," he told the House. "I have here a letter informing me that the sum of \$900,000 in cash has been paid into the Treasury this very afternoon while I was speaking to you. This latest settlement brings our revenue to a total of \$19,400,000, and bears out the accuracy of my earlier forecast."