

BILL PROVIDING TWO-YEAR TERM HELD NEEDLESS

Way Is Already Open
to Municipalities, Is
George Drew's Stand

APPLIES TO 1941

Described by Conservative Leader George Drew and Arthur Roebuck (Lib., Bellwoods) as a "totally unnecessary piece of legislation," covering a situation already provided for in the Municipal Act, the Municipal Elections Extension Act received second reading in the House yesterday and passed into committee stage.

The bill, a revised form of a measure promised by Hon. Eric Cross during the emergency session of last September, met vigorous opposition from the only two members to speak after the Minister had moved second reading. It called for two-year terms of office in all Municipal Boards after Feb. 1, 1941, but contained a proviso by which municipalities could vote themselves out of the bill by plebiscite.

"There is already adequate provision in our Municipal Act for creation of a two-year term at the will of the municipality," Colonel Drew declared. "Section 79 covers this thoroughly and there is no need for other legislation."

Can't See Difference.

The Government, he insisted, had reduced its measure to ineffectiveness by providing for the municipalities to vote themselves out of the bill "by an otherwise totally unnecessary vote."

"Why is it better to say that you must have a two-year term, but may vote yourself out of it?" he asked, "than to say you may have a two-year term by voting yourself in?"

Unless the Minister were prepared to say that, in spite of the expressed will of the municipalities, they would have to accept a two-year term, Colonel Drew pressed, there was no need for the act.

Mr. Cross's explanation that the act was being introduced for the same reason as it was passed in Great Britain did not hold water, he added.

Different in Britain.

"The Minister says its purpose is to increase efficiency, reduce expenses and to show leadership," he said. "Not one of those things were expressed as the reason for adoption of similar legislation in Great Britain. They passed the bill to avoid the gathering of large crowds on election days and subsequent casualties during the blackouts, because most of the buildings normally used for election were now used for war purposes, and because there were no air raid shelters available for voters."

Mr. Roebuck voiced complete concurrence with Colonel Drew's argument. The people, he said, had already voiced their disfavor of the measure.

Both members urged the Government to hold the measure over for further consideration, to see what public reaction would be, but the motion to give second reading was carried without further discussion.