

# HOUSE WARNED OF DEVELOPING HITLERISM HERE

**Roebuck, Croll Caution  
Against Too Wide Curb  
Upon Public Meetings**

**BILL TO BE ALTERED**

While ten Government bills, framed to meet wartime emergencies, were sped through second reading and committee stage in the Legislature yesterday, after House rules had been suspended to spur their passage, an eleventh measure, dealing with public meetings and processions, encountered stiff opposition from two Liberal members and was held over for amendments suggested by A. W. Roebuck and David Croll.

The bill, introduced by Attorney-General Gordon Conant, would make illegal the holding of public meetings in public places unless permits were obtained from municipal authorities. While members of the Legislature voiced approval of its principle, warm debate centred around its phrasing and its application.

Mr. Roebuck, former Attorney-General, cautioned the House against allowing itself to be "tempted to set aside our bulwarks of freedom." In getting rid of Hitlerism abroad, he said, the Legislature should be sure that it did not develop Hitlerism at home.

#### **Would Protect Thought.**

"In time of war," he said, "we must give up the individuality which is our pride and boast in peacetime. We must give up many of our comforts, much of our freedom and even life itself if need be. But one of our most prized institutions has always been the right of public assembly, and in considering this bill we must be careful that we do not suppress that individual thought and criticism that is so necessary to our welfare. If you prevent the functioning of democratic thought, you are playing into the hands of the subversive elements in our community."

Referring to a clause of the bill defining a public place as "any public park, garden, square, court, bridge, highway, road, alley or passage," Mr. Roebuck said that the meaning was not clear.

"According to the literal application of that clause," he said, "if my friend the Attorney-General and I have a talk in our garden we would have to ask General Draper for a permit first. There is nothing to show that 'public garden' is meant."

#### **Inserts Ten "Publics."**

Mr. Conant said he was willing to put the word "public" before each of the places referred to, and introduced an amendment inserting ten "publics" in the defining clause.

"This bill is not the monster it has been painted," he said. "It doesn't affect the right of public assembly in any way. The City of Toronto asked for it in the first place and it might be termed a sort of local option bill. It will only apply in the municipalities which want it. There are many who would make it more rigid than at present. Only today the Mayor of Toronto telephoned me and asked if I would be disposed to make it apply to Massey Hall and other public buildings. That I was not in favor of doing."

Mr. Croll pointed out that there was nothing in the bill to suggest local option and asked that the bill be revised to make this phase perfectly clear. The Attorney-General concurred in his suggestion and the bill was held over in committee stage until amendments could be drafted.