

February 13

# SOLDIER-VOTE DIFFICULTIES ARE DISCUSSED

Location of Troops in  
Future Is Uncertain,  
Col. Drew Points Out

BACKS PRINCIPLE

The uncertainty as to where members of the Canadian active service forces will be serving in future months was stressed in the Legislature yesterday by Lieutenant-Colonel George Drew, Opposition Leader, in speaking on second reading of the Government bill to give the franchise in future Provincial elections to all members of the armed forces from Ontario. Debate on the bill was adjourned by Colonel Drew.

While agreeing completely with the principle of the proposed measure, the Opposition Leader drew attention to some of the difficulties confronting the Government with respect to obtaining the votes by proxy of all active service members. He pointed out that difficulties which would arise in taking a Provincial vote did not exist if such a vote were taken in the Dominion as a whole.

"The situation which exists today is quite different from that which existed in the last war and in the early days of this war," said Colonel Drew. "In the last war fighting was on a line that was more or less stabilized, and the Canadian troops were in France, Belgium or England. In the next few months the active service forces of Canada may be widely scattered. At the present time we have thousands of men in the navy who may not touch port for many months. In a war of movement any normal procedure is impossible. General Rommel in Libya is not going to adjourn the fighting to permit Canadian troops to vote."

Colonel Drew said a more extensive definition of the term "active service forces" was needed. Only those on full time service or on special duties that take them outside of their residence location should come within the scope of the bill, he declared.

Attorney-General Conant, who explained the bill, replied that he appreciated the points made by Colonel Drew. Six months from now a person might have an entirely different military alignment, he said.

"By the time the vote is taken the war may be a very different war from what it is today," said Colonel Drew.

Mr. Conant, in explaining the various sections of the bill, said he intent and purpose was to provide the widest possible facilities for all members of the fighting forces to exercise their franchise in any Provincial election which may transpire following the passage of the bill.

"It is difficult, if not impossible, to anticipate what may be the disposition of our fighting forces," said the Attorney-General. "At any time in the future they may be distributed over the whole face of the globe. In setting up this machinery we must keep this fact in mind. As far as possible we have followed the general scheme of the Election Act. As far as qualifications are concerned, we have gone two steps further. We have removed the age limit of 21 years. Anyone who is courageous enough and loyal enough to fight for their country should be allowed a say in the running of the country. And then we have cut down the residence qualifications. It is as practical an arrangement as it is possible to work out."

An amendment to the Voters' List Act, to relieve the municipalities of the cost of revising the lists for Provincial elections, was also introduced by Attorney-General Conant. The bill provides for payment of this cost by the Province. Revision and printing in general Provincial elections costs approximately \$100,000. A section of the bill provides that enumeration shall take place in all towns and cities having a population of 10,000 and over. Previously only separated towns with a population of 10,000 or over were included.

## Members Grin As Drew Slips On 'Plebiscite'

The word "plebiscite" was heard in the Legislature yesterday, but it slipped out inadvertently while Lieutenant-Colonel George Drew, Ontario Conservative Leader, was discussing the bill to give the franchise to all members of the armed forces from Ontario.

"Whether the plebiscite—pardon me, Mr. Speaker, that word is on my mind," said Colonel Drew, as laughter rippled through the Chamber. Premier Hepburn grinned across at Colonel Drew.

"But I don't feel toward this bill what I feel toward that word," added Colonel Drew, as he continued his remarks.