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PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE GIVEN A REAL "EARFUL"

Board of Trade Members Impress the Great Necessity for Roads, and Also for Better Treatment of the North Land.

The Parliamentary Committee appointed by the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario to promote improvement of Hotels and to develop Tourist Traffic were guests at the meeting of the Timmins Board of Trade on Thursday evening, and in the words of one local man "they were certainly given an earful in regard to the needs of the North Land, especially in regard to roads, and in respect to the grievances and discontent that foster dissatisfaction and discontent often shown in talk for secession and the creation of a separate Province of the North Land. While showing the Committee the proper respect and hospitality, the members of the Board of Trade spoke what was in their minds. "Your frankness is much appreciated," members of the Parliamentary Committee said, at the same time suggesting that after seeing the country at this time the members of the Committee were all enthusiastic as to its possibilities and would line up behind Mr. Mac Lang, M.P.P., in his future battles for this big riding.

The Parliamentary Committee has been on a tour of the North Land and Timmins was visited on Thursday evening and Friday. The idea of the Committee is to interview influential bodies and citizens and making a general survey of the situation to learn ways and means for the betterment of the hotel situation throughout the Province and also to secure suggestions regarding the development of the Tourist Traffic of the Province.

The Parliamentary Committee has travelled through the greater part of the Province securing pointers. Leading cities have also been visited. The views and opinions of all are being received and welcomed and considered and the Committee will make an exhaustive report to the next session of the Legislature. The Committee apparently realize that there are a large number of factors that indirectly bear upon the problems that they are especially desirous of solving, and so no attempt is being made to restrict the discussions. Matters that do not appear at first glance to bear directly on either the hotel question or tourist traffic are duly considered and weighed, the Committee realizing that the wider the scope of the enquiry, the more thorough will be the knowledge and appreciation of the people's problems and the attitude of the public.

The Committee is non-partisan, the members representing all the political creeds of the Legislature. Mr. Edgar Watson, M.P.P., for North Victoria, is the Chairman, and Mr. W. A. Lane is secretary. The other members of the Committee are Mr. Malcolm Lang, M.P.P. for Cochrane Riding; Col. W. H. Price, M.P.P., Toronto; Mr. T. Tooms, M.P.P. for Peterborough; Mr. Joseph Cridland, M.P.P. for Norfolk; Samuel Clarke, M.P.P. and Hon. W. E. Raney. The last two named were not with the party visiting here. There was general regret here at the absence of these two, Hon. Mr. Raney being especially missed. Several would have liked to have had Mr. Raney present, so that he could learn at first-hand just what is really thought of the O.T.A. and some other matters. While the Committee were in town they were under the excellent charge of Mr. Mac Lang.

At the meeting of the Board of Trade Thursday evening Mr. Mac Lang introduced the Committee to the citizens present, and Mayor Dr. McInnis suggested that the Board of Trade would be glad to hear from Mr. Watson, the chairman, as to the plans and purposes of the Committee.

Mr. Watson read the resolution of the Legislature under which the Committee was empowered to act. He pointed out that the situation of the hotel business generally in the Province was in a bad way. In recent years the hotels had lost a big end of their revenue, and a large number of them had gone out of business or were having an undesirable struggle. Even in the cities where big hotels under expert management were paying ventures, there was difficulty in the providing of adequate hotel accommodation, many of the hotels in the suburbs being forced out of business through changed conditions. In the smaller centres the situation was acute. In addition to the other changed conditions, there was the matter of altered traffic conditions. The hotels had been much handicapped by the new and uncertain trade, much of it necessarily of the kind impossible to charge for, growing from the automobile traffic. "We know that many of the hotels are having a difficult struggle, and the feeling is general that we can't let them go out of business," said Mr. Watson. The Province

was suffering from lack of hotel accommodation and what the Committee sought to assure was clean, attractive, stopping places at all centres. Just how this desired end could be secured was the problem, and the Committee were anxious for all possible suggestions at all the places visited. Mr. Watson also referred to the possibilities of tourist traffic for the Province. Last year it was estimated that 350,000 tourists visited here, expending approximately \$57,000,000 in the country—a very tidy sum. Mr. Watson said the Committee would be assisted in its work if the opinions of the people could be secured as to whether it would be justifiable to assist hotels by subsidy or otherwise as a public service, whether the liquor law restrictions made the hotel business more difficult, how the traffic conditions affected the trade, if a reduction in the number of hotels would assist, and if regulations of various sorts could be used to make conditions easier.

Speaking of the relation of the North Land to South Ontario, Mr. Watson said that it would certainly pay to have the whole next Provincial Parliament visit the North for three weeks so that the members might realize the country and its possibilities. He said that the Committee were all delighted with the possibilities of the country and that Mr. Mac Lang had now won over a further group to aid him in making known the resources and needs of the North.

The Mayor, Dr. J. A. McInnis, said that the hotel problem was not an acute one here. In this respect the town was well looked after and that further structures now in course of erection would fill the needs for some time. The Mayor pointed out that Northern Ontario had wonderful attractions as a playground, but these would be of little avail without good roads. Good roads were the crying need of the North and he hoped the Committee would be able to impress this fact upon the Government. The Associated Boards of Trade had been the voice of the North in asking for the through highway from North Bay to Cochrane, but the Government had sidetracked the proposal. Such a high way would not only link together the towns of this new land and provide access to markets for the farmers and others, but it would also open up for the South a regular paradise for campers, hunters, fishermen, etc. Dr. McInnis referred to the limited amount of roads in this part of the country, and emphasized the fact that the amount set aside by the Government for roads was inadequate for the needs. Referring to the work on roads now in progress, he said the pace was painfully slow because the Government would not pay a fair wage and so could not get good men to work. "There is a general feeling," said the Mayor, "that the North Land has been badly neglected, especially in the matter of roads."

Reference being made to the highway programme in Old Ontario, one of the members of the Committee said he would support Mr. Lang next session in any action to get a change in the Act to allow the North Land to share in the Dominion grant for highways. The other members of the Committee agreed to a similar support.

Councillor L. S. Newton opened his remarks with the statement, "What the North needs most is good roads and good liquor,"—an expression that met with universal approval from the citizens present. Mr. Newton characterized as scandalous the pay offered by the Government for men for work on the roads in the North Land. He thought the Government should set an example in seeing that all its employees had a fair living wage. He contrasted the pay offered for Government road work with that paid by the mines and other employers in this district. "If the Hollinger Mine took the same stand as the Government," he said, "men here would not be able to live at all." The lowest wage at the mine for an eight hour day was \$3.76, and the average of course was higher than that. Thirty cents an hour might be all right for Old Ontario, but it was not right for this country. He emphasized the truth that every man was entitled to a pay that would allow him to live and keep his family decently, and the Government could not be upheld when it offered less. He expressed disappointment that the Labour members in the house had not fought against the Government's attitude in this respect.

Mr. Tooms, M.P.P., a Labour Party representative on the Committee said that the eleven Labour members had all made strenuous objection to the Government offering less than a fair living wage, and they would continue to fight against the principle.

Mr. Dayton Ostrosser referred to the discontent felt in the North Land because of the apparent neglect, indifference or worse of those in the South. The people here felt that their timber, their minerals and their other resources had been exploited too much to the benefit of the Government and the South and too little for the advantage of the country and the people here.

A great deal of wealth had been created here to the general advantage of the Province but the people felt they were not being fairly treated by the Government. There was too much of the wrong kind of paternalism and too little understanding and co-operation in the developing of the country. Another point of marked difference between the North and South was in regard to such matters as the O.T.A. The referendum showed very emphatically that the North had a different idea from Old Ontario. Mr. Ostrosser said that in case of secession, the North Province would no doubt have a considerable tourist traffic. In this connection he referred to the visit this month to Canada of fifty British M.P.'s. They were going first to Montreal and then to British Columbia. In reference to the cost of living here on which two citizens present had expressed exactly opposite opinions, Mr. Ostrosser said that in many things prices were much the same as below, but freight charges and other conditions naturally caused higher prices in other commodities. For instance the cost of coal here was \$7 or \$8 a ton more than "down below" because of the freight. Mr. Ostrosser expressed his faith in the country, not only for mining and lumbering, but for farming. The country, however, needed a fair chance. Roads were one of the prime necessities, while a fair understanding of the country and its problems was imperative on the part of the Governments. In conclusion he advised the Members of the Legislature present that unless more intelligent attention was given the North, the demand for separation would become more and more insistent.

Mr. F. M. Wallingford gave a striking illustration of the difference in costs in the North and South. He had bought a car of oats down below for \$640.00 and the freight on the car had been \$505.00. He thought something should be done towards reducing freight rates on the T. & N. O. He understood that the rate on the branch line was specially high.

The Committee showed a lively interest in the references to prices, etc. Mr. L. S. Newton emphasized the importance of the lumbering industry, which he characterized as the greatest asset of this North Country. He impressed also the fact that the great need of the country was summed up in the words, "Good Roads." Touching by request on the O.T.A., he pointed out that 80 per cent. of the people of the North were against the Act and this made its enforcement difficult, despite the fine type of police officers here. He also directed attention to the fact that while there seemed to be unlimited money to ferret out bottles or stills or home-brew, the Province did not have any money available to attempt the rescue of a lost prospector or to even bury the dead in unorganized territory.

Mr. T. F. King referred to the effect on the Province of the prohibition legislation. Tourists were going elsewhere, and conditions did not seem to be improved to any extent warranting the losses and drawbacks. The hotel situation was bad throughout the South and this was caused largely by the unfair and discriminatory legislation that had affected the honest hotel-man. Speaking of the matter of roads, Mr. King pointed out that much of the money that had been expended on roads here had been misapplied. "This country can not be run five hundred miles from the centre," said Mr. King, who instanced cases where new roads had been built in undesired places and then abandoned, and established roads allowed to go without repair. No money is provided for the up-keep of roads and this causes much unnecessary loss. If the money were handled by men who knew the country and its conditions, instead of from Toronto, the results would be better indeed. In reference to the feeling in favour of the creation of a new Province, Mr. King put

the matter in a nutshell. He referred to the exodus of the young men from the farms of Old Ontario some years ago, and said it was the same sort of short-sighted attitude that was to-day driving the North Land to talk and think of secession. The idea of a young man, or a young country, doing nothing but grind and work for the advantage of the "Old Man" would not work in this age.

Dr. McInnis directed the attention of the Members of the Legislature present to the handicap suffered by this country in the matter of selling debentures. He also touched on the question of the O.T.A. This, he thought had proved a failure. He thought more moderate legislation, such as a form of beer and wine licenses, would be more desirable. "You cannot legislate men into Heaven," said the Mayor, "but you can do a lot with education."

Police Magistrate S. Atkinson was asked as to the enforcement of the O.T.A. in this country. He replied to the effect that the law was really better observed here than it was turned below. Mr. Atkinson has just returned from an extended visit in the South where he observed no doubt how the law was working out or otherwise.

Col. W. H. Price, M.P.P., one of the members of the Parliamentary Committee, expressed his pleased astonishment at the remarkable development of the North in the last ten years. Having lived some years ago in the then new country of Algoma, he understood the feeling that Government were not considerate enough to those who pioneered. "The Government must lay out a definite policy for the North," said Col. Price, "and that policy must be founded on accurate and intelligent appreciation of the country and its possibilities." Speaking of the T. & N. O., Col. Price said that it must always in fairness to the country be considered as a colonization factor. "The people of Old Ontario can afford to forget that the T. & N. O. even cost them anything," he said. Col. Price made complimentary reference to Mr. Mac Lang's speech in the Legislature last session regarding the North and its needs. In reference to the possibilities of tourist traffic, Col. Price believed that hundreds of thousands would come to Northern Ontario to see the wonder of this country.

The Mayor mentioned the fact that recently the Government appeared to be treating the lumber industry with unnecessary harshness that might have the effect of throttling the industry. The Members of the Legislature present might do well to use their influence for more intelligent consideration for this important industry.

Mr. Mac Lang, M.P.P. for this riding, was heartily greeted on rising to address the meeting. In a brief but effective speech, he said he had been busy during the past year trying to preach the gospel of the North to the people of the South and it centre attention on the needs and possibilities of this great North Land. The South did not understand or appreciate the North Land perhaps, but Mr. Lang believed that a better understanding would come through acquaintance.

The Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee, Mr. Watson, thanked the meeting for the suggestions made and especially for the frank, open manner in which all questions had been discussed. "There has been on pussy footing," he said, "and your frank but courteous, discussion has been very enlightening."

The last issue of The Cochrane Post says:—"Mr. Brigham, of the Hollinger Mines, and Mr. Kerry Consulting Hydro-Electric Engineer, of Toronto, came up on Wednesday afternoon and left in company of Mr. McDougall, Engineer in charge of the T. & N. O. Extension, for the Abitibi to look over the various sites for water power development."

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