

House Scorns Bill For Civic Control Of Small Business

Liberal and Conservative members from Toronto ridings, yesterday in the Legislature "ganged up" on a city-sponsored bill providing for the regulations of coal yards, junk yards and second-hand shops and in fifteen minutes of acrid debate forced withdrawal of the entire bill.

The legislation, introduced for the city as an amendment to the Municipal Act by Ian Strachan, K.C. (Lib., St. George), was attacked in terms that labelled it as "vicious, unfair, drastic, high-handed, un-British, discriminatory and arbitrary."

"After all," said Mr. Strachan, finally, "the bill affects Toronto only and we have pretty well got the opinion of the Toronto members, so I move that the bill be withdrawn."

The action of Mr. Strachan, who has introduced the majority of the city-sponsored legislation during the session, was greeted with applause from both sides of the House.

Arbitrary, Says Glass.

The attack was led by J. J. Glass (Lib., St. Andrew), who criticized the arbitrary authority that the bill would place in the council's hands and which, he emphasized, would react as a hardship against junk and second-hand dealers.

Under the bill, the use of premises as junk yards or second-hand shops was prohibited unless permission was first secured from the Council. Chief fire was directed against the clause which provided that "the granting, refusing or cancelling of any such permission shall be in the discretion of the Council and it shall not be bound to give any reason for refusing or cancelling any such permission."

Vicious, Declares McBrien.

"That would enable the Council to put a man out of business," rapped out Fred G. McBrien (Cons., Parkdale). "That's vicious, that's drastic and un-British and unfair and unless it is withdrawn, I will vote against the whole bill."

Arthur Roebuck (Lib., Bellwoods), declared he had had experience with the "high-handed attitude of the City Council to some applicants and I am not prepared to vote for a measure that would place the junk dealers of my riding in the hands of City Council to have their heads cut off—or second-hand dealers either."

Attacks Fuel.

Mr. Roebuck then turned to the section of the proposed amendment that asked for authority to pass a by-law defining, grading and classifying of fuel. Powers were sought also to require fuel dealers to carry on their place of business continuously, and to be the owner or occupant of a yard having a fixed area used exclusively for the purposes of such business, and to specify the minimum quantity of fuel to be kept available for delivery and the facilities and equipment required for carrying on such business.

"What business is it of Council if I carry on my business continually or in a fixed area," declared Mr. Roebuck. "Who is Council to say that I must have a yard used exclusively for the purpose of such a business."

"These arbitrary provisions would put a small man out of business. And take this section that would give to Council the power to specify the minimum quantity of fuel to be kept available for delivery. It's up to the customers to decide that. The whole bill should go out from the first word to the last."

Summerville Caustic.

Distinctly unfair was the clause which proposed that coal dealers must use their yards exclusively for a fuel business, in the opinion of W. A. Summerville (Cons., Riverdale).

He stated that when he was a member of the City Council he tried to give each applicant for special licenses "a fair chance provided they kept their faces clean and their business in a good shape."

"I believe the bill should go back because many of the dealers handle coal in the winter and ice in the summer. It would be distinctly unfair to them," he said. "So far as John Public is concerned, there is too much legislation anyway. The first thing they know they will be charging a nickel a breath for the air."

Allan A. Lamport (Lib., St. George) pointed out that he was a member of the City Council at the time the legislation was first considered and that there was no thought in the minds of the Councillors of attempting to get dictatorial powers that could be used in a discriminatory sense.

He stated the city was trying to zone the corporation in respect to junk yards. He pointed out that junk yards often harbored rats and other vermin and it was essential that residents should be protected against the establishment of such a business.

The city, through the withdrawal of the bill, lost a third measure which asked for authority to license, regulate and govern private day and boarding schools and "other similar buildings in which children were housed."

Mr. Strachan intimated that one of the main purposes of the clause was to give the city authorities power to enforce adequate fire safety provisions in private schools. There was no debate on the section, although several who were strongest in their opposition to the other features of the bill, said their objections did not extend to this particular clause.