

STANDS FIRM ON PRINCIPLE OF HEALTH BILL

The municipal health services bill was given second reading in the Legislature yesterday after the C.C.F. Opposition had criticized the principle of the bill on the ground that it failed to give municipalities any control over the expenditure of their own money.

The Government's answer to this viewpoint was given by Premier George Drew, Provincial Treasurer Leslie Frost and Attorney-General Leslie Blackwell. It was pointed out by the Government that there was nothing dictatorial or bureaucratic in the proposed system; that a local municipality could devise its own health services plan. The Premier said the C.C.F.'s criticism was founded on a complete misconception of the plan as embodied in the bill.

There was no amendment or opposition offered to the bill by the C.C.F. group when the motion to give second reading was put to the House. Opposition Leader E. B. Jolliffe said he understood the Government was prepared to consider amendments to the bill in committee. Premier Drew, in answer to this point, said no amendments would be entertained so far as the principle of the bill was concerned.

"This is a Government bill and will be dealt with as such," the Premier declared.

Establishes Sound Basis.

Provincial Treasurer Frost said it was not the desire of the Government to be dictatorial in the matter. He stressed that the bill established a sound basis for future extension of health services. The setting up of a board to administer the scheme would prevent the creation of a patchwork plan that would give us much trouble as the present system of assessment in Ontario. Unlike the Dominion's health services proposals, the Ontario plan would not press heavily on the taxpayers, because it permitted municipalities to adopt whatever plan suited their ability to pay.

C. H. Millard (C.C.F., York West) declared that "if the people are going to be taxed for it, they should have a large say in the administration," and complained that not enough authority was left in the hands of local boards. There should be, he said, on the central committee, representatives of local governments. The principle of terminating the setup by outside authority should be withdrawn, Mr. Millard maintained.

Miss Agnes Macphail (C.C.F., York East) told the House that all rural Ontario wanted was legislation to permit it to look after itself and did not welcome the proposed central health control. Local administration of health services had worked satisfactorily in Manitoba and Saskatchewan as evidenced by letters from doctors there. The cost had been only about \$10 a year for a family of five or six. Rural folk wanted to raise the money themselves, but they wanted control of it, she said. She agreed that there should be a supervisory committee, but believed control should be in the hands of local bodies.

MINIMUM OF \$30 FOR OLD AGE PENSION URGED

The Bank of Canada should be brought into close co-operation with the Province in matters of financing, and bank loans should be available to small business men on reasonable terms, Flt. Lt. L. E. Wismer (C.C.F., Toronto Riverdale) declared in the Legislature yesterday. Opening the Budget debate as financial critic for the C.C.F. Opposition, Flt. Lt. Wismer urged that old-age pensions be paid automatically to rich and poor alike at the age of 60, and that the minimum should be \$30 per month. He called for pensions to the blind to be paid when blindness begins, not at 40.

The Royal Commission to study the educational problem with a view to relieving real estate of half its present tax burden should deal only with this question, due to the need for speed in reaching a solution, he declared.

He said the Government should have plans ready to lay more stress on base-metals development, and the protection of miners and municipalities in gold-mining areas of the Province. A major part of the Government's mining policy, said Flt. Lt. Wismer, must be the protection of the mining communities from sufferings brought upon them by international factors over which they had no control.

Urges Forest Rehabilitation.

The speaker advised plowing back excess of revenues over expenditures as a step toward rehabilitation of forest areas, the spending of more money in protection of game and restocking lakes and rivers, and extension of rural electrification as soon as labor and materials were available.

The Government should do its utmost, he felt, to encourage immigration from the British Isles after the war. He urged, too, that a housing scheme was an immediate postwar need, and "an obvious method of creating large-scale employment opportunities."

With syphilis the cause of many cases of insanity being cared for in Provincial institutions, he commended the Minister of Health for inclusion in the Budget of an estimate of \$340,000 for the control of venereal disease, but thought at least twice that much should be provided, to eradicate "one of the greatest scourges to our society."

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Agreeing with the proposed Dominion-Provincial conference, Flt. Lt. Wismer suggested that the present tax agreements should be discussed as to their revision rather than their termination. He wondered if the treasurer had considered the possible preference of the taxpayer to pay his taxes to one collector when such large sums were involved. The taxpayer would be only too ready to compliment the Government that could work out the necessary arrangements. Such arrangements could be made between the Dominion and the Province, he believed, "without curtailment of our Provincial powers, rights, privileges and authority."

On Debt Retirement.

Commenting on the postwar debt-retirement plan announced in the Budget, Flt. Lt. Wismer recalled that a debt-retirement plan had been in operation designed to retire the then \$319 million debt over a period of 40 years. "It began," he said, "in 1927, and was neglected except in respect to Hydro debt in 1932, and hasn't been operative since." The new proposal would retire the Province's \$495 million net debt over a period of 50 years, but Flt. Lt. Wismer maintained that the earlier plan should never have been permitted to lapse.

"If we enter on a debt-retirement scheme in the future," he said, "it should be made statutory so that it will not lapse in a period of restricted revenues and rising expenditures." He disagreed with the plan proposed because he believed revenues should go to the Consolidated Revenue Fund, and be earmarked only through the estimates as they passed the House. Also such a plan "must go the limit, and provide that all debts contracted will be subject to sinking-fund provisions sufficient to extinguish the new debt at maturity." This would increase taxes slightly, but would place Provincial finances on an invulnerable basis.