

LABOR COURT 'BATTLEGROUND' FROST ASSERTS

Conant Says Collective Bargaining Measure 'Pre-Trouble Legislation'

Acrimony and personalities entered for the first time in the discussion of the Collective Bargaining Bill in committee in the Legislature yesterday. After an afternoon of debate the members had progressed only part way through the bill. The House at one stage faced the unusual situation of an appeal to the Speaker from a ruling of the committee chairman, R. Patterson (Lib., Grey North). Leopold Macaulay (Prog. Con., York South) made the appeal "with indescribable agony."

It was on the Opposition amendment that there should be a labor tribunal of three representing employer, employee and the public, instead of the proposed one-judge Labor Court. It was ruled out as duplicating a previous motion lost on second reading.

L. M. Frost (Prog. Con., Victoria) objected to the Labor Court as providing a "battleground" instead of "conciliation, arbitration and outlawing of strikes for reasons of common sense." Premier Conant insisted it was a collective bargaining bill and had never been discussed as anything else.

Enforcement Bases.

To Col. Drew's objection at absence of bases for enforcement, the Premier said no one would disregard an order of a Supreme Court judge. To which Col. Drew replied that Mr. Conant, as Attorney-General, had "studiously disregarded" such a decision in the Scott Act, and others might not recognize official dignity.

"Have we returned to the Middle Ages, to the Star Chamber?" demanded Col. Drew, citing the Premier's statement that the Labor Court's power would be wide enough to send a man to jail for a day or for his life or fine him \$1 or \$1,000,000.

"The Minister of Labor will tell us about the industrial court in the Old Country," said Col. Drew. "It is not a Supreme Court, but the very sort of court we are asking for here. I do not suggest that we slavishly follow the practice adopted in Britain, but I do say that out of all the wealth of experience they have had, there must have emerged methods that should be studied.

Resume Monday, Conant Announces

The Ontario Legislature will not prorogue until next week, Premier Conant informed the House last night. A drive to finish all business within the next day or two would mean long hours and would cut short debate, the Premier said.

"We will meet tomorrow and adjourn at a convenient hour and then resume Monday," said Mr. Conant. "With the co-operation of all members we will be able to finish in good time next week."

Opposition Leader George Drew commended the Premier for affording an opportunity for debate on the matters that remain to be dealt with by the House.

"They take the position that the only satisfactory way of settling disputes between employer and employee is to bring their representatives together with a chairman who should, as far as possible, represent public authority. They gather, not as combatants but as men prepared to sit down and discuss their problems."

Col. Drew said a one-judge labor court was likely to produce the very friction the bill hoped to avoid. He charged the bill was badly drafted and could not be interpreted. Section 164 of the Criminal Code, he said, provided for a year's imprisonment for breach of a court order where no other penalties were provided. "That's pretty tough," he said. "There are two penalties, first, the year's penalty and second, the wide-open penalties referred to by the Premier."

Premier Conant said that if machinery were set up for appeal from an order of the Labor Court "it would be disastrous to industry and the House should not even consider it." Col. Drew replied that it was an "extraordinary statement" and the Premier was "getting just a little cockier," and doing his utmost to draw a herring across the trail.

"Guillotine Already."

Refusal by the chairman of Mr. Macaulay's amendment for a three-man court elicited from him the remark: "Surely we're not going to have the guillotine already in committee?" Premier Conant called it "an abbreviated edition of a previous resolution."

Minister of Labor Peter Heenan, rising to explain the bill, said he wondered if the members of the Opposition knew what they were legislating.