

LEGISLATURE ADJOURNED FOR 3 WEEKS

Hepburn Denies 'Snap Election' Is to Be Sprung CROSS CRITICAL

The Ontario Legislature adjourned for a probable three weeks' recess yesterday afternoon, with the assurance from Premier Hepburn that the Government has no intention of "playing any trick" on the Conservative Opposition during this period.

The Premier declared that the House would convene again early in March, and he stressed that the question of a Provincial election had not been considered. Later he told the press: "Rumor has it that the adjournment of the House is to enable the Government to call a snap election. That is absolutely incorrect."

The first sour note in the abbreviated session was sounded by Eric W. Cross, Liberal member for Haldimand-Norfolk, and former Minister of Welfare and Municipal Affairs, who protested adjournment without the members being consulted. Mr. Cross and the Premier were involved in several warm exchanges during the sitting. In the dying stages of the proceedings the former Welfare Minister again clashed with the Premier, and Speaker Clark warned him that his remarks were "almost a wilful violation of the rules of the House."

The Premier introduced a motion to pay the salaries of civil servants up to March 31, 1942. He explained that the motion originally contained provision for "other expenditures," but this had been deleted as he was confident the House would reconvene early in March. Provision was also made for the payment of salary advances to civil servants who, in the event of illness, asked for a month's salary in advance.

In moving adjournment of the House "until a day to be named by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council," the Premier declared that it was solely for the purpose of straightening out the financial picture with Ottawa.

"I find myself incapable of sitting down with the Treasury officials and planning a Budget," said the Premier. "I assure the Opposition that I have no intention of playing any tricks on them. This adjournment is for no other purpose than that which I outlined yesterday."

Mr. Cross said the Premier had answered the question in his mind as to when the House would likely reassemble. There were some important bills on the order paper, and he understood that the Minister of Municipal Affairs intended to bring in amendments to the Assessment Act which could very well take two or three weeks of discussion.

"My first objection was to adjournment of the House," said Mr. Cross. "Since then the Attorney-General has outlined the difficulties confronting Ontario in connection with the corporation and income tax agreement. I feel that these are largely of a technical nature and could be straightened out without too much trouble."

The Speaker, who had previously checked the Liberal member for being out of order, warned him at this stage that he was committing "almost a wilful violation of the rules of the House." This drew a "Hear, hear," from Premier Hepburn.

Mr. Cross argued that, while there was no motion to adjourn immediately before the House, the motion to pay civil service salaries was joined with the other.

Urges Ottawa Trip.

"This motion would be unnecessary if this House carried on business," said Mr. Cross. "I urge the Attorney-General and the Prime Minister as well to go to Ottawa in a spirit of conciliation and cooperation. If they do so they can get this agreement straightened out in a short time, otherwise months may elapse before an agreement is reached. The utmost despatch should prevail."

Rising before the orders of the day, Mr. Cross said he wished to know if the Government intended to introduce a motion for adjournment of the House. He declared that the Premier had not informed the House of his intention to move such a motion, but had informed the newspaper reporters following Tuesday's session.

"I wish to state most emphatically that I am opposed to that course," said Mr. Cross. "I do so—"

"The honorable member is out of order," interrupted the Speaker. "A motion to adjourn is not debatable."

Claims Privilege.

"As a matter of personal privilege I should be allowed to rise before the orders of the day," replied Mr. Cross. "Yesterday we had an amazing suggestion on the part of the Leader of the Opposition and an amazing confession of weakness on the part of the Government in accepting it. Surely I have a right to comment on it."

Mr. Speaker said he wished to extend every opportunity to the members of the House and had no desire to curb any member.

"I only ask that rules of the House be observed, Mr. Speaker," said Premier Hepburn.

"Then I will move that the House be adjourned to consider a matter of importance," declared Mr. Cross.

One Member's Opposition.

"In view of the opposition of one member, the motion to adjourn cannot be put," said the Speaker. "Furthermore, no notice of motion has been given."

"Whatever arrangements the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition may have, surely the members of the House are entitled to express their opinion, and this is the only opportunity I have to express my views," protested Mr. Cross. "If I might rise to a point of personal privilege I'll do that."

"In the course of the Prime Minister's remarks, I had hope that he would refrain in this House from the extended criticism he has made from time to time of the Federal Government."

Remarks Not Privileged.

Mr. Hepburn interrupted with a demand for "order" and the Speaker ruled the member's remarks did not fall within the scope of personal privilege.

Mr. Cross declared that the Premier, Tuesday in the House, had charged that the word of the Federal Government could not be taken and that in matters of welfare, had been broken again and again.

"I wish to say that as long as I was Minister of Welfare, the word of the Dominion Government was not broken," he said.

He was again ruled out of order, but Mr. Cross, persisting, declared that the word of a Federal Minister of the Crown had been challenged "and I repeat that word was not broken while I was at the head of the department."

Mr. Hepburn Replies.

"I feel obliged to rise on a point of privilege," said Premier Hepburn as Mr. Cross resumed his seat. "I did make that statement and I will give some facts. I sat in with Mr. King and with Mr. Croil, the then Minister of Welfare . . ."

At this point the Speaker made a comment which was not audible in the press gallery, and Mr. Hepburn declared: "My word has been challenged. I think I am entitled to speak in reply."

Continuing, the Premier said: "Two points have been raised by my disgruntled friend. Let me say now that there was no understanding between the Leader of the Opposition and myself regarding adjournment of the House. It is a very nasty and unwarranted inference, and he knows it."

"Unfortunate Tenure."

The Premier at this point referred to Mr. Cross's administration of the Welfare and Municipal Affairs portfolio as "his short and unfortunate tenure of office." The Premier, in support of his charge that the Dominion Government had broken faith with Ontario, said that the Dominion had agreed on a 40-40-20 division of relief costs, the Dominion and the Province each to pay 40 per cent and the municipalities 20 per cent.

"While the Legislature was still in session, the Dominion Government, without consulting us, reduced its monthly payments for relief by \$200,000," said the Premier. "The late Mr. Rogers asked for a consultation with Ontario and we sent representatives to Ottawa. When they arrived they were told there would be a further reduction in the relief grant, and there was nothing for them to discuss."

"Clubbed Into It."

"We refused to sign the new agreement on the ground that the Dominion Government had not lived up to its word. We were told that unless we signed the agreement there would be no money forthcoming, and for three months nothing

was given. Finally we were clubbed into it."

Opposition Leader Drew then rose on a question of personal privilege to declare, "I strongly resent the utterly unfounded insinuation that there was any understanding that dictated that course."

He was referring to Mr. Cross' suggestion that there was an arrangement between the Prime Minister and Colonel Drew on the matter of the adjournment.

Colonel Drew cited that last year he had pointed out the same thing, that the Legislature could not deal effectively with legislation unless it knew exactly the basis on which it stood. "I am glad to see," he added, "that the Premier this year has acted on my suggestion."