

DREW BLOCKS INTRODUCTION OF EXTENSION

First Reading of Bill Delayed Until Today—Opposition Against It

Failure of the Government to give the required two days' notice of intention to introduce the bill extending the life of the Legislature, resulted in first reading not being given in the Legislature yesterday. When Premier Conant introduced the bill, Opposition Leader George Drew rose and said he was not prepared to give consent to the introduction. As the unanimous consent of the House is necessary in cases where the two days' notice has not been given, the Premier did not proceed. The bill likely will come before the House today.

The attitude of the Progressive Conservatives in the House was said to be one of opposition to any attempt to extend the life of the Legislature at this time. A caucus of the Progressive Conservatives was held yesterday and it is reported the decision was reached to oppose an extension measure.

It is believed one of the reasons the Opposition objects to an extension bill is that such action is not considered necessary at this stage, and that if war conditions warrant calling a halt to an election this year it would be an easy matter to call a one-day session of the Legislature and pass an extension bill.

There is a feeling among some Liberals that an extension bill is not the wisest course to follow, and one Liberal frankly declared: "I am afraid some of the members were thinking of shaky seats as well as the possibility of an offensive when they voted for extension."

Another Liberal expressed the view that the Liberal Party would become weaker and its political opponents stronger if the life of the Legislature ran on for another year. Liberals also felt that the temporary nature of the present leadership was a factor which made an appeal to the people all the more important, apart altogether from the fact that the Legislature already has outlived its mandate by a year.

DREW REQUESTS CLARIFICATION

Position of Minister Before Legislature

The position and status of R. M. Smith, Deputy Minister of the Ontario Highways Department, in relation to his Government duties and his connection with the R. Melville Smith & Company Limited engaged on the Alaska Highway project came before the Legislature last night.

As consideration of Highways Department estimates came before the House in Committee of Supply tonight, Lt.-Col. George A. Drew, Opposition Leader, asked Highways Minister McQuesten if he could clarify the situation. He would like to know under what arrangements Mr. Smith went to Alaska.

The question was based on the anomaly of a man who still was Deputy Minister having connection with a firm which was working on the highway as a private corporation. Mr. McQuesten explained that Mr. Smith had been paid only for the time he spent performing his Deputy Minister's duties and he had a report on the matter from the Civil Service Commissioner, the details of which he did not have at hand. However, the matter was at 'loose ends' because Mr. Smith had been ill for some time. He had had many months of sick leave owing him and this time was not yet up.

The matter ended and consideration of estimates began when Col. Drew said he would give Mr. McQuesten a written statement on the matters to allow the Minister time to study the question further.

He knew of complaints being made in Edmonton of conditions pertaining on the highway where the Smith firm was engaged. They raised questions about the company acting as a supply company besides acting in a managerial capacity, Col. Drew said.

DECLARES NEED FOR OVERHAUL

Wants Top-to-Bottom Assessment Revision

The "crying need" for revision of the Assessment Act "from top to bottom" in view of the steadily changing situation as regards real estate, was stressed in Committee of the Whole in the Legislature yesterday afternoon by Leopold Macaulay (Prog. Cons., South York). His strong advocacy of a change came during discussion of the omnibus bill containing amendments to the Municipal Act. Mr. Macaulay's contention found support with C. M. MacFie (Lib., Middlesex South) who advocated a special sub-committee to study it.

The act as it stands needed adjustment and clarification, Mr. Macaulay thought, and said time and money were wasted in complicated legal discussions on municipal assessments which sometimes had to be settled by the turn of a card. "And even dice" commented Premier Conant. And even with straws after \$30,000 had been spent in litigation in one case, Mr. Macaulay added.

G. S. Henry (Prog. Cons., York East) objected to private bills being introduced through the Minister of Municipal Affairs or his deputy instead of being explained by private members, and to the limitation on the time for their submission, all resulting in a multiplicity of amendments. The situation had existed for years but had reached a climax, said Mr. Henry.

Hon. T. B. McQuesten, Minister of Municipal Affairs, thought the committee should be broadly treated as a place for discussion of amendments and Mr. Macaulay agreed Deputy Ministers should be encouraged to appear. He added his plea that the Assessment Act be brought up to date.