

March 22

Statement Issued May Nullify Design Of Tory Strategy

Attorney-General Price Discloses Terms of Wider Sale Plan—Beer and Wine at Meals in Hotels Allowed, and Likely in Restaurants and Clubs—Beverage Rooms Established—Veterans' and Labor Union Clubs Also Privileged to Sell, All Under Control of Board

RESPONSIBILITY IS GOVERNMENT'S, OPPOSITION MEMBERS DECIDE

(Text of Beer-Sale Bill on Page 3.)

The Government's beer bill is before the House, and the Opposition acquiesces in it.

These developments came in fast order late yesterday. Just before the Legislature rose at 6 o'clock Attorney-General Price introduced his measure providing for sale of beer and wine by the glass. Opposition members immediately went into joint conference, and emerged a few hours later with a statement that, to keep the liquor issue out of politics, they were prepared to acquiesce in the measure without discussion.

The Conservative plan, it was understood, had been to pass the bill through the House, but not proclaim it, so making it an election issue, with the promise that the bill would become law if the Government party returned to power. The Opposition's move apparently has robbed the issue of its campaign value, but whether this would advance the date on which the bill became effective was a matter of speculation last night.

Enlarged Powers For Liquor Board To Control Sale

Attorney-General Price explained a measure which will permit sale of beer by the glass in hotels, restaurants and clubs, and sale of wine with meals.

He outlined the vastly enlarged powers given the Liquor Control Board to supervise the wider sale, while at the same time "to continue strict regulation" while giving "an opportunity to the general public to consume beer by the glass under proper restrictions, and to provide a cheaper beer than heretofore obtainable."

Another Revision.

Colonel Price announced also that another bill would be introduced empowering the Liquor Board to eliminate the need of a permit for purchase of beer and wine. A sentence in the same connection was significant: "The board already have the power to reduce the permit fee at present charged."

Advertising in newspapers and by radio, and permits for beer and wine at banquets, also became probabilities when Colonel Price mentioned that the board already has authority in this direction, but never has exercised it.

Definite word was given that the local option feature of the present act will be extended to provide for votes on the subject of beer and wine in dining-rooms, or beer in refreshment rooms, as provided by the regulations.

Authorize Sales.

The essential clause in the bill empowers the Liquor Board to authorize sale of beer and wine by the glass under certain restrictions. A hotel, restaurant or club would be allowed to sell either beer or wine in the dining-room with meals. A hotel could establish a refreshment room where beer alone could be sold by the glass, but meals need not be served. This privilege would be extended also to veterans' and labor union clubs.

All persons selling beer would require an "authority" from the Liquor Board. This would apply both to owners of the business and to employees engaged in the serving of beverages.

A long list of restrictions would be placed upon granting of "authorities" and upon sale of beer. Both the proprietor of the premises and his guests would have to conform with the board's regulations, the onus being upon the host to see that those regulations were observed.

To handle the new situation, the Liquor Board would be given new responsibilities and authorities. The board would continue to exercise full power over all aspects of the beer and wine trade.

Colonel Price's explanation of the present measure, and the supplementary one which he will introduce, was as follows:

"This Bill amends the Liquor Control Act by adding Part 3A.

"The Liquor Control Board has now full power to control and regulate the supply and sale of liquor, of all kinds, in stores, breweries, brewery warehouses, distilleries and wineries, throughout the Province. This Bill extends the power of the board to enable it to authorize the sale of beer and wine with meals in dining-rooms in standard hotels and such other places (which would include restaurants and clubs) as the board may from time to time determine under its regulations as empowered by this act. It also empowers the board to authorize the sale of beer by the glass in the refreshment room in standard hotels, and in veterans' and labor union clubs, as provided by the act and regulations.

"An 'authority' will be issued by the board to any person empowered to sell under this act and its regulations. The board maintains its control of both the supply and sale.

Power of Board.

"It is believed that the control exercised by the Liquor Control Board, in its seven years of operation, has contributed very largely to the proper carrying out of the provisions of the Liquor Control Act. The aim, therefore, of this amendment is to continue the strict regulation of the Liquor Control Board, and at the same time to give an opportunity to the general public to consume beer by the glass under proper restrictions, and to provide a cheaper beer than heretofore obtainable, and also to permit the general public to have beer, or wine, with their meals in standard hotels and in such other places as the board may from time to time feel disposed to grant.

"It has been thought most important to give the board sufficient power to deal with this problem, using their discretion as to whether an 'authority' should be granted from time to time.

Consumption Lessens.

"Liquor consumption in this Province has dropped from the peak year of 1929 from \$55,000,000 to \$30,000,000 in 1933. The greatest reduction has occurred in spirituous liquors, a much smaller reduction in the consumption of beer, while the consumption of wine has decreased very little. It is anticipated that with a freer distribution of beer and wine there will be a further decrease in the consumption of spirituous liquors and an increase in the consumption of beer and of light wine. It will also remove the feeling of the average working man that he has been discriminated against in not being permitted to buy a glass of beer. Nearly 175,000 homebrew permits granted by the Federal authorities has presented a menace which had to be met. This act puts the control of the consumption of beer back in the hands of the board, and should be an aid to temperance and sobriety.

"In a further bill which will be introduced, in which there will be amendments to the general sections of the act to make it conform with this new part which is being added, the Liquor Control Board will be given

power, should they deem it in the interests of temperance and for better control of the sale and consumption of beer and wine, to make it unnecessary to have a permit to purchase beer and wine, or either of them, as is at present being carried out under the Liquor Control Act. The board already have the power to reduce the permit fee at present charged.

"The board has already power to permit advertising in newspapers and by radio.

"The board has also power to grant a permit for the consumption of beer and wine at banquets.

"Neither of these powers has so far been exercised.

"The local option features of the present Liquor Control Act are continued, but will be extended so that local option districts may vote on whether they want beer and wine in dining-rooms, or beer in refreshment rooms, as provided by the regulations."

The price of beer under the new system would be 5 cents a glass, according to the general report. Rumors concerning details of the bill had been current for months, but Government secrecy was maintained to the end.

Early yesterday afternoon, Conservative members attended a caucus and heard—most of them for the first time—the particulars of the forthcoming legislation. Released from caucus at 3 p.m., just before the House sat, they were still in some doubt as to whether the bill would come down yesterday afternoon. The House plodded through routine work until 5.45 p.m.

Attorney-General Price rose, and an expectant hush fell. "Before the House rises," he said, "I beg leave to introduce, seconded by Mr. Henry, a bill entitled an Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act, and—." The rest of his sentence, the formal motion for first reading, was inaudible above the Conservative desk-pounding that lasted for nearly a full minute.

Liberal House Leader McQuibban asked the Attorney-General to explain the purport of the measure, and Colonel Price read the prepared statement which appears above. At the conclusion, Progressive Leader Nixon asked assurance that the local-option features of the present act would be maintained, with a three-fifths vote required before a local option district could go wet. This assurance the Attorney-General gave.