

MARCH 26

Conant Now Uncertain Re Bargaining Measure

Document From Committee Provokes Discussion in Legislature; Report in Draft Bill Form

The Conant Government is not now certain whether it will bring in a collective bargaining bill for labor this session.

This statement came from Premier Gordon Conant following a motion by Vice-Chairman H. L. Hagey that the report of the House Committee on Collective Bargaining be adopted. In the ensuing discussion Opposition members objected to "adoption" of the report without a statement from the Government, and later Mr. Conant asked that the mover recast his motion to ask merely that the report be tabled. Opposition members based their dissent on the point that a motion to adopt the report required unanimous consent of the members—a concession they were not willing to make, under the circumstances.

The report is in the form of a draft bill calling for the appointment of a labor court, as a separate division of the Supreme Court of Ontario; compulsory collective bargaining machinery; the outlawing of company-dominated unions; the filing by labor unions of a sworn statement of their financial affairs, and numerous provisions as to the carrying out of the collective bargaining principle.

It was when the Opposition sought to ascertain the form of the report that Premier Conant revealed that his Government was not certain as to whether any kind of a collective bargaining bill would be introduced in the Legislature.

"You are not now certain if you are going to introduce a bill?" asked Leopold Macaulay (Prog. Con., South York).

"No," replied Mr. Conant.

There was some confusion in the minds of the members as to the

status of the labor committee's findings. In an explanatory note attached to the lengthy report, the committee said it had come to the conclusion that no useful purpose would be served by presenting in their report a resume of the evidence adduced, and for that reason was giving the House a series of recommendations in legislative form, in other words a draft bill.

"Is this now introduced as a Government measure?" asked Opposition Leader George Drew.

"It is the report of the committee," replied the Premier.

"We are asked to concur in the report," protested Mr. Macaulay.

"I wouldn't expect the House to dispose of this matter now, because as far as I am concerned I don't know what's in it," replied Mr. Conant.

"What is the exact status of the bill?" asked Col. Drew.

"There is no bill," replied the Premier. "The committee has reported as a committee. It is not the report of the Government. I would think the practice should be to have it tabled. No action of the Legislature is necessary. I think the honorable member who presented the report might well change the request for concurrence and permit the report to be tabled."

Col. Drew Objects.

"The committee has drafted a bill," said Col. Drew. "It is drawn in the form of an act. We are asked to vote on a motion to support this report. The Prime Minister had made it clear this is not a Government bill. It comes as a child of the committee and the House is now asked to vote on a motion to support this report. The Government must take the responsibility."

"Retribution is catching up with the Government in its labor efforts," said Mr. Macaulay. "We are back to the situation we were in originally when we suggested a draft bill be presented, and then sent to a committee of the whole House."

"The recommendations should be presented to another committee for testimony of all the people interested," said Mr. Macaulay.

"The meat of the labor question is being brought up now," continued Mr. Macaulay. "What do the representatives of those concerned have to say of the recommendations made here? There are clauses in it which recommend secret sessions, which are unjust and unfair. What have they to say about it?"

"This bill has not been considered by the Government, but it will be given immediate study," said Mr. Conant.

Lands and Forests Minister Norman Hipel brought an end to the discussion by moving adjournment of the debate.