

April 3.

61-20 Majority Vote At Second Reading

Any doubt that Ontario's new liquor bill will become law was largely removed yesterday when it was approved in principle by the Ontario Legislature on a recorded vote, demanded by Premier Drew.

Despite the appeal of 800 hymn-singing members of the Ontario Temperance Federation, who had moved on the Government buildings in an anti-liquor demonstration earlier in the day, 61 Government supporters lined up solidly against 20 Liberal, C.C.F. and Labor-Progressive members to carry the bill through second reading.

The House division came in quick and definite reply to opposition from without and within the Legislative Assembly to the act to provide — in five cities and local option otherwise — by-the-glass sale of liquor in hotels, cocktail lounges and dining lounges; and beer and wine in restaurants.

Three-Hour Debate

For three hours, after lobby scenes reminiscent of the break of prohibition in Ontario, the House debated the issue. One after another, Opposition leaders rose to demand that the bill be deferred. They, in effect, were achieving what the Ontario Temperance Federation had failed to—they were speaking to Premier Drew. Liberal Leader Farquhar Oliver, C.C.F. Leader W. J. Grummett and Labor-Progressive Leader A. A. MacLeod had their say and it was that:

The bill was hasty . . . it was too involved for full consideration . . . it would involve use of vital materials in liquor production or rebuilding of premises . . . it was being rushed by the Government

Premier Drew listened and he answered. He declared that "not one Opposition voice has been raised against the proposals of this measure, not one voice denies the conditions that it seeks to correct, but every Opposition voice has sought to evade by asking that it be deferred or withdrawn." He insisted that the principle of the bill was the issue.

Premier Drew said his Government was assuming responsibility for its proposals. It believed in the need for a system which made moderation in drinking possible and law enforcement possible. In this respect, he remarked, he urged all who talk temperance to practice it in utterances. His Government, he said, did more in temperance education than any other Government of the past, yet the best way to meet the challenge was to develop courage, character and a sense of decency and self-respect.

He declared the bill "is a Govern-

ment bill, and will not be withdrawn."

But his most definite answer came when he asked for a "division," a vote by call of names, which left no doubt of solidity within Government ranks on the bill.

Mr. Blackwell was the only other Government speaker. Seven members of Opposition groups spoke, with only G. I. Harvey (C.C.F., Sault Ste. Marie), who followed the Premier, saying he was opposed to the bill. He agreed with the Government that "sincerity marks the Attorney-General's effort but that effort is not needed; what we need is correction of abuses under the present law."

Premier Amazed

Premier Drew said he was amazed at suggestions now that the bill should be withdrawn; every party leader had agreed that it be considered and not one asked suspension or withdrawal. Interim between first and second readings "exceeded that of most legislation in the House, so haste cannot be charged." Not more than 20 sections of the bill contained new provisions; no one could say truthfully it was "too involved for full consideration now."

And that charge, he said, was valueless in the light of demands that it be held up a year. What could be learned in a year by any person who couldn't construe 20 clauses in a week? As to grain being used for liquor, Ontario was now importing wines and liquors from the "very countries that members here say we will be depriving of foodstuffs." Materials going into establishments? Why, he remarked, with a smile, the Federal Government had delivered materials control into municipal hands

and surely municipalities could determine where they should be used.

The basic fact, he insisted, was that "deplorable" conditions existed and must be righted. Certain principles had been recognized by the Government: Either some means of honest administration and adequate distribution must be found, thereby achieving a lawful condition which people would respect, or conditions would gradually get worse until prohibition, with all its abuses, be accepted. And, he stressed, not one group which the Government met, including the Ontario Temperance Federation, had suggested prohibition—all had discussed legal distribution, thereby recognizing the majority desire for legal use of beverage alcohol.

Sequel to Demonstration

The introduction of the bill for second reading had followed a day of considerable uproar around the Legislative buildings. At noon a mass gathering of prohibition forces had descended on the Government, after declining an earlier appointment suggested by the Premier. The members did not see him—Cabinet council was in session. After singing several hymns it gradually dispersed.

Rumors then circulated that galleries would be packed by partisan groups who might seek to interrupt the session if the liquor license bill came up for consideration. No organized effort to that end occurred, though some applause burst out during Mr. Oliver's speech. This was promptly squelched by Speaker W. J. Stewart, who advised that no demonstrations were permitted by spectators.

Mr. Blackwell opened the liquor session when he moved second reading and then entered into a fuller description of the bill's proposals. But first, he said, he should tell the House that objections had been received from widely separated interests: Temperance workers, brewers and hotel owners. Brewers objected to the Government's intention to take over all retail outlets, such as warehouses. Hotel owners, seeing their places listed for reclassification into "true" hotels and those which had been "merely a sham for the licensing of beer sales," feared losses.

To Retain Board

From first entering office, the Government realized that the mess inherited from the Hepburn regime had to be cleaned up, he continued. Evidence of Government faith and honesty was its first step, the removal of hotel licensing from political control into a public commission, with licenses granted only after public hearings and public advertising of the applications. The Temperance Federation, he added, had approved this, and, in its latest brief, had asked that the Liquor Authority Board be retained, despite any changes. This, he said, the Government intended doing.

The Government had sought also to remove any monopoly from the business, establishing drastic fees for transfer of licenses. In the new bill another recognition of an evil was provided: Beer pushing for profit would lose favor because the whole schedule of fees would be revised so that establishments providing fewer public services would pay proportionately heavier fees for their licenses.

Picking up the brief presented by the Temperance Federation at a three-hour session two weeks ago, he then outlined its proposals: Abolition of women's beverage rooms (the new bill offered local option decision by any municipality on this) continuance of the Robb Authority Board (this was proposed in the new bill); enforcement of the Canada Temperance Act in its lawful areas (this the Government had already pledged); rehabilitation of alcoholics and temperance education (he had forwarded these to, respectively, the Health Department and the Department of Education); opposition to creating new outlets or