

MARCH 17

Present Bill Tomorrow Establishing Committee On Security: Conant

Opposition Amendment to Make Scope More Specific Is Defeated

The Government majority in a Legislature vote last night rejected an Opposition amendment which sought to make more specific the scope of the proposed social security committee and the resolution calling for the setting up of such a body was adopted without a dissenting vote.

The bill to establish the committee and set out its scope and authority will be introduced by Premier Conant tomorrow. At that time the Premier will discuss it fully, he told the House.

There was no quarrel with the general principle of the resolution itself, the Opposition agreeing with the Government on its importance. But in expressing the viewpoint of his group, Lt. Col. George A. Drew, Opposition leader, criticized the vagueness of the wording of the resolution and asserted that on a matter of such necessity to the welfare of the nation, nothing loose or vague should be allowed to pass. The amendment offered by the Opposition was specific and clear cut, he declared, and left no doubt as to the problems to be explored by a committee.

Discussion Opportunity.

In reply Premier Conant said there would be ample opportunity for members of the House to discuss the provisions and scope of the bill when it was introduced. He agreed with Aurelian Belanger (Lib., Prescott) that the resolution was purposely worded in general terms so as to place no limits on the work of the committee. The Opposition amendment, said the Premier, was not acceptable to the Government.

The Opposition amendment provided that the words after the word "authority" in the resolution be struck out and the following substituted:

"To undertake, with special reference to the constitutional relationship between the Dominion and Provincial Governments, a survey of existing social scheme here and elsewhere and with due regard to the probable course of events after the war, to make recommendations for a unified, comprehensive and workable plan which will assure a proper standard of work, wages, health, education and living conditions for all our people, with particular reference to the re-establishment of the men and women in our fighting forces and war industries."

An earlier Opposition amendment was ruled out of order in the afternoon by the Speaker.

After a lively session which saw Premier Conant and Health Minister Harold Kirby under Opposition fire, George H. Challies (Prog. Con., Grenville-Dundas) introduced the

second amendment. This called for the Government to undertake, with special reference to the constitutional relationship between the Dominion and Provincial Governments, a survey of existing social schemes here and elsewhere, "with due regard to the probable course of events after the war."

The amendment further proposed that the committee on social security make recommendations for a unified, comprehensive and workable plan to ensure a proper standard of work, wages, health, education and living conditions for all citizens, with particular reference to the re-establishment of the men and women in the fighting forces and in industry.

Appeal Ruling.

The Speaker's ruling that the first Opposition amendment was out of order was appealed by the Progressive Conservatives, who called for a division of the House. The Speaker was sustained by a vote of 45 to 16. Prior to the taking of the vote Leopold Macaulay (Prog. Con., South York) called the action "intolerant," and asserted that if the amendment was already covered by the Government resolution, as stated, "we might as well go home."

Supporting the need for social security legislation, Mr. Macaulay criticized the Government for its delay in bringing down legislation that should have been provided several years ago, and declared the chances were "fifty-fifty" whether the Government would "take its courage in its hands and bring down any bill at all."

C.C.F. and other left-wing parties with roseate social plans he decried. What was needed he outlined as full employment at good wages, employment through controlled individual enterprise, a drastic change in the educational system whereby higher education and university training would be made available through

scholarships to those best capable of benefitting from it and aiding the State.

Unemployment insurance, free medical care and other social needs could not wait until after the war, he said.

Federal Bureau Ideal.

The ideal plan, Mr. Macaulay felt, was a Federal bureau to subsidize local administration in the Provinces. With Arthur Roebuck, M.P., he said, he was against centralization of government. He looked with apprehension at the Province "holding out the tin cup" to Ottawa for subsidies and declared the Provinces, which raise the money, should spend it.

Underpayment of school teachers was the complaint of G. H. Dunbar (Prog. Cons., Ottawa South), once a teacher himself. He urged that their salary minimum shouldn't be \$400 or \$600, but much higher, in keeping with their importance to the country. He also made a plea for consideration for private enterprise, which, after all, paid the bulk of the taxes. Control of credit was advised.

Resuming the debate on the Speech from the Throne, W. J. Stewart (Prog. Con., Toronto Parkdale) expressed regret that the Speech had not forecast consideration for the country's basic industry, agriculture. He suggested direct subsidies to aid farmers in beef as in cheese and that a share of race track and amusement taxation might go to aid county fairs. He asked the Minister of Agriculture if there had been any investigation of a report that abattoirs had got a corner on beef and butter and were responsible for shortages. Fixed prices to farmers for their products for the next two years was also suggested to give them some secure foundation for planning production.

Co-operation of military and civil police to reduce lawlessness, a commission to inquire into temperance and a study of a possible change in election methods in view of the public's failure to utilize their franchise also were advised. Mr. Stewart also asked replacement in school textbooks of "patriotic gems" that had been removed.

Would Bonus Production.

Encouragement of food production by bonus and otherwise also was urged by J. W. Freeborn (Lib., Middlesex North) for food was Canada's "secret weapon to win this war for the Allies." But with conditions as they were, especially as regarded manpower, he felt it would be a "new miracle" if the farmers in 1943 reached the food production quota set for them as they had in other war years. A straightforward, long-term, clear-cut policy for agriculture, to end uncertainties, was needed, he said.