

## EQUALIZATION OF ASSESSMENT IS AIM OF BILL

Counties May Appoint Assessor Under Change Sponsored by Cross

BACKED BY HENRY

In the hope that the problem of equalizing assessments within the counties and throughout the Province may be solved, councils of counties, subject to the Department of Municipal Affairs, may appoint a county assessor under an amendment to the Assessment Act given second reading in the Legislature yesterday.

Hon. Eric Cross, Municipal Affairs minister, said the problem had existed for a long time and cited a recent dispute between Napanee and Lennox and Addington County which was aired this week in the Legislature Private Bills Committee.

He announced, at the same time, that the municipal schools sponsored by the department in different parts of the Province, this year would concentrate largely upon the problem of assessment.

Under the county assessor plan, he suggested, standardized methods of preparing the assessment rolls could be established among the separate municipalities. The move was lauded by Hon. George S. Henry but he urged the Government to take action toward removing the unequal assessments in the counties themselves.

He had read a school report recently in which an inspector, an employee of the Government was recommending to a county that it cut its assessment down 20 to 25 per cent so as to get under the line and receive a higher grant from the Province. "There should be something done to have a more equitable assessment throughout the Province," he said.

Under amendments to the Ontario Municipal Board Act, the jurisdiction of the board is extended to cover charges on water rates supplied by one municipality to another, and removes from the board a duty of intervening in certain strikes and lockouts.

In view of the activities of the conciliation branch of the Department of Labor, under Hon. Norman Hipel, this duty, first impressed upon the board in 1906, is no longer necessary, said Mr. Cross.

"Only once was I faced with the problem," he recalled. "When I was chairman of the board, a strike threatened in London and I hastened there to arrange conferences between the two parties. Then an act of nature intervened in the London flood and washed out the necessity of intervention in the threatened strike."

## LAW TIGHTENED TO EXTEND CURB ON GOLD THEFTS

The Government's determination to stamp out highgrading was reaffirmed in the Legislature yesterday by Mines Minister Paul Leduc and Attorney-General Gordon Conant, during discussion of a bill which tightens the law regarding purchase of unwrought metal. The bill is an amendment to the Unwrought Metal Sales Act and was given second reading.

The word "knowingly" is taken out of the section which forbids persons to purchase or acquire unwrought metal except from license holders, because of the difficulty of proving knowledge in cases of this kind. Exception to the clause was taken by John Glass (Lib., St. David), who claimed that would put the onus on citizens to prove their innocence.

"It is a bad principle," said Mr. Glass. "It makes a citizen victim of a charge he can't defend."

Mr. Conant denied that this was the intention of the Government. No new offenses was being conceived, he said. The bill was aimed at wiping out highgrading, which annually took a toll of hundreds of thousands of dollars, he said.

### Says Difficulty Great

"Undoubtedly highgrading is the largest difficulty in the mining industry," continued the Attorney-General. "The mining companies go to great expense to curb this illegal activity but it still continues. We have brought to justice many of the offenders and we intend to push our efforts until the crime of highgrading is wiped out."

"The section to which my honorable friend takes exception imposes upon the person purchasing unwrought metal the necessity of making sure of his source of purchase," said Mr. Conant. "If a man is dealing within the law, he knows from whom he purchases metal."

Mr. Leduc, who sponsored the bill, said he had written to the mining departments of the chief mining Provinces of Canada, informing them of the amendments.

"Highgrading not only robs the owner but the Province and the Dominion as well," said Mr. Leduc. "This section is a reasonable and proper one. A person who conducts his metal purchasing business in a legitimate manner has nothing to fear. It is a practical impossibility for law officers to obtain proof that a man knowingly purchased stolen metal."

## SAYS COMPANY RETAINED JUDGE AS SECRETARY

Conant Promises Full Inquiry Into Lengthy Charge by Col. Drew

CITE TRANSACTIONS

Opposition Leader George Drew brought to the attention of Attorney-General Conant in the Legislature yesterday, a statement in a recent issue of the Financial Post which claimed that County Judge Ambrose Shea had been an officer of the Frontenac Construction Company at a time when the company was engaged in carrying out contracts for the Department of Highways. Judge Shea was a magistrate for the City of Kingston at the time.

Mr. Conant said this was his first intimation of the matter and promised a full investigation of the facts.

Col. Drew rose before the Orders of the Day and quoted the following paragraph from the Post article:

"Associated with Leslie G. Ogilvie in the direction of the Frontenac Construction Company was J. Ambrose Shea, K.C., of Kingston, a former secretary of the Kingston Liberal Association. Mr. Shea was a director of the company and either its secretary or treasurer during the period of most of the transactions cited. (These transactions referred to contracts obtained at Ottawa by the company). During the same period he was also a magistrate for the City of Kingston and surrounding counties. Magistrate Shea resigned from the board of the Frontenac Company during the summer of 1939. On Jan. 4, 1940, he was appointed a County Court Judge for the County of York."

"This article requires some answer," said Col. Drew. "This company had contracts for \$408,000 from the Highways Department from 1937 to 1939, according to Public Accounts. This article claims that the company had as an officer J. Ambrose Shea, then, as the paper says, a full-time magistrate. The article refers to the terms of the Magistrates Act which says that no magistrate shall practice any profession or business but shall devote his whole time to the duties of a magistrate."

Mr. Conant said the person in question was recently appointed to the county court bench and for that reason any investigation might be an unusual one.