

April 8

Failure to Provide Job Insurance Scored, But House Motion Lost

Failure of the Hepburn Government to implement its oft-stated election pledge to provide unemployment insurance at the 1938 session of the Legislature was scored yesterday by Opposition Leader Macaulay, who alleged that Premier Hepburn well realized now that Ottawa wasn't going to do anything about the matter, and was consequently confronted with the job of executing Provincially what he had told the people he would carry out. "Be true to your promises," Mr. Macaulay prodded the Treasury benches.

A straight want-of-confidence amendment to the Supply motion, moved by W. A. Baird (Cons., High Park), and deploring the Government's neglect to place an insurance plan before the House, was defeated on a registered division of 57 to 22. There were several cantankerous debate incidents, particularly when Hon. Peter Heenan, Minister of Lands and Forests, and one-time Federal Minister of Labor, accused the Opposition benches of "reeking with corruption," and disgustedly threw some documents on the floor of the Chamber, with the sharp rebuke to the Conservatives of "You make me sick!"

Mr. Heenan said that no one could take Mr. Baird's motion seriously, and that it actually "makes me laugh out loud" to see Conservatives get up in the House and advocate unemployment insurance. Why, said he, when he had been in office at Ottawa, he had written all the Provincial Premiers regarding the question, and Premier Ferguson of Ontario, he added, hadn't even shown him the courtesy of replying to the communication, let alone showing any interest in the proposals advanced.

Hon. M. M. MacBride, Minister of Labor, stated that when he first assumed office he was directed by Premier Hepburn to devote time to the preparation of an unemployment insurance bill. Then, he explained, came the request from Ottawa for a waiver of Provincial rights in that field. It was given, he said, and he claimed that the Province was ready to co-operate, and it was most proper of the Province to await Federal action.

The Opposition Leader, without wasting words, claimed that at Brampton the Lands and Forests Minister and the Premier gave a pledge that if the Ottawa Government did not bring in unemployment insurance this Government would at the first session.

Asks Why Promise Not Kept.

"Why hasn't the Government carried out this promise?" he demanded, and he emphasized that, despite the promise, the entire answer that Mr. Heenan had made to his election pledge was to throw down a paper in the House with the claim, "You make me sick."

"I would like you to be true to your promise," he hammered at the Government benches.

Mr. Heenan, on his feet, angry in gesture, charged that the Opposition benches were "reeking with corruption." Mr. Macaulay demanded a retraction, and the Speaker, on appeal, laid down a weighty decision, to the effect that if the Minister had referred to the benches his remark was in order. If he referred to the men who occupied the benches a retraction was in order. The incident dissolved in laughter, and Mr. MacBride demanded of the Opposition Leader acceptance of his statement that the Provincial Government was attempting to do something to bring about unemployment insurance.

The Premier then reread his letter to Prime Minister King, pledging Ontario's support to a national unemployment insurance scheme. "That was our position then, and that is our position now," he said.

"But," objected Mr. Macaulay, "what does Ontario propose to do if the Dominion fails to get the assent of the three Provinces (Quebec, Alberta and New Brunswick) to embark on a national scheme?"

Macaulay Doubtful.

The Premier again emphasized that Mr. MacBride had been instructed to prepare legislation for this present session. He said the Ottawa Government had clearly indicated its intention of doing something.

"The Premier is an astute politician and must know what is going on at Ottawa. Why not call a spade a spade? Don't you know nothing is going to be done in Ottawa this year about unemployment insurance?" asked the Opposition Leader.

"No, I don't. I only know that a Government usually carries out what is indicated in the Speech from the Throne," replied the Premier. He pointed out this pledge was definitely made in the Ottawa Throne Speech.

Mr. Macaulay referred to the works program statement of Hon. Norman Rogers this week. He said he had studied it carefully and failed to find any reference to a concrete program that would be of benefit to Ontario. The Premier agreed.

"I take it," said Mr. Macaulay, "that political correspondents are correct when they say unemployment insurance is as dead as a door-nail."

In any event, he claimed, he felt it his duty to bring the attention of the people of the Province to this situation. Mr. Hepburn again agreed.