

Quotes Hepburn for Hepburn.

Colonel Drew time and time again drew the House's attention to Mr. Hepburn's oft-stated 1934 and 1937 election declarations that he would not increase the gasoline tax, because it would add to the costs of the small motorist, to the costs of transportation by bus and truck; because the poor man would suffer, and the costs of commodities and living would increase. Once when he read from the Premier's accredited remarks, Mr. Hepburn shouted: "Read it—I love the sound of that sweet voice."

This pledge to the people, said Colonel Drew, should be fulfilled by the Premier—should be recognized by the House. Now, the Premier was "jamming through" a tax which six and seven years ago he had labelled "unbearable."

"If," said he, "the improvement in the province's position is as pronounced as the Premier in his budget would have you believe, why not reduce this gas tax instead of increasing it? I'm afraid the Premier's word during the election campaign was just a promise in exchange for a vote—with not the

slightest thought behind it of carrying it out."

"They're Not Behind You."

"The Premier has made a threat and twice repeated it here," said Colonel Drew. "He has introduced an extraordinary angle into the affairs of this House. For three weeks the members on this side of the House have been chided for not talking. Now, when a matter of \$6,000,000 is involved we are told either to shut off the debate or somebody else will be penalized."

"Make no mistake—my members are solidly behind me for this act," snapped Premier Hepburn, as he again warned that the bill would go through, and the municipalities would have to bear their share of the loss of revenue that delay in the increased taxing would produce.

"They're not behind you, look at them sit there silent in their seats," some Tory member called.

"They certainly are," snapped the Premier.

"Oh, no, oh, no," said the Opposition.

"How many of you voted for your present leader at the Conservative convention, I'd like to ask of you?" the Premier challenged, and the Tory benches were quiet.

"Pseudo Robin Hood."

Before the afternoon had ended Hon. Mr. Henry had charged that not a cent of the gas tax of the year ahead or the fiscal year closed had been applied to highways construction or highways maintenance. Colonel Drew had labelled the premier a "pseudo Robin Hood" who had broken his promises to the electors on gasoline tax policy as readily as he had broken his promises with regard to the Canada Temperance Act, C.I.O., unions, and the "once-obnoxious" importation of Quebec power into Ontario. And Mr. Macaulay had accused the government head of near-Prussian methods in his handling of the situation before the House.

"Now, Mr. Premier," he said, "climb down off that level."

With freedom of discussion—instead of the 5 o'clock termination that the prime minister had indicated—the gas tax question could be fully discussed, and the bill put through its necessary stages, Mr. Macaulay argued, within the present calendar day. But nothing was to be gained, he contended, by the stand the Premier had taken.

"What you tell us is," he declared, "if you don't sign on the dotted line this afternoon you will take it out of the hides of the people for which you supposedly have so much concern."

A Liberal back-bencher tried to interpolate some remark, but the fiery former highways administrator waved him into silence with a cutting "Sit down."

"I have only five minutes in which to get in my say," said he, "and I'm going to use that five minutes."

"I'll give five minutes more," smiled Mr. Hepburn.

"I don't need it," Mr. Macaulay hurled back.

Charges "Political Blackmail."

Attorney-General Conant then argued that the setting of a deadline on taxation debates was usual in the House of Commons at Ottawa, where it was used to prevent evasion of the tax being debated. "It is just as necessary for that reason in provincial legislatures," he added. "It would be unsound to hold such a measure as this before the House for a number of days and then make it retroactive."

Mr. Macaulay: "May I ask how much loss of revenue would be involved in delaying this measure for a debate?"

Mr. Conant: "That would depend on the Opposition and how long they gummed it up."

Mr. Macaulay began his speech by expressing hope "that the Prime Minister will pull himself out of this tantrum he's in this afternoon and see that it is only reasonable to give the House time to discuss this matter after 5 o'clock."

He charged that Mr. Hepburn, in setting a time limit and then "taking up half of the time with his own speech," was committing "political blackmail."

"If we don't sign on the dotted line, then he is going to take it out of the hides not only of the municipalities, but even out of the poor T.B. patients. The Premier is behaving exactly like the Germans when they invaded Belgium. They trained their guns on a town when the fighting men were away, and said the women and children would suffer."

"The art treasures and buildings would be destroyed if the white flag was not hung out. I ask you to come off that level, Mr. Premier."

Sees "Swag" Shared.

Attacking Mr. Hepburn's claim of having placed the province in a sound financial position, Mr. Macaulay warned him, "You haven't seen anything yet compared to 1932 and 1933."

"What you'll collect in the next year, and the finances of this province in the next year, depends very largely on the manipulations of affairs by diplomats on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean," he declared, after referring to the position of the province during the "depth of the depression."

He charged the government had executed "an about-face in principle in relation to the gas tax," in that it had been said previously that the proceeds were for the maintenance of roads. "Now you are saying the tax is for T.B. clinics and so forth. The gas tax today is going into the consolidated revenue fund and you are borrowing and issuing bonds for the highways," he declared.

"This scheme of paying out some of the proceeds to municipalities is motivated by the hope of making the municipalities aiders and abettors by giving them a share in the swag of this highway robbery. They would be further ahead if they passed the hat themselves, instead of being allowed to have twenty-five cents on the dollar."

John Newlands (Lib., Hamilton Centre): "Pass the hat in Hamilton and you won't get much."

Mr. Macaulay: Of course, because you've passed the hat there yourself so often, he continued by charging that "the Prime Minister in relying on the alleged gullibility of the public in offering this 25 per cent share of the proceeds."

"Moreover," he continued, "I don't think this matter should be settled in the absence of the Minister of Highways, since you, Mr. Premier, have not admitted the money is going to be used for any other purpose."

Mr. Hepburn: "I may inform the House that the Minister of Highways is absent today because he is acting as a pall-bearer at a funeral in Hamilton. I can also say that in this matter he will vote with the government."

Mr. Macaulay: Well, I should think he is doing better over in Hamilton serving the dead than he could be doing here.

He asserted there were "more than 200,000 applications outstanding against the province for rebates on the gasoline tax" by farmers and others using gas for other purposes than operating motor cars and trucks, and added they had been outstanding "too long."

"I also understand," he continued, "that there are unusually large amounts outstanding against the province on road expenditures."

Mr. Macaulay expressed belief that "we ought to focus our attention not on how we are going to get more money, or how we are going to spend it, but on whether it is fair and sound to levy more taxation."

Cutting down of Provincial Government so as to eliminate duplication of work done by Federal agencies would pay for all the grants expected of the proposed gasoline tax increase, he claimed.

It was twenty minutes after five when Mr. Macaulay sat down. He had concluded with: "Now that I have managed to escape the guillotine by twenty minutes, I will tempt providence no further. I have said all I had to say, and I'll sit down. I think the Premier will be well advised to let other members have their say. I think we should stay on this evening and transact the state's business. We can get the whole discussion, I expect, into the one calendar day of Friday."

There was no idea of the guillotine, when a proposal to increase the gas tax was brought before the House in 1929, said Hon. George Henry. At that time the House sat until nearly 4 o'clock in the morning, he said, although there was other important legislation considered in that time.

Attacks Road Policy.

"The general impression throughout the province," said Mr. Henry, "is that the gasoline tax is for construction and maintenance of highways." He charged that not one cent of the levy last year had ever reached the highways. Although the Premier was on record on former occasions as favoring expenditure of gas tax on roads he raised no objection now to using the money for other purposes.

"I think the people should know to what purpose this tax is put," he continued. "How often did the Provincial Secretary (Harry Nixon) sit over here and protest that some of that revenue was going for general purposes?"

Mr. Henry started to read a list of Liberal members who had voted against the increase ten years ago.

"Did you vote for it then?" asked Mr. Nixon, jumping from his seat. "Yes, I did," but it was justifiable then because the money was to be spent on roads."

"You borrowed every dollar you ever spent on roads," the Provincial Secretary charged. "Nonsense," answered Mr. Henry. "Your government put the highways department \$200,000,000 in debt," Mr. Nixon pursued. "And we got value for it," was Mr. Henry's reply. The former Conservative leader switched his attack to other taxation methods. He agreed there was an improvement effected in collection of income tax