

March 8

Drew Proposes Use of Hutments To Ease Housing

Premier George Drew revealed during the Throne Speech debate yesterday in the Legislature that he had suggested to the Federal Government last week that surplus hutments in training camps, not required for peacetime training, be used as emergency shelter to ease the present housing shortage.

Emergency shelter, he said, was the immediate and pressing problem and there was no device by which houses could be built quickly enough to meet the need. In the large training camps there "were thousands of hutments in excess of any number that could be used for peacetime training.

"With that thought in mind," he explained, "we have sought to impress upon the Dominion officials dealing with this matter the practical possibilities of using these hutments, and to the extent that these hutments cannot meet the situation, to deal with the problem by billeting arrangements carried out under the Emergency Transitional Powers Act." The plan, he said, was similar to the course followed in Britain.

Reply From Mr. King

Premier Drew said he had received a reply to his suggestion on Tuesday from Prime Minister King who said immediate consideration was being given to the proposal and that a further reply would be sent "at the earliest possible moment."

Emergency shelter is needed especially by the thousands of returning veterans being demobilized.

In his letter to Mr. King, Mr. Drew pointed out that Dominion officials had said that all supplies available for housing are going into that program already, and that nothing that could be done would increase the overall total for that reason.

Ontario officials, he said, had urged the drawing of a clear distinction between the actual building of houses and the emergency problem of finding temporary accommodation.

"Our officials," Mr. Drew's letter stated, "have proposed that hutments at such camps as Borden, Petawawa and other training centres be made available to the extent that they will not be required for future training, be dismantled at the camp and the material then used for emergency shelters to be erected in appropriate areas in those centres of population where the emergency is most severe."

Ontario officials, he said, had indicated their willingness to take part in the administration of such a plan under agreements similar to those in other joint fields of activity.

"These hutments," the letter pointed out, "appear to offer the only immediately available supply for this purpose. Obviously, they are under the full control of the Dominion Government."

The Dominion Government also, he set out, could create a billeting authority with power to take immediate steps to billet those requiring accommodation "just as has been done in other countries as the only way of meeting the sudden movement of population caused by the destruction of houses or extensive shifts of population for any other reason.

"I cannot emphasize too strongly," Premier Drew's letter concluded, "my belief that this is the only practical way to meet a situation which is causing very great hardship and discontent."