

HOUSE DEBATES AGE TO RETIRE MAGISTRATES

Eleven Are Affected if
70 Years Agreed Upon;
Bill Given Committee

SIX NOW OVER 75

An amendment by Attorney-General Conant to the bill to amend the Magistrates Act which was introduced by Ian Strachan (Lib., Toronto-St. George), occasioned considerable discussion in the Legislature yesterday. After many of the members had expressed their opinions regarding the retiring ages for magistrates, the bill was referred back to the Legal Bills Committee.

The bill, as presented by Mr. Strachan, was the expression of the special committee of the House which studied the administration of justice throughout the Province and one section provided for the retirement of every magistrate or deputy magistrate at the age of 70. Exception was made for those magistrates and deputies who are now in office to continue until they reach the age of 75 years. The amendment of the Attorney-General was to give the Government power to continue any magistrate, who was particularly fitted for his position, in office until the age of 75.

Mr. Conant said that he realized his amendment would mean plenty of trouble for the Attorney-General of the Government in the future when magistrates reached the age of 70, but he thought it would be in the interests of the Province to retain the services of certain magistrates.

Mr. Strachan said he did not appreciate his position as sponsor of the bill because there are six magistrates at present over 75 years of age. "The main principle involved," he said, "is whether the office of magistrate is maintained for the magistrate or for the administration of justice.

"I regret that it is necessary to make a retiring limit, but the magistrate's court is the hard court of the Province, it is the people's court, the rough and tumble court. Things have changed in recent years and the magistrates now have to make more difficult decisions. I feel that I will be held responsible for the fact that these fine old gentlemen will be out of jobs, but the office is much more important than the individual."

Colonel Drew pointed out that the committee had agreed upon 70 as the retiring age and it should be kept at 70 unless the House thought 75 was a better age and if so then 75 should be the limit.

Mr. Conant said there are eleven magistrates who are over seventy or who will reach that age this year. They are S. B. Arnold, Chatham; D. M. Brodie, Windsor; J. Makins, Stratford; F. W. Walker, Walkerton; J. R. Blake, Galt; W. Keith, Toronto; C. F. Bick, Orillia; E. J. Butler, Belleville, J. H. McCurry, North Bay; J. H. Campbell, St. Catharines, and O. A. Langley, Peterborough.