

## Cross Informs Legislature Special Bill Is Planned to Empower Municipal Board to Order Move

### DISCUSSES REFUNDING

Powers of the Ontario Municipal Board to order the annexation by Toronto of suburban municipalities, in event the government-appointed Metropolitan Area Investigating Committee recommended such a course will be conferred upon the board by special legislation during the present session, Hon. Eric Cross, Minister of Welfare and Municipal Affairs, revealed yesterday before the House.

Mr. Cross served notice that a bill, enlarging the board's annexation powers, would be introduced shortly. At the same time, he emphasized that, if annexation proceedings were recommended by the committee, the municipalities affected would be given full right to present their cases before the board.

#### Ready for Action.

"If, therefore," he said in explanation, "the committee should report in favor of annexation of certain of the suburban areas to the city, the necessary legislation will be in existence to implement their recommendations, and all parties and interests affected by any such proposal will have an opportunity to study the report and to be heard with respect to it, before any action is taken.

"If, on the other hand, the committee should report in favor of some entirely different type of solution, such as the setting up of a metropolitan commission, such a course, if accepted by the government, could only be implemented by special legislation at the next session of the Legislature."

In introducing this subject, held by Toronto and the suburban areas to be of vital importance to them, Mr. Cross reminded the House that last session the government refused to support private bills to incorporate Forest Hill Village and York Township into cities until an opportunity had been afforded to study the whole problem.

#### Committee Appointed.

Subsequently, he reminded the members, a committee was appointed under the chairmanship of A. J. B. Gray, Chief Supervisor of the Department of Municipal Affairs and one-time Reeve of York Township. The committee, he said, was not yet in a position to make its report, and no definite action would be taken by the government until that report was received.

Mr. Cross' announcement came at the end of a section of his Throne speech, which, in effect, gave an account of the municipal affairs' activities in relation to debt and taxation problems.

Government assistance to the municipalities through the assumption of highways, mothers' allowances, old-age pensions, and indigent tubercular patients' costs, along with the one mill subsidy, would amount to nearly \$12,000,000, he said. He asserted the government had been alive to the burden of real estate taxation.

"It may be a surprise to the House

to know that real estate taxation in Ontario is at the lowest level it has been in the last ten years," said Mr. Cross, pointing out that it had been reduced by \$12,000,000 to \$116,000,000 in 1937 from the \$128,000,000 figure of 1931. "In fact," he added, "one has to go back to 1925 before one finds that taxation in Ontario was lower for municipal purposes than it is today."

He pointed out that thirty-four municipalities, involving 20 per cent of the gross debt of the province, had defaulted. As a result of the activities of the department, some \$58,000,000 of debt has been refunded and plans are now pending involving another \$19,000,000 of debt. "I am hopeful," said the minister, "that at the end of 1939 at least 75 per cent of the total amount in default will be refinanced.

The minister emphasized his belief that the municipalities were now convinced that the supervision had been beneficial while the lending public were given confidence that supervision had afforded added security.

As the result of the control exercised by the Ontario Municipal Board over capital expenditures and of the increasing demand from ratepayers for curtailment in municipal spending, the municipal debt, fixed at \$494,400,000 in 1933, was reduced by \$68,700,000 in 1937.

The minister revealed the department hoped to inaugurate by next year a standard manual of accounting practice for townships and villages, and out of the schools of municipal administration, which last year had an attendance of some 340 elected and appointed officials, he hoped that the department program would be extended to the point where it could set examinations for municipal clerks and treasurers.

## MIGHT SUPPORT TORY FOR M.P., STATES NIXON

### 'I Am Not a Hide-Bound Party Man,' House Told After Roebuck Says He Is 'Worst' Conservative

#### TRACES HIS CAREER

Provincial Secretary Harry C. Nixon went on record in the Legislature yesterday as ready to support Federal Conservative policy and a Conservative candidate in Federal Brant if, in his opinion, such a combination would best serve the needs of Canada at the present time.

Coming fairly soon after the reported utterance of Premier Hepburn that he would "vote Manion"—if he had to choose on election day between Manion and King—the public declaration of Mr. Nixon is said to have added fresh fuel to the fires of suspicion that the present Queen's Park-Ottawa breach is now far beyond the healing point.

This allegedly significant gesture which passed almost unnoticed in the wind-up of the Legislature debate developed from a mild rebuke which Mr. Nixon had delivered to his one time Cabinet associate, Arthur W. Roebuck, for terming him (Mr. Nixon) "practically the worst Tory in the House."

"Well, it is true," said Mr. Nixon, "that I came into this House with

the Farmers' movement in '19. He (Mr. Roebuck) and I were both candidates in 1923 on that same ticket. He, in East York, was badly defeated. I happened to be successful. I have been guilty of voting for myself on several occasions, but it is rather interesting to note that the conventions which nominated me in those days were made up of identically the same voters who made up the Liberal convention for the selection of Federal candidates. In 1929, when instructions went from the powers in charge at Liberal headquarters to Liberals in Brant that I was to be opposed even if it meant electing a Tory, a Liberal convention was called that passed a resolution saying they felt they were well represented by the sitting member. They then adjourned. So I feel very happy in the company I keep.

"I am not a hide-bound party man. While I have never yet voted Conservative I am still young enough, and if I felt that Conservative leadership in Federal policy promised more for Canada, and a Conservative candidate in Brant would more creditably represent the riding, I would not hesitate to vote for him, and say so. I am, frankly, not pleased with the present setup, but if my honorable friend (Mr. Roebuck) calls me a Tory because I was frequently unhappy in my close association with his peculiar brand of Liberalism—if such it was then—I must plead guilty.

"If I could be absolved from the oath of Cabinet secrecy I might give this House an interesting half-hour. I frankly find myself much happier associated with the Liberalism I find inherent in our present Attorney-General (Hon. G. D. Conant), and if you want a little example of what I mean, let me inform you I supported most enthusiastically his recommendation that restored the King's Counsel patents to the honorable leader opposite (Colonel Drew) and to Hon. G. Howard Ferguson."