

HIPEL CHARGES BID TO WRECK STRIKE PEACE

Claims W. Gunn Spread
False Rumors; Latter
Denies Accusations

NAMED IN HOUSE

Charges that William A. Gunn, secretary-treasurer of the Toronto Retail Fuel Dealers' Association, had prejudiced amicable settlement of the coal strike by spreading false rumors, was made in the Legislature yesterday by Hon. Norman Hipel, Minister of Labor. The Minister rose before the orders of the day and said he wished to assure the House and the people of the Province that the strike had been definitely settled and that it was not of a temporary nature.

Mr. Hipel referred to a report in The Globe and Mail which described the coal agreement as hanging in the balance. This had resulted in uneasiness and his office had been besieged with telephone calls from coal dealers, their employees and the public, wanting to know if the strike was really over.

There was no mention of Mr. Gunn's name until Provincial Secretary Harry Nixon asked his colleague to name the person he was referring to, and Mr. Hipel immediately complied. He charged Mr. Gunn with circulating false rumors and with having told a Hamilton group that he had all kinds of "pull" with the Labor Department and could get anything they wanted.

"I notified the Hamilton people my office was open at any time and they were welcome to come and see me about their problems," said Mr. Hipel. "This man became disgruntled and spread false stories. He acts as secretary-treasurer and adviser to a small group of dealers. He went so far as to run over to my department yesterday, when he felt a final settlement was about to be made, and tried to influence the press and attempted to get his picture taken."

The Minister asked the public not to get excited over the coal situation and order their fuel as required. He expressed every confidence in the men who had signed the strike settlement.

Replies to Hipel.

Replying to Mr. Hipel last night, Mr. Gunn said he was called to Queen's Park by the president of the Toronto Fuel Dealers' Association, Norman Blanchard.

"Mr. Blanchard wished to consult with me regarding the terms of the agreement," said Mr. Gunn. "I spoke very favorably of the agreement and the Government's work in effecting a settlement. I would refer you to Mr. Blanchard as to what I actually said."

"I refute the charges of Mr. Hipel, which I would simply term low-down political rubbish. I have always thought he was above that sort of thing and the use of such tactics. It shocks me to think we have a Minister who would go out of his way to injure a fellow-citizen who has not the privileges of the House."

"I did head a delegation of coal dealers from Hamilton shortly after Mr. Hipel became Minister of Labor, but only because they asked me to do so. He told them in front of me there was no need for them to secure my services as his door was open to them at all times. I never at any time said I had 'pull' with the Labor Department."

COUNT OF LIBEL AGAINST PAPER URGED BY DREW

Charges Contained in
Report Were Not Made,
He Declares in House

A demand that the Crown take action for criminal libel against the Toronto Daily Star because of a "dastardly and cowardly attack on the integrity of the civil service" was made on the floor of the Legislature yesterday by Opposition Leader George Drew.

Attorney-General Gordon Conant said the matter was already under careful scrutiny of his law officers and if the facts were as alleged, prosecution would follow.

The Toronto Star is alleged to have published in its issues of Thursday, Feb. 22, charges purported to have been made before the lands and forests investigation committee by Charles W. Cox (Lib., Port Arthur). These charges were to the effect that civil servants had been "greased" by sums of money to influence their actions.

No such charges were made before the committee, Colonel Drew asserted, and no aspersions were cast on the integrity of members of the civil service. He claimed it was no error in reporting, and called upon the Government to evoke the law against "this venomous publication."

The Leader of the Opposition was joined by Hon. Paul Leduc, chairman of the timber probe committee, in a denunciation of the newspaper

in question. Hon. Peter Heenan, Minister of Lands and Forests, also contributed his views, but he made Mr. Cox the target for his attack, declaring that the charges supposed to have been made by Mr. Cox were in the manuscript which he (Cox) handed to the press. When Mr. Cox came before the committee, however, he lacked the "intestinal fortitude" to make them, Mr. Heenan asserted.

The attack on the newspaper was started in the timber committee itself by Colonel Drew, and was carried over to the floor of the House by Mr. Leduc, who rose before the orders of the day.

The eight-column streamer in the night edition of the Star: "M.P.P. charges timber graft; political toll gate," was absolutely without basis in fact, Colonel Drew told the House. The statements which he complained of were not made before the committee but they had created an impression not easily forgotten, he stated. It was "dastardly and cowardly," claimed Colonel Drew, particularly in view of the fact that members of the civil service could not defend themselves on the floor of the House as could elected representatives.

Colonel Drew charged that the Star, after publishing the report, had actually increased the scope of the libel by changing words which were in quotation in earlier editions. He declared that freedom of the press must be preserved, but that freedom of the press "does not mean unbridled license on the part of wealthy press magnates."