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RICHMOND HILL, ONTARIO THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14th, 1935

No. 33

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The Week in Parliament

By Wilfrid Eggleston

Ottawa, Feb. 12.—The bill of fare for the week included beam trawlers, the Ottawa agreements, income tax exemptions, the distribution and refrigeration of bait, the farm loan board, Russian timber contracts, the nationalization of the chartered and central banks, and drought relief. No one could complain at the lack of variety, still, it must be said that the legislative mill was not running at very effective tempo, so far as the 'New Deal' was concerned. Perhaps the week represents a lull before the storm; or the tranquillity which sometimes ushers in a period of intense interest and activity. Here and there a disposition was evident to descend from the high co-operative level of the previous weeks and spout election speeches: this was especially true in the debate on the Ottawa agreements. Mr. Mackenzie King produced a firecracker in the form of an amendment to a motion to go into supply which fizzled out in about five minutes because it was ruled out of order. Aside from that gesture, the master minders on both sides of the house seemed to be away on vacation. Mr. Mackenzie King's absence from the House possibly indicated that he was about to emerge shortly with the first of his 'fire-side addresses' to the Canadian people in which he will seek (over the radio) to emulate the prime minister, —at least to answer him. The government's self-approbation in respect to the Ottawa agreements, which took the form of a private member's resolution, obviously inspired, produced a flood of oratory and statistics on both sides of the House. Some of the addresses which have been 'on ice' since the sudden collapse of the debate on the Throne Speech were taken out of the refrigerator and made to serve another purpose on the Ottawa agreement debate. You can't expect a member to spend long hours during the recess preparing a masterpiece which he believes will stun an admiring house, to pass up such an opportunity to place it on Hansard. (Statistics Versus Statistics)

No good purpose would be served by a detailed account of these speeches; the government members said the Ottawa agreements had been the salvation of agriculture, and industry generally, and quoted figures to prove it: the opposition said, in effect, that they hadn't been worth a hoot, that business would have revived just as well without them; and they, too, quoted figures. The Independent Groups in the corner rebelled against being placed on record on a resolution endorsing the Agreements, on the ground that it was like the old question: "Have you stopped beating your wife?" Moreover, they objected to the idea of a member on the government side patting the government on the back for its achievements, and using private members' day to do it in: if once that policy was well started, there would be no end to it: and the private members would lose a lot of useful time in the process. "On With Reform," they demanded.

The resolutions concerning fish bait and beam trawlers served to give the "Blue Nose" members a field day: and a good deal was heard about the plight of the fisherman, and the remedies which must be applied. There seemed to be serious divergence of opinion as to the best means; but there was striking unanimity between the two sides as to the need for relief.

A similar harmony between the two parties prevailed while the amendments to the Farm Loan Act were being introduced. These extend the provisions of the federal act to three new provinces, namely, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Prince Edward Island, and the sum which the Farm Loan Board is empowered to loan is extended from Forty Millions to Ninety Millions. (When originally created, it was only Fifteen Millions). It was repeatedly stressed that agriculture can't pay high interest rates.

(Scientific Attack on Drought)
An important statement of policy in regard to the "dried-out" areas of the west was made by Hon. Robert Weir, the Minister of Agriculture. It is announced that a long-range scientific attack on this problem is about to be made by the federal government, co-operating with the provincial authorities, eminent citizens in the affected areas, and the farmers themselves.

A certain amount of vagueness obscured the exact nature of the proposals as announced, but if I understood them, they involved the rough division of the 'dried-out' country into (a) areas where only ranching could be expected to be successful; and (b) areas where wheat farming might reasonably be expected to be successful; and (c) areas where the two might well be combined.

As an attack on the problem of drought, soil drifting, insect pests, etc.; typical areas will be selected from each region, and will be converted into demonstration and research stations, where government funds can be freely employed in a scientific study of the capabilities and limitations of that region, soils, climate, plants, suitable stock, etc., will be considered. Tree-planting will be tried out. The retention of surface water by the building of dams, for the purpose of holding water for stock, keeping as much water as possible on the surface, and even as reservoirs for small irrigation systems will be carried out. It is hoped that these government demonstration stations will assist farmers in finding ways and means of coping with the drought so far as present scientific developments will permit. As an example of what these stations can do for the farmer, Hon. Robert Weir mentioned the illustration station at Manyberries, where some valuable experiments in grasses suitable for checking soil drifting have been carried out. The crested wheat grass, brought from the dry steppes of Siberia, promises to be very useful. It is capable of withstanding very severe drought, once it has taken a good catch, and it is about as nutritious as the "Buffalo grass" prairie wool which originally clothed the prairie.

(Not Too Radical)

It was apparent in the debate upon the nationalization of the chartered and central banks that the zeal for the reform of capitalism has not reached the stage in either major party at which the socializing of our financial structure is approved. Of course the way in which the resolution was presented, linking as it did in one resolution the central bank and the chartered banks, made it difficult to obtain a true opinion of all parties on it. In the main the Liberal members are in favor of a publicly-owned central bank, and if the resolution had been confined to that, it is more than likely that they could have supported it. But to take over the present chartered banks—the private banks of Canada—and make them into a publicly-owned institution or series of institutions, along the lines of the Canadian National Railway, is another story. This country may eventually come to publicly-owned finance machinery in all particulars, but it was evident that the resolution was too far ahead of current opinion to get much support yet. As a matter of cold fact, when you come to a 'show down' the radicalism of either the Liberal or Conservative parties, bolstered even by the 'New Deal' spirit of 1935, is not very revolutionary after all. It seems to be satisfied to make minor changes in the direction of badly-needed social legislation. It really does not attack capitalism at all; nor does it threaten the 'profit-motive'. Leading statesmen may be carried away in radio addresses to praise John Strachey, Litvinoff or Sir Stafford Cripps, but we are a long way behind even the comparatively conservative radicals of that school. Perhaps just as well.

Though it did not come to the surface during the week, the question of the right of the federal government to pass the national unemployment insurance measure, compulsory in all provinces, the eight-hour day, maximum hours, etc., has been the inspiration of a good deal of quiet delving among the court decisions of the past. Canada has undertaken in the past, by signing treaties and agreeing to conventions at the League of Nations, to bring about reforms in the realm of social legislation, and Premier Bennett evidently believes that these agreements give the Ottawa government the power to pass the present bills dealing with such things.

Section 132 of the British North American Act does, indeed, give the federal government some powers in respect to the fulfilment of obligations. For example, if Canada as a nation agrees with some other country

to observe certain air or radio regulations, it naturally undertakes so far as possible to carry them out. But whether this treaty power extends so far as to enable Canada to pass the program of social legislation which was forecast in the Speech from the Throne, and make it stick so far as all of the provinces is concerned, is a subject under dispute. Some Supreme Court judgments on the subject indicate that while Canada is obligated after signing conventions or agreements in respect to any matter, to lay them before the proper authorities in Canada, that is as far as the obligation extends.

Way Back in Liberal Files

FIFTY YEARS AGO

From Our Issue of Feb. 12th, 1885
The Oyster Supper and Concert given by the Bachelors of Maple and vicinity on Wednesday evening, proved a complete success, both financially and otherwise. Notwithstanding the severity of the weather, the Masonic Hall, in which the concert was held, was packed to the doors. The committee deserve much praise for the way in which the program was carried out.
At the late meeting of the County Council the following assessments for the villages in the county were struck: Richmond Hill, \$176,000; Parkdale, \$1,275,000; Newmarket, \$515,000; Aurora, \$331,000; Holland Landing, \$95,000; Stouffville, \$190,000; Weston, \$267,000; Woodbridge, \$145,000. It will be seen that Richmond Hill is assessed \$2,000 lower than last year.

Mr. Salem Eckardt has received instructions from Mr. Wm. Cook to sell by public auction on Lot 16, 2nd Con., Vaughan, on Thursday, March 5th, his farm stock, implements, etc. Sale without reserve as the proprietor has rented his farm. Sale to commence at 12 o'clock sharp. Lunch provided.


The Richmond Hill Fire Brigade met in the Lorne Hall on Friday evening, Feb. 6th. Lieut. Pugsley in the chair. A report from Foreman Reddit showed that the officers are the same as last year. Fireman A. B. Wilson moved, seconded by T. F. McMahon that Mr. Jos. Hall be accepted as a fireman. The motion carried. On motion, the Treasurer was instructed to present the Cornet Band with \$5.00 for services on New Year's night. Fireman Trench gave notice that at the next meeting he would move that the practices be held once a month, instead of fortnightly as heretofore, during the coming summer. The Secretary was instructed to notify by post card all the members of next regular meeting.
The sculling race between Edward Hanlan and William Clifford came off on the Paramatta River on Saturday last, and resulted in an easy victory for the Canadian. Hanlan is to meet Beach, his former vanquisher, on the 28th of March.

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