

HEPBURN QUIT TO ELIMINATE RACIAL ISSUE

Declares Ottawa Sought an Ontario Election With French vs. English

Fear that a racial issue might develop in Ontario if a Provincial election had been brought on last fall without the Legislature first giving approval to the Quebec-Ontario power agreement was one of the reasons why Mitchell Hepburn resigned the Premiership.

The former Premier made this statement to the Legislature last night to suddenly attentive members during second reading of the bill to ratify the agreement. Mr. Hepburn said the King Liberals were pressing for an election in Ontario last fall, and he did not favor an election until the power agreement now before the House had been ratified.

"If I had yielded to pressure from Ottawa for an election the issue would have been a racial one," he declared, following a clash with Opposition Leader George Drew. "The Province of Quebec would have been pictured as the dog in the manger and I did not want that. I went through one campaign which was based on a religious issue, and I wanted no more."

Mr. Hepburn's unexpected and dramatic revelation of one of the reasons for his resignation from the premiership, was regarded as a definite indication that the Conant Government will go to the country this year. His declaration that he opposed holding an election until the power agreement had been ratified, was taken as meaning that the barrier to holding an election this year would disappear with ratification of the measure.

Col. Drew Objects.

Lt.-Col. George Drew, Progressive Conservative Leader, clashed with Mr. Hepburn over the suggested racial issue. He charged that Mr. Hepburn's speech was "one of the most improper ever made in the Legislature." "There was not the slightest justification for the former Premier's intimation that the racial issue had arisen out of the Opposition's demand for more information on the power agreement," declared Col. Drew.

"It is a deliberate attempt to create an impression utterly remote from the debate," charged Col. Drew.

Mr. Hepburn, who earlier had criticized William Stewart, Progressive Conservative member for Park-

dale, for a remark concerning the Dionne quints and the tongue they would use at a ship launching, replied that he was not accusing the Opposition of attempting to raise a racial issue. He accused Ottawa of wanting to create a racial issue in an Ontario election.

Referring to his resignation as Premier, Mr. Hepburn remarked, "I am glad to move over one seat, now that we have obviated a racial issue in this Province."

Mr. Hepburn praised the French-Canadian people as being prepared to "shed their last drop of blood for Canada," but he insisted that French-Canadians could not be made to become Imperialists and he could not blame them. Had the Battle of the Plains of Abraham gone the other way, and had I been raised as a member of a minority, I could not have been the same Imperialist."

"You cannot make the French-Canadians Imperialists," he declared. "And you cannot push them around."

Was Anxious About Power.

"I do not tolerate the hot-headed Imperialists any more than I do the rabid isolationists of Quebec," continued the Provincial Treasurer. "If I had yielded to pressure from Ottawa and brought on an election last fall, my friends opposite would have damned Quebec for standing in the way of Ontario's progress. I was more anxious to bring this bill before this House than to remain Premier of Ontario."

"I know my friends in the House won't like it," remarked Mr. Hepburn, after accusing Ottawa of trying to foment racial warfare. "But it is the truth. They didn't succeed, however, because I refused to bring on an election."

Mr. Hepburn said there was nothing speculative about the agreement. When the war ended, as all wars must do, he believed there would be a highly profitable market for the power in the United States.

"Two Crown bodies have agreed on an equitable division of power sites, and it is my view that it will help to create a binding link between the two races," said Mr. Hepburn. "We asked Quebec to enter into this agreement. They didn't ask us. They have been eminently fair."

Mr. Hepburn predicted that the time would come when a Government "not as stubborn" as the present one, would be in power at Ottawa and then it would be possible to negotiate power agreements to develop various sites which would be an everlasting source of revenue to the Province.

"The leader of the Opposition says he wants more information. I don't know how much more he wants to know after listening to the member for Carleton (A. H. Acres, Prog. Con.) who spoke on Hydro at the afternoon session."

"He talks of priorities. It's a hypothetical matter. We'll get them if this bill goes through. I believe if we pass the bill it will then become effective."

Praising the Premier, Dr. Hogg and others who had carried on the power negotiations with Quebec, Mr. Hepburn reminded the House: "We were seeking the deal. I think Quebec has been manifestly fair in the way it has treated us."

Sought An Alternative.

Mr. Hepburn said that Ontario and the Dominion had gone through with the St. Lawrence agreement, after which the United States Congress had thrown it out. There was no reason to believe that Congress would have passed a bill after that for development of the St. Lawrence.

Then came the war, and one of the first things he had done was to consult with the Leader of the Opposition and offer to remove any objections so the St. Lawrence development could be proceeded with as it was realized it would be a long war. Three and a half years later no action had yet been taken by Congress. Even the impact of war seemed insufficient to get it through, and it seemed it would not be done for many years to come.

"Having arrived at that decision, we turned to another source, the Ottawa River," said Mr. Hepburn. Of Decew development, he said: "If we get anything out of it we'll be lucky—but that's over the dam."

In the Sifton application for charters for development of the Ottawa, he said, "both political parties share in the blame." The Sifton bill was killed, "and we were told the Ottawa River was cleared for development by both Provinces."

"I did not resign as Premier over any disagreement with Premier Godbout on this issue," declared Mr. Hepburn. "One reason I resigned was because of pressure on me to call an election last fall," he said. An election then would have brought up discussions that might have proved harmful.

It was at this stage that Mr. Hepburn accused W. J. Stewart (Prog. Con., Toronto-Parkdale) of raising a language issue when he asked if the Dionne quints were going to speak in two languages when they christen five warships in the United States for use by Britain.

Mr. Henry attacked the speech on Hydro given by Hydro Vice-Chairman Houck, declaring it was a speech that would fit at a social banquet, all generalities, "but it won't satisfy this House. He should have been better armed. It's the same speech he had probably given to service clubs."

Hon. T. B. McQuesten challenged Mr. Henry's complaint about shortage of Eastern Ontario power, saying: "It has always had ample power. Show me any demand that has not been satisfied."