

March 3

Drew Warns Ottawa Ontario Rights Guarded

Premier George Drew warned the Dominion Government yesterday that Ontario intends to insist on its constitutional rights in demanding that matters affecting the Province should be the subject of consultations between the two jurisdictions.

Speaking in the Legislature before the orders of the day, the Premier criticized the Dominion Government's action in bringing forth health insurance proposals without having had prior consultation with the Province, as requested in a letter sent to Prime Minister King by Mr. Drew last Jan. 6. The Premier emphasized that Ontario was prepared to co-operate with the Dominion to the utmost, but there must be an approach to the problems which "recognizes the duty and obligation of the Provincial Government," he said.

"This Government, under the British North America Act, has certain responsibilities," declared the Premier. "There are certain fields of legislation in which Ontario must act or no one acts at all. This Government is not merely a subsidiary Government. Under our Constitution there is one field for us, one for the Dominion, and there are some fields in which there is overlapping.

May Be a Kite.

"It is most unfortunate that a bill so far reaching and so important should be presented as a Government bill when it may well be a kite flown to the Social Security Committee," the Premier continued. "There has been no consultation with this Government nor with the department directly concerned, although some of the broad details have been discussed in earlier correspondence."

The Premier said that in his letter to Mr. King of Jan. 6 he had asked for an early Dominion-Provincial conference to develop a formula for legislation action by all Governments concerned. In his reply, Mr. King wrote that copies of the letter had been sent to all Provincial Governments.

"Yesterday I received a letter

from the Clerk of the Privy Council stating that it was not now possible to fix a definite date for such a conference," declared Mr. Drew. "It was hoped to hold the conference during the Easter recess of Parliament, but this would not be possible because other Parliaments would be meeting during that period. This presents a very real problem.

"The health insurance plan is represented as being a Government measure, whereas in fact it has not been presented to the House of Commons, but to the Social Security Committee. No one here, least of all the Government members, who must assume first responsibility in giving direction, is in a position to deal effectively, either by way of comment or otherwise, with a bill which is in a state of suspended animation and not even established as a Government measure. We are not even sure it will be a Government measure. It may come back from the committee in different form.

Ready to Co-operate.

"We are prepared to co-operate in laying the basis for reforms," continued the Premier. "To be effective, there must be an approach to the problems which recognize the duty and obligation of the Provincial Government. It is essential that we should meet and discuss the basis of proposed legislation so that when legislation is introduced it will be on an agreed basis.

"I have made it clear that we stand ready to co-operate," continued Premier Drew. "I should also make it clear that this Government does intend to insist on the constitutional rights of Ontario, and in matters affecting both Governments there should be consultation."

E. B. Jolliffe, Opposition Leader, asked the Premier whether his Government had made specific representations to Ottawa on matters of health insurance and social security and whether it had taken the initiative in seeking agreement.

"Health insurance is only one of a great variety of subjects on which we have taken the initiative," replied the Premier.