

March 7.

Hepburn Attacks Drew On Religious Education And Immigration Policy

A subamendment attacking the Drew Government's religious education program in the schools and its proposed immigration policies after the war was introduced in the Legislature yesterday by Liberal House Leader M. F. Hepburn, after Premier George A. Drew had warned the members that, because he accepted the supremacy of Parliament, he would follow the "usual constitutional procedure" if his Government did not receive support of the majority of the House. This would be to seek dissolution of the Legislature.

The Premier made clear that the Government would be forced to take "appropriate action" if any concerted effort is made to disrupt the orderly despatch of business in the Legislature. His Government still believed the people of Ontario wished to avoid another wartime election. In declaring that his Government would bring an end to the life of the present Legislature unless majority support was forthcoming, the Premier added: "Any other course would be contrary to our established institutions, and would be contrary to the best interests of the people of Ontario."

Several Clashes

Continuation of the Throne Speech debate saw the Premier speak for an hour, and Mr. Hepburn, who followed him, for 40 minutes. The Liberal House Leader engaged in wordy duels with a dozen members during his address. He charged the Government with attempting to create national disunity and with planning to sponsor large-scale immigration into Ontario before rehabilitation of Ontario soldiers.

Mr. Hepburn wound up his address by voicing the hope that no issue would be raised to "stir up race against race, creed against creed," and he then proceeded to move an amendment to the C.C.F. amendment to the Throne Speech motion. The Liberal amendment read:

"That the amendment now before the House be amended by adding thereto the following words:

"This House further regrets:

"That the Government has reversed our traditional policy of non-sectarian public schools by introducing a program of religious education which has caused disunity among large sections of our people, and has thereby violated the cherished democratic right of each to worship according to his conscience, free from interference by the State;

"That the Government, without any mandate from the Legislature, has given ill-considered encouragement to large-scale immigration before providing adequate safeguards to ensure full employment for our war veterans and present workers."

Premier Commends System

The two points raised by the Liberal subamendment were dealt with by the Premier in his address. He said that the system of religious education was working well, and that few boards of education had availed themselves of the privilege of excusing the schools under their direction from participation in the program. Then, dealing with post-war immigration into Ontario, the Premier emphasized that never at any time had he suggested any plan of immigration would go into effect until "we had assured the re-employment of our veterans and workers in the munitions factories."

Mr. Hepburn took the opposite viewpoint on both matters. He quoted from newspaper articles in the British press, and asserted that the Premier's plan was to keep the French-Canadian population in the minority by bringing in British immigrants. He charged that a definite effort was being made to bring immigrants to Ontario "under false pretenses." He quoted from a British newspaper which purported the Premier to have said on one of his visits to Britain that the people of Ontario were 90 per cent of British stock "and we intend to maintain and increase it." "If the member for Elgin is trying to stir up racial hatred, then it should be known that two years ago he tried to precipitate an election on the issue of finishing off the French-Canadians," declared the Premier.

Mr. Hepburn ignored this charge and continued with his address. A little later, when the Liberal House Leader made another attack on the Premier, the latter retorted: "The member for Elgin may recall what he said on one occasion in speaking of Quebec: 'The tail cannot wag the dog forever. If it does it is doomed.'"

"There's nothing very offensive about that," Mr. Hepburn replied. "Nothing comparable to the Aug. 9 speech of the Prime Minister."

Mr. Hepburn told the House that he had given notice of motion to repeal the Optometry Act amendment passed at the last session. He accused the Premier of getting the amendment passed to pay a pre-election pledge, and asserted that the amended act permitted optometrists to charge as high as \$50 for a pair of spectacles worth four or five dollars.

Points "Irritating"

Referring briefly to Premier Drew's contribution to the debate, Mr. Hepburn expressed disappointment that he had not referred to the 22 points of his party's platform. The points, he remarked, evidently were "beginning to be rather irritating to him," and added: "The points are closing in and he's the irritable member of the House, not myself."

He criticized the C.C.F. leadership as too academic and said many were falling away from the Socialist Party because it lacked the right kind of leadership.

Repeating his recent statement that his prolonged personal attacks on Prime Minister King had been a "mistake," Mr. Hepburn said he had probably been "overzealous," since he was concerned over the war situation on his return from a visit to Australia, where the full danger was realized.

"I still maintain there's nothing much to be gained by personal attacks," he said, then hastened to add: "There have been no overtures made by him (Mr. King) to

me or me to him. The greatest thing is national unity and the only body that can give it to us is Liberal reform opinion," not "reactionary Tory."

Mr. Hepburn tangled with Opposition Leader E. B. Jolliffe over his account of the arrest of several Lakeview relief strikers while he was in office, Mr. Jolliffe pointing out that the convictions had been reversed and the men freed.

Mr. Hepburn defended his walk-out at the Sirois Conference, denying that he was creating national disunity. When he added that he "didn't hear a peep out of the Premier at the Sirois Conference," Mr. Drew promptly reminded him that he had introduced a resolution in the House at the time.

Flurry Over Adjournment

There was a brief flurry when A. A. MacLeod, Labor-Progressive Leader, moved adjournment of the debate at 5:25 p.m. Mr. Drew said he believed the debate should go on, and this started a mild clash. Speaker Stewart called for the ayes and nays on the question of adjournment and ruled that the nays had it. Mr. MacLeod said he wished to contest the ruling.

"If the member doesn't want to continue the debate I don't want to make an issue of it," said the Premier. "We can hear the Liberal-Communist tieup on another occasion."

"You can't take it," retorted Mr. MacLeod.

"I pay no attention to what this member says," answered the Premier.

In his address the Premier dealt with the need of a Dominion-Provincial conference and declared that, now it was evident a Dominion election "is still some distance in the future," the need for such a conference was more urgent than ever.

Excuse Lacking

"I do not believe there can be any excuse for postponing such a meeting until fall, which would now be the very earliest that it could take place if nothing is to be done until after a Dominion election," said Mr. Drew. Apart from questions of re-adjusting taxing power and agreement as to the way in which social services can best be handled, there were a number of other very important subjects upon which it was of the utmost importance that there should be full agreement before the end of the war, the Premier said. He cited immigration and air transportation as two cases in point.

Turning to criticism of the Oppo-