

February 29

# Ontario-Ottawa Parley Sought on Liquor Issue

Need for a conference "as soon as possible" between the Provincial and Federal Governments to clarify the whole question of liquor control and restrictions was urged in the Legislature yesterday by Premier George Drew. Premier Drew tabled cor-

respondence between himself and Prime Minister King on the question, and read from his letter to the Prime Minister in which he said Ontario people were ready to accept liquor restrictions if they were necessary to assure full requirements of commercial alcohol for war purposes. But it is not possible, he said, to state that present restrictions are necessary for that reason.

The Ontario Liquor Control Board, he said, has on hand "large reserves of different kinds of spirituous liquors. It could obtain more wine without limiting any phase of the Canadian war effort. The supply of beer could be increased considerably. We are therefore unable to assure the people of Ontario that the limitations imposed by the Dominion Government are called for by any circumstances connected with the prosecution of the war."

## Early Parley Essential.

Premier Drew said he thought a conference was due as soon as possible, so that it should be known what agreements were to be observed. He quoted Finance Minister Ilsley as having said that the Dominion Government would not enter the field of liquor control.

The Ontario Liquor Control Board, said Mr. Drew, found it difficult to explain why Ontario residents were limited to 26 ounces of liquor a month while Quebec residents were allowed 80. Criticism of the Ontario Board resulted for imposing greater restrictions than apparently were necessary in another Province.

Of restrictions imposed by the Dominion, Premier Drew said in his letter to Prime Minister King that it would be of considerable assistance "if we knew the constitutional grounds upon which the Dominion Government imposed these restrictions, which are contrary to the definite statement contained in Mr. Ilsley's letter of Jan. 31, 1942."

In his reply, Prime Minister King said he saw no greater restrictions on one Province than another, and that there was no further change now in circumstances which had caused the Government to take the action it did in December, 1942, in restricting allowances to the Provinces. He said Mr. Ilsley's assurances of non-interference had relation only to the safeguarding of Provincial revenues.

## Conant's Statement.

Mr. King said the Government had been influenced to some degree by a statement at Oshawa by the then Premier, Gordon D. Conant, that "the question of curtailment in the quantity of liquor or the hours of sale is a matter over which the Dominion Government may exercise jurisdiction in a war emergency. If they find it necessary . . . all jurisdictions involved will have to accept it as part of our war program."

Premier Drew repeated that Mr. Ilsley had given assurance that the Dominion would not attempt to enter the field, but would treat it as belonging entirely to the Ontario Government.