

APRIL 7

Conant Will Introduce Bill to Lengthen Life Of Legislature Today

Liberal Caucus Almost Unanimous in Vote to Avoid Election; Convention-Chosen Leader Would Not Be Bound; War Fortunes Factor

A bill to extend the life of the present Legislature for a one-year period will be introduced in the House this afternoon by Premier Conant. Acting swiftly on the recommendation of a Liberal caucus held yesterday, the Premier will set in motion legislative machinery which may result in there being no general election in Ontario for the duration. C

The Liberal caucus endorsed an extension bill by an overwhelming majority, approximately 95 per cent of the members voting for it. The few dissenters were snowed under.

The holding of a Provincial election this summer or fall depends on whether the Canadian Army overseas will see large-scale action in the opening of another land front. The extension legislation is permissive in character and the new Liberal Leader to be chosen at the coming convention will not be bound to put the extension into effect if he and his associates feel an election should be held.

What action the Progressive Conservatives in the Legislature will take when the extension bill comes up for discussion is not known, but it is no secret that many of the Opposition group are just as much in favor of an extension as are the Liberals. Some hold the view that a victory for their party at the polls is rather a slim prospect, anyway, and they feel the way the Liberals do about holding an election in the midst of a land offensive somewhere in Europe.

It is believed in some quarters that the Progressive Conservatives will do what they did last year: make the passage of the bill a unanimous one, particularly in view of the fact that a 1943 election is not being ruled out altogether.

Harry Nixon, who may be the choice of the Liberal convention, agreed with the members that an Allied offensive would certainly put an end to any plans for political campaigning this year. But neither Mr. Nixon, nor any other person who may be chosen leader, is committed to perpetuating the present Legislature if it is felt that the war situation would not be a factor in an election.

Plan Election Caucus.

It was further agreed that a caucus should be held at the earliest opportune moment following the Liberal convention, April 29, 30.

In view of the strange circumstances surrounding the political setup it is felt an extension bill cannot be regarded as anything but a "safety measure," to be used or not used as circumstances warrant. There is little doubt in the minds of most members that if the war situation during the next few months removes the possibility of a 1943 election, then there will be no election for the duration.

Premier Conant was not present at the caucus, due to an indisposition which for a time threatened to keep him from his seat in the House. But his position in the matter was clear enough. At the caucus Monday he told the members he would leave the decision in their hands. Following the caucus W. L. Miller (Algoma-Manitoulin), and chairman of the gathering, informed the Premier of the decision arrived at by the members.

All members of the Cabinet were present at the caucus and they are said to have held the view that, while it was advisable to seek a renewal of their mandate by going to the country, it would be highly unwise to take such a step if any Allied offensive this spring appeared likely.

The caucus to be held soon after the convention will be for the purpose of discussing the election question in the light of the war situation at that time. The newly chosen party Leader will canvass the opinion of the members and, after considering all pertinent factors, a decision will be made.

It is learned on excellent authority that a June election is out of the question unless the new Liberal Leader decides to exclude the soldiers' vote, provision for which was made in a special act passed last session.