

Confidence Vote 66-19 For Drew Government On Grants to Schools

Staking the life of his Government on passage of a motion to go into Supply, Premier George A. Drew yesterday obtained from the Legislature a vote of confidence on the question of distributing \$8,820,000 to the school boards of Ontario as part of the Govern-

ment's pledge to assume 50 per cent of educational costs. Challenged by Liberal House Leader M. F. Hepburn, who charged the Government with "trickery" and "calculated misrepresentation," the Premier electrified the crowded galleries by stating that, since the motion was being opposed, he would regard it as a resolution of confidence.

Unable to obtain the support of the C.C.F. Opposition, Mr. Hepburn found himself on the short end of a 66 to 19 recorded vote, the two Labor-Progressives and the two former C.C.F. members voting with the Liberal group. E. B. Jolliffe, C.C.F. Leader, told the House he would vote against the Government on a principle, but would not seek to obstruct or impede assistance to the school boards.

After three hours of debate, which was carried into the evening session, the Legislature in committee of supply, voted the estimate at 9:15 p.m.

Premier Applauded

There was thunderous applause from Progressive Conservative members when the Premier took up the Liberal challenge. After denying that the Government was seeking a blank cheque endorsement from the Legislature, as Mr. Hepburn had charged, the Premier declared: "We are here as a Government just so long as the Legislature supports us. We undertook the responsibility for government and are willing to carry on as long as we have the support of the Legislature. Since we have been challenged, we will accept the resolution as a vote of confidence."

Speaker Stewart then put the motion to go into Supply to the House, and the Premier and his front-row colleagues rose to signify their desire for a recorded vote.

The House then divided 66 to 19, the C.C.F. voting solidly with the Government.

At the outset, when the House was about to pass on the Government motion, Mr. Hepburn declared the motion was out of order because the rules provided that the Budget should not be considered before the completion of the Throne Speech, and that the "rump Government" could not vote money until its program as stated in the Throne Speech was approved by a majority of the House.

Doubtful of Surplus

Mr. Hepburn claimed the Government was guilty of "deliberate misrepresentation" in claiming a surplus it did not possess, and he asserted that the Premier had promised to consult group Leaders in the House before going into estimates, and he had not done so.

Premier Drew promptly denied

this. "My undertaking was with respect to the Budget debate," he said.

Mr. Jolliffe supported the Premier, and later the Premier quoted from Hansard: "We will first consider supplementary estimates — that, of course, is not the Budget debate. I shall be happy to confer with Leaders of the other groups before proceeding with the Budget debate."

"I admit my mistake," said Mr. Hepburn. "I am more concerned with giving a rump Government whose fate is in the balance a blank cheque. As far as this group is concerned, we are out to beat this Tory Government at the first opportunity. We have no confidence in it. It is unprecedented to ask power to vote money be given a Government which does not have the confidence of the House. It is out of order, and I will oppose it to the point of asking a recorded vote."

Charge Denied

"It's neither a blank cheque nor has it anything to do with anticipated expenditure," the Premier retorted. "The motion (for payment of the \$8,820,000 school grants) could be made at any time. The payment is out of last year's funds."

Then Premier Drew told the House that his Government would accept the Hepburn resolution as a vote of confidence.

"It was first amusing and then became tiresome," he said, "to have the member from Elgin threatening this Government. I have made it clear many times that we'll be here as a Government just as long as the majority of the House support us. We are willing to carry on only so long as we have support. As he challenges this resolution, we'll accept this resolution as a vote of confidence."

Opposition Leader Jolliffe rose to declare his party's stand in reply to Mr. Hepburn's remark that there was "no escape" for the C.C.F.

Says Member Ingenious

"My position is clear," he said. "We wish an opportunity to express an opinion. But we wish to express it on principles such as are embodied in our amendment to the Throne Speech motion and not a question of procedure, no matter how ingenious it may be—and the member for Elgin is ingenious in such matters."

Whether the school grant was an election promise or not, Mr. Jolliffe added, "we do not conceive it our duty to deny to the school boards of Ontario the financial assistance they have a right to expect."

"We are going to vote against the Government, but on principles, and we won't be a party to any design or device to impede or obstruct assistance to the school boards of Ontario."

A long debate followed the division of the House, with C.C.F. and Liberal members firing numerous questions at the Government.

A. A. MacLeod, Labor-Progressive Leader, also took a hand in the discussion and engaged in debate with Provincial Treasurer Leslie M. Frost. Mr. MacLeod accused the Government of "dangling a prize package in front of the people at a critical time in its experience without any idea of how it is going to make good on the balance" (of the school grants).

Mr. Hepburn said the Government was using last year's and this year's surplus to pay the increased cost of education, and he wanted to know why the Government did not do last year what it was doing this year.

Such Disappointment

"I have never seen such bitter disappointment as these two members are showing," remarked Mr. Frost, referring to Mr. MacLeod and Mr. Hepburn. "They are tearing their hair because we are doing something they said we wouldn't do."

Charles Millard (C.C.F., West York) described the financial plan as "risky, if not dangerous financing."

Premier Drew and Mr. Frost answered numerous criticisms of the application of the school grants. To claim by Mr. Millard that prudent municipalities would be penalized since grants were based on the previous year's costs, Mr. Frost said that prudent municipalities, having lower tax rates by reason of low expenditures in the past, are now in a position to make expenditures aided by the new grants and that such prudently increased costs, as the basis of future grants, would shortly react to their benefit.

Fair Equalization

"The grants have been applauded by the people of the Province generally as a fair way of equalizing the situation," he said.

Laughter greeted the observation by J. B. Salsberg (L.-P., Toronto-St. Andrew) that responsibility for education had rested for years on Liberal and Progressive Conservative Governments. The amusement at criticism of the Liberals caused Mr. Salsberg to interject: "We have much to criticize in the Liberal Party." To which Mr. Hepburn replied that the Liberals "couldn't stand a cruel word" from their Labor-Progressive friends.

Mr. Frost replied to Mr. Salsberg's criticism that Toronto had received less than 30 per cent instead of 50 per cent of cost of education, by citing Cobalt as having received 75 per cent, and said the amounts varied, but were 50 per cent over all the Province. Oshawa, for instance, gets 35 per cent, while near-by Brooklin gets 60.

"The regulations apply uniformly throughout Ontario," Premier Drew declared, and to a question as to when future grants would be paid Mr. Frost said it was proposed