

HEPBURN GIVEN STAB IN BACK, ACRES CHARGES

Member of Opposition
Chides Premier Conant
and Cabinet Associates

A vigorous defense of Mitchell F. Hepburn came from a Progressive Conservative member of the Legislature yesterday when A. H. Acres, member for Carleton, denounced Premier Conant and members of his Cabinet for "stabbing Hepburn in the back." Mr. Acres' remarks drew no reply from Treasury Row.

Describing the acceptance of the Hepburn resignation as "an unkindly act," Mr. Acres told Mr. Conant: "You wouldn't be Prime Minister if it hadn't been for him. It was an unkindly act to call him up on the telephone and accept his resignation."

The Progressive Conservative member singled out Highways Minister T. B. McQuesten for attention in connection with the same matter.

"You are now a happy colleague of the present Prime Minister," remarked Mr. Acres. "You should have advised him not to call Mitch Hepburn on the telephone and accept the resignation. You and every one of the others in the front-line benches wouldn't be there if not for Hepburn, a man known all across Canada as one who is all out to win the war. And a lot of other members of this House would not be here if they hadn't had Mitch Hepburn in 1934 and 1937.

"It was a stab in the back, and I come to the defense of Mitch Hepburn in the matter," continued Mr. Acres. "It is enough to stir up any one's blood. At no time did Mitch Hepburn ever make a statement that he was not 100 per cent for winning the war. And then to stab him in the back, even with all the mistakes he made."

Mr. Acres blamed Mr. McQuesten and former Attorney-General Arthur W. Roebuck for "leading Mr. Hepburn astray" on the now-famous Quebec Hydro power contracts controversy. He described the Highways Minister as a "level-headed" man who should have advised the then Premier against cancellation of the contracts.

Speaking of Mr. Roebuck, the member for Carleton exclaimed: "If he ever gets to be Prime Minister of Ontario I don't want to live in this Province." This was a reference to Mr. Roebuck's entry into the field as a candidate for Liberal Party leadership.