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THE LEGISLATURE PASSES SOME IMPORTANT BILLS

Government Looking Carefully After the Interests of the Workingmen--Amendments for the Compensation Act--Mr. Baxter Got Huffed Because His Suggestions Are Not All Accepted by the Govt.

The Legislature resumed at 8.30 last evening after the week end adjournment and passed a number of bills. The sitting was enlivened by several breezy passages between the attorney general and his predecessor, the latter announcing that he would withdraw an offer of assistance made to Hon. Mr. Byrne at the beginning of the session.

On Monday evening the House went into committee with Mr. Potts in the chair, and agreed to the bills to amend the Act relating to the Richibucto and Rexton Electric Light district, and also the bill to enable the Town of St. Andrews to provide a water system for the said town. The latter, with certain amendments. They also had under consideration the bill to confirm the agreement between the Town of Edmundston and Fraser Limited, and progress was reported.

The House again went into committee with Mr. Magee in the chair, and took up the bill to amend the Schools Act, relating to St. John.

Workmen's Compensation.

The bill respecting compensation by employers for injuries to workmen was next taken up.

Hon. Mr. Byrne said that under the old Act compensation to be paid a workman in the case of accidental

death was fixed at \$2,000. The new act fixed the amount at \$2,500. It was proposed also by the amended act to increase the maximum weekly indemnity to \$16 and provide that in no case it be less than six dollars. The amendments were in line with suggestions made in the report of the Commission on the Workmen's Compensation Act. Another change it was proposed to make was that in case the indemnity was not paid weekly, applications could be made to a judge for an execution.

Hon. Mr. Robinson said he felt that there was a desire on the part of the House to co-operate with the working man and see to it that he had adequate protection. While the proposed amendments to the Act met with the views of the Trades and Labor Council for the present, something better would be looked for in the future. The branch of the organization in Moncton felt that legislation along the lines of the Nova Scotia Workmen's Compensation Act would be much more suitable for this province. He regretted that there had not been sufficient time to bring down a more complete act this session. It was important that changes should be made from time to time and the act made to conform with the most advanced labor legislation.

Mr. Baxter said he concurred in the remarks made by the hon. member from Moncton. He felt that matters of this kind should be dealt with alto-

gether apart from politics. The workman was entitled to compensation although the accident occurred through no fault of his own or of the machinery he was using. An amendment embodying this provision had been incorporated in the act last session. The limit had not yet been reached in legislation of this kind, and it was wise for the government before taking further action to await the report of the excellent commission now dealing with the matter.

Mr. LeBlanc wanted to know why, when a workman had recovered a judgment once and the employer did not pay the compensation as ordered, it should be necessary for him to prove his case a second time, as appeared to be required under section 4 of the bill. He thought it should be sufficient to get an order from a judge to the employer without anything further.

Mr. Tilley said he desired to call attention to the amendment to the act passed last year, under which the families of three men who were unfortunately killed a few days after the act came into force, within four weeks received the compensation due to them which they would not have got so quickly had the act not been passed.

Hon. Mr. Foster said the report of the commission had been prepared after a very great amount of work on the part of its members, to whom he thought great credit was due. He proposed to have the report printed as soon as possible for general circulation. The commission would have a good deal to do in the future, and it would be necessary for the province to spend some more money. The Compensation Acts in force in other provinces varied and it remained to be seen if they would work out as the promoters of them anticipated. He thought all would agree with the object of the bill.

Mr. Baxter expressed the view that considerable benefit would arise if the lawyers in the House got together privately and discussed the bill. If it went through as drawn it would conflict in many cases with the present act.

Hon. Mr. Byrne said that the section referred to by his hon. friend from Restogouche (LeBlanc) was recommended by the commission. The other sections of the bill were identical with the sections in the present act except the amounts of compensation to be awarded was changed. He therefore moved that bill be reported as agreed to.

Mr. Baxter said with regard to the bill under consideration as with every other bill that had come before the House, he had honestly and with the best possible intentions done all he could to give what practical assistance he was able to the consideration of the legislation brought down.

The bill was then agreed to.
Compensation Commission.
The bill to facilitate the work of the commission to inquire into the working of the Ontario and Nova Scotia Workmen's Compensation Acts was then taken up.

Mr. Baxter moved that instead of the Provincial Secretary being required to advertise to employers that they had to furnish him with a copy of the pay roll in the Royal Gazette and such other newspapers as he may wish, that he advertise in all of the daily papers in the province.

Hon. Mr. Byrne said that the powers given the Provincial Secretary were very wide and the House must give him credit for being a reasonable man who would advertise where he thought most desirable, but to insist that he should advertise in every daily paper was absurd and he could not believe that his hon. friend was sincere when he made the suggestion.

Mr. Tilley said possibly his hon. friend from St. John was fearful lest the Provincial Secretary should advertise in papers friendly to his party only and his hon. friend's suggestion was perhaps intended to give employers who happened to think differently politically from the Government a chance to get a notification also.

Hon. Mr. Byrne was always glad to receive suggestions from hon. gentlemen opposite and at times he had received some very valuable suggestions that way, but at the same time suggestions were frequently made across the floor that were not intended to assist at all, nor to help the consideration of the bill under discussion, they were made with the express purpose of blocking the progress of the bill.

Mr. Baxter—"Do you say that I have made suggestions intended to block any bill?"

Hon. Mr. Byrne said that there had been at times lots of such suggestions. Several opposition members—"Name them, name one."

Mr. Murray (Kings) said that the statement made by the hon. attorney general was a very serious one as it imputed dishonesty to the members of the opposition. He took the strongest possible objection to that statement which was a most unjustifiable one.

Mr. Baxter said that on the first day

of the session he had met his hon. friend the attorney general and offered him in all sincerity any help that he could give him and the benefit of any experience that he had, in carrying out the duties of his office, and he thought that his offer was accepted in the same spirit in which it was tendered. He had said that of course he could not expect and assistance in matters that were purely political, but in matters of legislation which had the good of the province as their object, he would give all the help he could. He had never made one single suggestion in regard to any bill that he had been made honestly and with sincere desire to make the best of the law as possible. He had made the same offer to his personal friends, the premier, and he had accepted it on every occasion in the spirit in which it was made. He also made the same offer to his hon. friend in the government without portfolio who was not only big enough not to resent it, but had accepted the suggestions whenever they suited his views.

With regard to the advertisement in the Royal Gazette he repeated that it was so little read that the government was now using it to give official notification to officials who were dismissed, instead of writing them letters.

Hon. Mr. Byrne was under the impression that the bill in vesting discretionary power in the hands of the Provincial Secretary Treasurer to publish it in any daily paper he thought fit, went far enough, but his hon. friend from Moncton had urged that the power be made compulsory. The hon. member for St. John had differed with the ex-attorney general on this same point so the difference of opinion on one side of the House was as great as on the other. He regretted that the ex-attorney general had got warmed up and found it necessary to tell the House of his broadness in offering to assist the Government in putting through legislation. It was true he had made such an offer, but he must not forget that differences of opinion exist and that his suggestions might not always be accepted. When this happens he should not rise with a feeling of preponderance and get cross over it. While he (Byrne) agreed with the hon. member from St. John that the section was sufficiently broad to meet the case he had no objection if hon. members thought the expense of having the notice published in all the daily papers of the province was not too great to making the change.

The bill was agreed to as amended.
Permanent Bridges.

The House then went into consideration of the bill to make further provision for permanent bridges and other works of a permanent character.

Hon. Mr. Veniot explained that \$151,164.31 had been expended on permanent works and provided for under temporary loans and the Provincial Engineer estimated that \$370,423 would be required to complete permanent bridges now under contract. It was proposed to construct during the year other bridges at an estimated cost of \$224,000. The bill therefore proposed that the sum of \$700,000 be borrowed on the credit of the province for the purposes set forth.

Mr. Murray (Kings) wanted to know if there was any likelihood of the expenditure going beyond the \$700,000 this year.

Hon. Mr. Veniot said it would pay for all the work to be carried on up to the close of the next fiscal year.

Mr. Smith (Carleton) wanted to know if the site had been agreed upon for the Victoria Bridge in Northumberland County. He understood that two sites were available.

Hon. Mr. Veniot replied that all objections to site chosen had been withdrawn.

The bill was agreed to.
The House adjourned at 12 o'clock.

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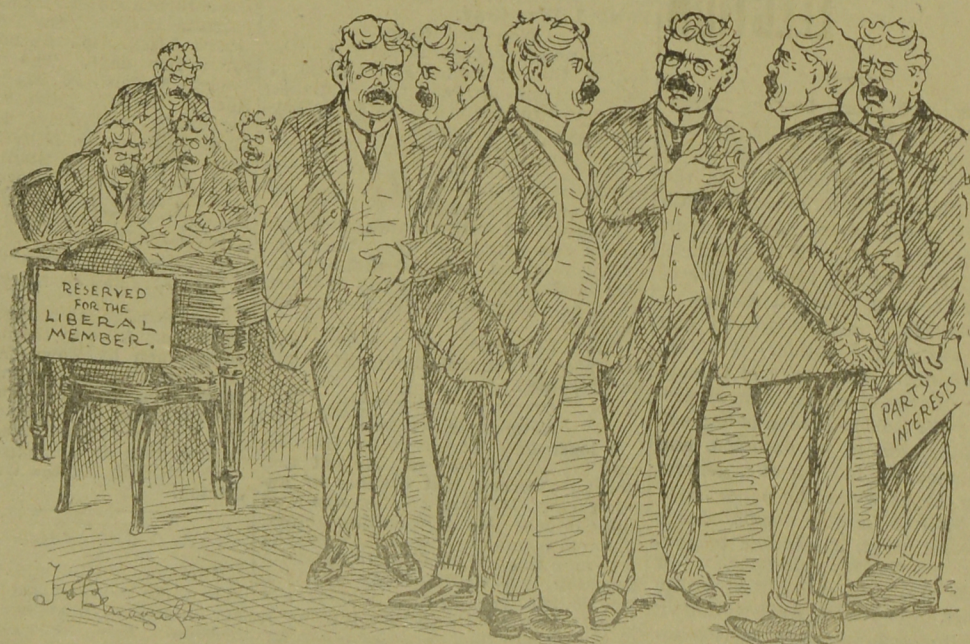
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