

PROVINCIAL ACCOUNTING CRITICIZED

L. M. Frost Suggests Ontario
Fiscal Year End in
Late Fall

DEBATES RESTRICTED

Private business would not tolerate the system that the Province of Ontario has been given since 1935 in reporting its accounts, Leslie M. Frost (Cons., Victoria) charged yesterday in the Legislature, when he appealed to the Hepburn Government to change its fiscal year closing date from March 31, to a date some time in the late autumn.

Mr. Frost pointed out that while the Premier's Budget speech was delivered on March 18, intelligent discussion of the huge items of receipts and expenditures contained in it was hopelessly restricted because the latest copy of the public accounts in the members' possession was nearly a year old, and had bearing on the year 1936-37 and not of the fiscal year now closing.

"Unbusinesslike."

"During the last year there were great expenditures on public works just before the election," said the member. "It seems particularly unbusinesslike that the Legislature will not have an opportunity of discussing these until 1939, almost one and one-half years after they have been incurred, and, in fact, under the present system the Government is not bound to deliver these accounts until the Legislature convenes next year. This system does not provide for the public safeguard, which an early scrutiny of the public accounts provide."

He noted that under the Conservative regime, the fiscal year ended Oct. 31, and that the public accounts were available to every member during the session that immediately followed the close of the year.

Mr. Frost, late yesterday, adjourned the Budget debate, which will be resumed, it is anticipated, on Tuesday. An early conclusion of the debate, and of the House itself within a period of two weeks, was forecast when Government leaders indicated there would not be further debate speeches from the Liberal benches.

Sunday Hunting.

Abolition of the present prohibition of Sunday hunting was urged by James Cooper, Liberal, Sudbury.

"There is a decided feeling in my riding," said he, "that the ban on Sunday hunting has long outlived its usefulness. The large majority of those in my riding are men who work six days a week. They cannot understand why people can play golf or tennis on Sunday while hunting on that day remains an offense. Hunting is a good, healthy outdoor recreation, and I suggest that the Minister of Game and Fisheries consider my suggestion for future action."

Mr. Cooper also expressed strong opposition to any idea which the Government may have of closing beverage rooms to women. "I cannot agree with the member for North York (Morgan Baker, Liberal) when he advocates closing of the ladies' beverage parlors," said he. "The people in my riding are satisfied with the law as it stands. I would not favor any extension of the act, but I would be less in favor of abolition of beverage rooms for women. The ladies of today are going to drink beer if they are so inclined whether we of the Legislature license beverage rooms or not. The real effect of the suggested abolition would be to drive women who wish beer into hotel rooms where drinking has become prevalent, or to so-called 'blind pigs' over which the Liquor Board has neither supervision nor control."

Asks Better Roads.

Mr. Cooper advocated the construction of hard surface main roads in the north country—particularly in the North Bay-Sault section—which, he said, was travelled by "untold thousands" of American tourists every year on their way to see the Dionne quintuplets.

Where was the Ontario Securities Commission when the great mining slump of 1937 occurred, Goldwyn Elgie (Cons., Woodbine) demanded of the House. "Did he investigate to find out the causes of that slump?" he queried. "If he had done so I think he would have discovered that the whole thing, beginning with a vague rumor from New York that the price of gold might be reduced, was manipulated by a small group of brokers, operators and mining magnates, representing perhaps half a billion dollars of accumulated wealth, who made millions out of the fall and the rebound of mining securities. Yes, they made millions, but the trusting investors and speculators of the Province lost in equal amount."

In a lengthy castigation of general Government policy, Mr. Elgie singled out the Succession Duties branch operations for particular attention, charging that Premier and Provincial Treasurer Hepburn had been compelled "to dig into graveyards, so to speak," to get a balanced Budget.

"He calls it a duty to do that," giped Mr. Elgie. "He made the duty an issue in the last election campaign. Now he is boasting about results. But sooner or later this source of revenue will be curtailed. There will be no more old estates to probe, and doubtless any new estates that may be investigated will not return such dividends in the way of taxation. This Government was out after money at any cost, and if all reports are true, it cared little about the ruination of properties and the suffering of individuals in the attainment of its end."

Mr. Hepburn, in his Budget speech, said Mr. Elgie, had passed some rather pointed comments on lawyers who had acted in the settlement of certain estates. "If what he says is true," he added, "why haven't these men been prosecuted? If they are as bad as he says they are, why are they not in jail? Perhaps some of them are Liberal lawyers. Personally I think the whole outbreak is only another smoke-screen of the kind the Government is so fond of throwing up to hide the weakness of its own position."