

March 14

Galleries Applaud Drew For Defense of Smythe

Quick defense of Major Conn Smythe by Premier Drew following an attack on the soldier-sportsman by A. A. MacLeod, brought an immediate outburst of rule-breaking applause from the galleries in the Legislature yesterday.

The Labor-Progressive member had declared that Major Smythe's charge that green reinforcements had been sent to Canadian front lines had been found "utterly baseless" by Col. Ralston on personal investigation overseas. Premier Drew was at once on his feet.

"I don't intend to pay any attention to the statements of the leader of the Communist Party concerning myself," said the Premier. "But I do resent these statements about Major Smythe, one of the finest soldiers and sportsmen I ever knew."

There was a burst of hand-clapping from the speakers and public galleries. Government members and the Liberals banged their desks.

Speaker Stewart immediately informed the galleries that applause by the public was not permitted.

"Col. Ralston did not say that the Smythe charge was untrue and Ralston's own action later proved it was true," asserted the Premier.

Mr. MacLeod then read from a newspaper interview with Col. Ralston overseas in which he was quoted as saying, in reply to a question as to the accuracy of the Smythe charge: "The system is now adequate if carried out."

"Does that look like corroboration of the Smythe charge?" asked Mr. MacLeod.

The Premier immediately rose. "The member said that Col. Ralston declared Smythe's statement was not true," said the Premier. "He said nothing of the kind."

Mr. MacLeod termed the reinforcement issue "the most slanderous and morale-destroying campaign in the history of this country," and said the Defense Department was being "pilloried by Tory zombies headed by John Bracken." In the Grey North by-election, he declared, Mr. Bracken had descended to an all-time low in charging that soldiers had thrown away their rifles en route overseas. "That was proved false. The story was offered to the C.C.F. Leader and he refused it," he said.

He thought it strange that Premier Drew should urge the return of Col. Ralston as Defense Minister in place of Mr. McNaughton since he had once charged Col. Ralston with sending green and untrained troops to Hong Kong.

"I repeat," he said, "the Ontario Premier was the father of the reinforcement crisis and no blood test is required to prove the parentage. The Globe and Mail gives him full credit for doing the job in Grey North, although neither he nor Conny Smythe entered that campaign."

Later he said the Premier, supposed to be an expert in weapons, "doesn't know the difference between a harpoon and a boomerang. Every one he has aimed at Ottawa has returned to hit him on the chin. But he's still standing up."