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CAUCUS GIVES HEPBURN VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

'Everything Fine,' Says
Premier When Leaving
Four-Hour Conference

SOME CRITICISM

In a four-hour caucus—the longest held by a Government party in recent years—Liberal members of the Legislature last night passed a vote of confidence in Premier Hepburn and his leadership, after receiving an implied assurance that matters concerning the Federal arena would not be discussed in the House.

W. L. Miller, member for Algoma-Manitoulin, was chairman of the caucus, and the only statement he would issue was that the members had voted confidence in the Premier. Smiling broadly as he emerged from the caucus room, the Premier referred all questions to Mr. Miller, and refused to be drawn out on what had transpired.

"Everything's fine," said Mr. Hepburn and that was all he would say.

But it is understood that the caucus resulted in (1), there will be no resolution condemning the plebiscite introduced at the current session as a Government move; (2), the question of a Provincial election was left in the hands of the Premier, the likelihood being that the life of the present Legislature will be extended, providing it is given the unanimous endorsement of the House, and (3), a coalition Government is not felt to be even a remote possibility.

About 5 or 6 per cent of the Liberals criticized the recent actions of

the Premier in South York and Welland by-elections, and they frankly expressed the view that their leader had hurt the cause of the Liberal Party. The Premier's reply to those views was that he was speaking not as Premier of Ontario or even as a member of the House, but as a Canadian citizen entitled to air his views on the conduct of the war, even as other members of the House were free to express their views, apart from all political considerations.

The Premier was greeted with applause when he entered the caucus room a few minutes after 8 p.m. He addressed the gathering at the outset, declaring that he wished to clarify certain matters before the members discussed them. The Premier is reported to have reiterated views given publicly on numerous other occasions; that the war situation has reached such a grave state that no person is entitled to place mere political considerations before the welfare of the country as a whole.

To those critics of his actions in supporting Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen in South York, and opposing the King candidate in Welland, the Premier said he was guided wholly by his desire to spur the country to a greater effort.

Premier Defended.

Colonel F. Fraser Hunter, member for Toronto-St. Patrick, who also spoke on behalf of Mr. Meighen, vigorously defended the Premier in the course of an address in which he warned the democracies face even greater trials in the future.

Frequent bursts of applause were heard during the four-hour session, and the hand-clapping was prolonged when Mr. Hepburn wound up the meeting with an address in which he summed up the position as he saw it.

The impression gained by the members, it was learned, was that the Premier is prepared to let bygones be bygones, and that his future course of action with regard to Federal affairs on the war effort will be taken outside the Provincial arena.

Hon. Robert Laurier, who resigned his mines portfolio in the Cabinet over the Premier's support of Mr. Meighen, made a special trip from Ottawa to attend the caucus. He told newspaper men he was returning to Ottawa for medical treatment.