

Decency in Beer Rooms Demanded by Blackwell

Certain standards of decency must be established if the public is to enjoy liberty in the matter of consumption of alcoholic beverages, Attorney-General Leslie Blackwell told the Legislature yesterday in moving the second reading of the Government bill which sets up a licensing board and divorces the Liquor Control Board from any connection with the granting and cancellation of beer and wine authorities. This bill and an amendment to the Liquor Control Act were given second reading without Opposition comment.

"The disabilities which have accumulated indicate that the time has come when on-premises consumption of beer and wine must be maintained on standards within the concept of decency of the people themselves," said Mr. Blackwell. "In the interests of the many fine citizens who operate hotels and maintain fine standards, in the interests of the patrons themselves and the public generally, there must be established standards of operation which will be approved by a large section of the people."

Given Full Control.

The proposed licensing board of three persons will have complete control over the granting, suspension, cancellation and revocation of authorities, the Attorney-General said. In cases where an authority holder has obeyed the law in every particular, but the interests of the community call for cancellation of the license, provision is made for compensation of the authority holder to the extent that the board's act has depreciated his capital assets.

To prevent abuses in transfer of authorities, the bill setting up the licensing board provides that when a transfer is made there must be repaid to the Province the value of the authority as distinguished from the authority holder's interest in the property.

If the Government had attempted to deal with the volume of complaints regarding prevailing abuses there would have been criticism that politics and political dealings were a consideration, Mr. Blackwell said.

"Properly Qualified."

The object and purpose of a licensing system was not to arbitrarily regulate and restrict the quantity of beer and wine consumed on premises, but to see that the persons holding authorities and the premises themselves "are properly qualified." Such a vast vending body as the Liquor Control Board was enough to fully occupy the time and energies of the board officials without the additional responsibility of handling authority problems.

The licensing board will move

through the problems and hold meetings of two types, annual meetings when reviews of the 1,100 authorities in Ontario will take place, and special meetings to consider other business, such as applications, proceedings for cancellation, suspensions and applications for transfer.

The Liquor Control Act contains an amendment which permits a municipality to vote for a Government store without having to accept a beverage room as well. The Attorney-General explained that in 1934 authorities were issued in three municipalities when the voters in those municipalities had voted for a Government store.

"It means that voters may now vote for a store without having a beverage room thrust upon them," said Mr. Blackwell.