

APRIL 7

Labor Relations Board Amendment Rejected In Bargaining Debate

Second Reading Given Before Legislature; Bill to Committee

An Opposition amendment, to substitute a Labor Relations Board for a labor court was defeated and second reading was given to the collective bargaining bill in the Ontario Legislature last night. The amendment was moved by L. M. Frost (Prog. Con., Victoria) and seconded by Leopold Macaulay (Prog. Con., South York). It was defeated without a division of the House.

The collective bargaining bill now goes to committee and it is likely the Opposition members will renew their urging for amendments. The labor court provision was stoutly defended by Labor Minister Peter Heenan, who wound up with a plea for withdrawal of the amendment. He charged attempts had been made by managements opposed to the bill to have it delayed.

The bill amending the Judicature Act to establish the labor court was also given second reading in face of Opposition criticism, the House dividing 45 to 12. Col. Drew objected that, though it was known that it was to be a one-judge court, the bill did not so specify.

Premier Conant, moving second reading, declared the bill complete and constitutional on the strength of advice of his law officers.

Supporting the collective bargaining bill, C. W. Cox (Lib., Port Arthur) warned that labor was apprehensive of courts. Ian Strachan (Lib., Toronto St. George), A. Belanger (Lib., Prescott) and J. F. MacKay (Lib., Hamilton East) spoke for the bill. W. J. Stewart (Prog. Con., Toronto Parkdale) said he had heard many complaints about it, and even that it would be contested in the courts.

Hon. Peter Heenan had warned against passing the Opposition amendment, which, he said, "would be the death of the collective bargaining bill."

Answers Criticism.

Premier Gordon Conant answered Opposition criticism of the bill by pointing out that collective bargaining meant many things to many persons and that "construction of a bill of this kind becomes a matter of compromise to reconcile the views of many persons." He added that the bill "will be effective to accomplish the object for which it has been introduced."

Provision in the bill for establishment of a Labor court came under heaviest criticism. Claim by Leopold Macaulay (Prog. Con., South York) that setting up of such a court was ultra vires of the Provincial Government was denied by the Premier, who said that "the question has been given the utmost care and consideration by a very capable constitutional lawyer, and I'm satisfied it's quite within the jurisdiction of the Province and is constitutional."

The bill, he said, makes trade unions lawful in the eyes of the civil law, gives employees the right of freedom of organization, prevents discrimination, makes illegal "yellow dog" contracts, forbids coercion and "leaves enforcement in the hands of a court, as it should be." There was no interference with liberty, since an employee could join a union or not as he saw fit. That the bill was "vague and uncertain" Mr. Conant denied.

To Opposition Leader George Drew's question as to provision for enforcement, the Premier said: "The court can restrain any person from committing any violation. I don't know what more ample provisions could be made." He felt that enforcement through police courts would be offensive to thousands.

Premier Conant denied that a one-man labor court's powers were more restricted than those of a board of three. "Very few people will wilfully disobey an order of a judge of the Supreme Court of Ontario," he said. "If the order is disobeyed, he has liberty of action to impose any penalty he sees fit."

Some Fear Monopoly.

Mr. Macaulay said a great many people were worried and could not sleep at night for fear that the collective bargaining bill would be used by labor as a weapon to create a monopoly. The abuses by capital more than a half-century ago were mentioned by the speaker as being a precedent for labor. But he expressed the view that there was little reason to be disturbed by abuse of power because in the long run it brought on its own destruction.

Speaking to second reading of the bill, Labor Minister Hon. Peter Heenan said there should be no division in the House on the principle of collective bargaining, and appealed to the members "to protect the workers of the Province and let us have an all-out war effort." The principle was recognized in the Treaty of Versailles, and he felt he could apologize for all political parties for not having introduced such legislation in Ontario years ago, since "every citizen in Canada is pledged to that principle."

Approving the principle of the bill, Opposition Leader Drew urged the Government to defer second reading and redraft the act "with proper