

discussion. A question of very considerable moment, and one that has occupied the attention of the House, is the Hydro-Electric question. This is a question concerning which the Government appears to be a trifle sensitive, judging from the debate so far as it has progressed. Let me see exactly, Sir, where both parties stand on this question. One would understand—an unwary or an ill-advised listener would gather—from the honorable member for London, the Minister of Power, that he and his colleagues were the sole and only people who desired to propagate the scheme of giving cheap power, and that they started or discovered the microbe, and that nothing was done prior to their time. Sir, I would like to refer the honorable gentleman to the Statute of 1903, upon which Statute the one under which he now operates is largely based. Sir, the statute of 1903 passed by the old Government provides for a union of municipalities. It also provides for the appointment of a Commission for the working out of the power scheme. The weakness, Sir, of the municipal power scheme under the Act of 1903 was that municipalities might unite in different groups and might appoint different Boards. The first section of the Statute of 1903 reads as follows:—

(1) It shall be lawful for any municipal corporation, or for any two or more municipal corporations jointly, on such terms and conditions as may be mutually agreed upon between them, and under and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, by and through the agency of Commissioners and their successors to be appointed as hereinafter also provided, to secure the acquisition, construction, maintenance and operation of all necessary works, plant, machinery and appliances for the development, generation, transmission, transformation, distribution and supply of electrical and other power and energy, including heat and light, for their own corporate use as well as for general public uses and purposes, and for the use of such persons, firms and corporations as may desire the same.

Now, Sir, that statute is the basis and foundation of the present Hydro-Electric scheme. The present Hydro-Electric law is based not only as to its conception, but as to its machinery, largely upon that statute. True it is that in the natural evolution of the scheme there has been an advance made, and I admit, Sir, and state freely, that the advance is an improvement, namely, that one Commission should act for the various groups of municipalities that gather together in the different parts of the Province, instead of having each group appoint a different Commission. That, Sir, is a decided advance and in addition to that, the fact that the Government appoints the Commission in a certain sense places the strong right arm of the Provincial Government behind the Commission. This gives the whole scheme greater strength and more force than it would have under the old Act. But, Sir, the scheme is largely the same in its working out. So that, Sir, I was surprised, and anyone who reads the statute of 1903 will be decidedly surprised at the Honorable Minister of Power's boastful statement as to the discovery of the scheme. I am often surprised at his statements, as he is decidedly reckless in his utterances. He stated boldly the other day across the floor of this House that the present Hydro-Electric Commission had not changed their plan.

CHANGE OF PLAN.

How, Sir, any sane man can expect this House to believe a statement of that kind, in view of the legislation that from year to year has been passed, passes my comprehension. He knows, Sir, and if he doesn't know, he is the only man in the Province of Ontario that doesn't know, that under the statute of 6 Edward VII. votes were taken in fourteen or fifteen municipalities in the Province of Ontario. He knows very well, and if he doesn't know, he is the only man in the Province that doesn't know, the scheme then was that power should be delivered to the respective municipalities at the city or town gates ready for distribution at a certain sum, and the limit of that sum was fixed in the by-law. (Applause). Let there be no misunderstanding on this point, because it is the great point where the parties in this Province differ. I have several of the by-laws here. Take the by-law of the City of Toronto. The first enacting clause is that, "It shall be lawful for the said municipal corporation to enter into a contract with the Hydro-Electric Commission of the Province of Ontario for the supplying to the said corporation for thirty years 15,000 horsepower for the use of the municipal corporation, for light, heat and power purposes, for the sum of from \$14 to \$18.10 per annum, for continuous power to be delivered to the said municipal corporation." That was the scheme that the ratepayer was asked to vote upon. Power was to be delivered ready for distribution at the city gates.