

APRIL 15

# Drew Declares Law Enforcement Regard Undermined by Conant

## Claims Attorney-General Arranged to Have Charge Against One of Feder's Henchmen Withdrawn After Brown Derby Raid in 1938

The controversy over the existence of gambling establishments in suburban Toronto was renewed in the Legislature yesterday when Lieutenant-Colonel George Drew, Opposition Leader, clashed in vigorous debate with Attorney-General Gordon Conant.

Crowded galleries, attracted by the prospect of some sensational developments, heard the Attorney-General and the Opposition Leader present their respective sides of the picture.

Colonel Drew criticised the Attorney-General for having been instrumental in arranging to have a charge of carrying concealed weapons withdrawn when Harry Lieberman, henchman of Manny Feder, so-called underworld leader, was arrested following the raid on the Brown Derby in October, 1938. This man was convicted on a lesser charge and sentenced to four months in jail, whereas a conviction on the weapons charge would have carried with it a five-year sentence, he declared. A sawed-off shotgun and a blackjack were items of evidence in this case, said Colonel Drew.

"There can be no justification for withdrawing a charge that would have led to a five-year penalty," asserted Colonel Drew. "That was in the Brown Derby raid. In November, 1940, Feder, et al, moved to more palatial quarters, the Combine Club. A raid was carried out, and

a shot gun and a blackjack were seized. Again we find the names of Feder and Lieberman, the men who were excused by the Attorney-General two years before. That is the kind of thing that is undermining confidence in the enforcement of the law. Yesterday I was prepared to accept the Attorney-General's statement concerning the difficulties confronting him in dealing with this problem. Today I am not.

### "Fattening On Public."

"This man Feder has been fattening on the public for years. He is not interested merely in the gambling game. When racing was threatened by the drugging of horses a few years ago, Feder was uncovered as the key man in the plot. If the Attorney-General doesn't know that, then his files are not complete. Feder is an expert on horses, as well as on gambling. This matter has gone far beyond the stage of the Attorney-General writing to a municipality and saying he believes there is something wrong. What has taken place consists of nothing but token raids. That is all they are.

"These men are extensive bootleggers as well, and their activities extend to the still worse angle of corruption that creeps in with joints of that kind," said Colonel Drew.

During the course of the debate, Mr. Macaulay asked the Attorney-General if he had any legislation in mind with a view to remedying the situation. The Attorney-General replied that he had conferred with his law officers, and the only constructive suggestion was that the Attorney-General might be given some jurisdiction over local police.

Dr. H. E. Welsh (Cons., Hastings East): "The only conclusion that I can come to is that these people have law enforcement licked."

The reply of the Attorney-General was that the problem resolved itself around the extreme difficulty of obtaining evidence.

It was the Attorney-General who reopened the gambling issue in a statement prior to the orders of the day. Quoting from an afternoon newspaper report of an interview with Reeve Clutterbuck of Scarborough Township, Mr. Conant denied the reeve's charge that the Province had failed to keep its promise, to raid a gambling establishment located in the township. Mr. Conant read correspondence between his department and Reeve Clutterbuck and Chief Constable Thomas Draycott of Scarborough, and then related how the Ontario Provincial Police, acting on his instructions, set about preparing to raid a gambling place known as the White Castle, at Danforth and Kingston Road. Provincial Police action was invited by the municipality, said Mr. Conant.

### Police Are Foiled.

A system of counter-espionage developed by the suspected gambling house foiled Provincial Police officers in their attempts to get inside the premises and obtain the evidence needed before a raid could be organized, Mr. Conant revealed. The men sent by the department to obtain access and collect evidence were detected and "thrown out," said the Attorney-General.

"Many persons believe all you have to do is to take a gang of officers and surround a place," said Mr. Conant. "All you get then is a

bunch of dupes without any evidence as to who the keepers are."

### Raps Explanation.

Colonel Drew arose immediately after the Attorney-General resumed his seat, and launched into criticism of the Attorney-General's explanation. He referred to a letter which Mr. Conant sent Crown Attorney McFadden in connection with the withdrawal of the concealed weapons charge against Lieberman, and declared that the Attorney-General had not explained to the House the nature of the charge withdrawn by the Crown.

"I have nothing to conceal," retorted Mr. Conant. "I am speaking from memory but I believe it was a charge of having concealed weapons"

"Yes, a sawed-off shotgun," said Colonel Drew. "No doubt used as an ornament around the gambling joint."

The Opposition Leader charged the Attorney-General with "brazen" conduct in attempting to defend his department, and asserted that the law gave the department ample power to step in and clean up an "intolerable" situation. The name of Benny Littman was mentioned for the first time when Colonel Drew asked Mr. Conant if he did not have information concerning this man on his files. The Attorney-General replied in the negative.

"Let the Attorney-General find out his source of revenue and the contact between Littman and Feder," declared Colonel Drew.

### "I Despise Feder."

The Attorney-General, continuing, said the Conservative Leader had named one, Manny Feder. "I despise Feder and all his kind," said Mr. Conant, "but after all it is altogether a different matter despising a man and getting evidence that is necessary to put him in jail."

He recalled that after Feder's arrest in the Brown Derby raid, Feder was sentenced to four months in jail. In connection with that prosecution, said Mr. Conant, there were two charges against Lieberman. He was convicted and sentenced on one, and when he was brought up for a hearing on the second, "counsel said the Crown had given an undertaking that it would be satisfied with one conviction."

Mr. Conant said he was "very much annoyed" and immediately on being advised of that situation, wrote to Crown Attorney McFadden. He read the letter, which outlined the position, and then stressed "there must not be in this Province any compromise with crime."

### Has No Information.

Colonel Drew, on Monday, he said, had made charges that certain of these men were engaged again in illegal operations and that the department was aware of it. "In the short time I have had available to deal with it since, I am unable to find any officer in the Attorney-General's Department who has any knowledge of the statements. Of the charges made yesterday of the Attorney-General's Department, certainly I have no information," said Mr. Conant.

The Attorney-General stressed that inquiries were not made of Commissioner W. H. Stringer, bereaved within recent days by his wife's death.

Colonel Drew said he wanted to read the original of a letter "writ-

ten by the instructions of the Attorney-General," dated Oct. 3, 1941, to the Rev. Gordon Domm, "written to one of those ministers whose sermons apparently fall on the unwilling ears of the Attorney-General."

The letter, said the Conservative Leader, was written by Commissioner Stringer. It stated, in effect, that the Attorney-General had referred to the commissioner a letter from Mr. Domm in which the minister had drawn to the department's attention that some alleged resorts were being operated.

"And, at the time, the files of the Attorney-General contained letters, of which I have the original copies, giving information as to where and in which municipalities these resorts were being operated," charged Colonel Drew.

The commissioner's letter, he continued, advised Mr. Domm that if he had information as to the location of these alleged resorts, that he should give that information to the local police and, in event there was no action, to the Provincial Police "who will consider the advisability of lodging a complaint with the police of the municipalities involved."

"It is obviously a form letter and I don't blame the commissioner for writing that letter because he obviously wrote it immediately following an interview with the Attorney-General," he added.

"I might say that the Attorney-General might make some inquiries. He might inquire into the fight which occurred at the Auburn Club on March 18, less than a month ago."

It was at this juncture that Premier Hepburn called for a closure on the argument, on the grounds Colonel Drew was out of order, and Colonel Drew declared with emphasis that he would reopen it in discussion of the estimates of the Attorney-General's Department.