

March 7

Speaker Steps In As Debate Flares On Penal Question

Movement of 10 Government bills through second reading or into special committee stages yesterday accomplished what Attorney-General Leslie Blackwell described as "steps to tidy up" some of the Provincial legislation, but also precipitated the hottest exchange of debate since the 22nd Legislature opened.

Speaker W. J. Stewart finally clamped down with a vigorous "out-of-order" ruling when Joseph Salsberg (Lab.-Prog., St. Andrew's-Toronto) insisted on attempting to discuss penal reform during consideration of an amendment to the Parole Act introduced by Provincial Secretary George Dunbar. Hot words flew between the Attorney-General and Mr. Salsberg before the Speaker ruled that discussion must be confined to the provisions of the bill.

These provisions covered full-time employment of a chairman for the parole board and use of \$1,500 of a \$4,000 vote. But Mr. Salsberg took issue with what he termed "no real major proposals about reform of penal institutions."

Speaker Takes a Hand

Mr. Blackwell pointed out that "penal institutions" were outside Provincial jurisdiction. Mr. Salsberg held that reform should be discussed of such institutions as were controlled by the Province. When Speaker Stewart finally ordered discussion restrained to the subject of the amendment, Mr. Salsberg snortingly sat down, while his leader, A. A. MacLeod, bitterly directed the words, "British institutions, humph!" at Premier Drew.

Amendments introduced by Attorney-General Blackwell included provision to permit a person confined to a mental hospital by a court order to recover custody of his own affairs on release by another court order, rather than, as at present, await a year's freedom; to abolish the office of the surrogate clerk and place the duties under the Supreme Court registrar; to change the name of the Money Lenders Act to the Unconscionable Transactions Act, "better to describe its true intent."

At the opening of the day's sitting, Premier Drew took occasion to direct the attention of members to the Opposition Leader, Farquhar Oliver, whom he described as a veteran of the Legislature though "today he is celebrating only his 42nd birthday."

"Many Happy Returns"

"For 20 consecutive years he has sat in this House," said Premier Drew, "and it has been not a result of any machine politics but because of his own merits. He represents a healthy industry (farming) and is a worthy representative of that industry. It is a pleasure and a privilege to have this opportunity of wishing him many happy returns of this day."

Former Liberal Leader Harry Nixon, who is dean of the Legislature with 27 years of continuous service, echoed the Premier's sentiments and warned the Premier that greater honors would "before long fall upon the shoulders of the now Opposition Leader." C.C.F. Leader W. J. Grummett and Lab.-Prog. Leader A. A. MacLeod added words of tribute.

Mr. Oliver described himself as a "farm boy just trying to get along down here." The greatest benefit he had experienced, he said, had been the associations in the Legislature that he had made during 20 years, and this was reflected in the kindness of the Premier and the others who had spoken kind words to him.

"It will be difficult to rise tomorrow and flay this Government after its leader's pleasant remarks," he said. "However, a night's sleep can work wonders."