

APRIL 22

Hepburn Backs Choice Of M.L.A. for Liquor Post

Defending his stand in appointing a member of the Legislature to the position of Ontario Liquor Commissioner, Premier Hepburn yesterday, for the first time, publicly named Hon. A. St. Clair Gordon (Lib., West Kent) as his choice to succeed the late E. G. Odette.

A bill amending the Liquor Control Act to permit Mr. Gordon to retain his seat in the House after accepting the position was given second reading, but only after the Conservative Opposition had forced a division, resulting in a 48-to-12 victory for the government side of the House.

Colonel Drew, who led the Conservative Party's opposition to the measure, emphasized the fact that his stand was prompted by the high regard he held for Mr. Gordon and the desire that the new commissioner should not be placed in the

embarrassing position "in which he will inevitably find himself."

"Making this appointment in this way," he said, "is simply inviting the charge of political administration. I would urge the Premier not to place this very fine man in an embarrassing position."

Premier Hepburn recalled many precedents for his action. Hon. Dr. R. J. Manion, National Conservative Leader, he said, had been a member of the Liquor Control Board while retaining his seat at Ottawa. Senator Arthur Meighen had been member of the Hydro Commission while still Conservative Leader of the Senate.

"Regardless of any commission that may be appointed," he said, "I have found that this government has to take full responsibility. You can't divorce the administration of the Liquor Control Board from the responsibility of this government. I want the chairman right in this House so he can answer charges when they are made."

The Premier paid high tribute to the "many sterling qualities" which had led him to select Mr. Gordon for the position. The government, he said, had never made a more popular appointment.

"Mr. Gordon's huge majority in the last election indicates that he holds the confidence of the people in his own riding," Mr. Hepburn said. "He is a keen executive, and a real asset to the people of Ontario. I tried to induce him to join the Ministry in 1937, but he was forced to decline owing to pressure of his own business. I was very happy when, under my persuasive powers, he consented to take this position."