

April 6

## Drew Ready To Battle for Indemnity Boost

Because the functioning of democracy depends on the ability of the highest type of citizen being able to accept candidature and to serve as an elected representative of a riding, the intention of the Drew administration is to make it possible for any man or woman to accept office and not shun it because of financial inability to hold office.

Premier George Drew yesterday defined this position of his Government when he withdrew from the Ontario Legislature order paper the bill to define members' indemnities as tax-free expense allowances. A select committee of the House, he explained, would report to the next session, rendering the bill unnecessary now, but he pledged that his Government would stand by its decision to oppose any "bureaucratic interpretation of Federal laws" if the committee were to recommend adoption of the principle originally embraced by the bill.

### No Basic Raises

He could, the Premier said, overlook the bill but in view of the House record dealing with every item brought before it he would take the opportunity to outline his Government's stand. No party had been alone in the demand for increases in the indemnities; all groups had made such a request. Yet in the present abnormal times, he had felt that no increase in the basic amount of \$2,000 was justifiable, though fully agreeing with the belief that "the great majority if not all of the members incur expenses in excess and often greatly in excess of the amount they receive."

The Government of Britain had recently on recommendation of a select committee of Parliament, increased payments to members, besides setting aside a 500-pound allowance as expenses, and that despite far more drastic wage controls based "on an urgency far surpassing those restricting Canada." Canada's Federal Government, along lines exactly comparable to Ontario's proposal, had made part of the payments tax-free while "going to a degree which we did not consider justifiable in increasing the basic amount." Numerous other Legislatures had announced similar intentions, he said, and in other jurisdictions the policy proposed by Ontario was considered sound and reasonable policy.

### Year-Round Task

Most important consideration, however, the Premier said, was that the very function of democracy depended on the best man or woman, without regard to financial independence or position, being able to represent the electors. Their services were "a continuing task," not merely a few weeks in Toronto. Year-round, he said, all members came regularly to the Government offices—"though we see divisions here, we are not politically divided in our daily duties." In year-round responsibilities, he said, most members spent far in excess of the indemnities they received.

To maintain democracy, he repeated, it must be made possible that no person should find the financial obligations of office preventing him from serving the people. It was with this basic idea in mind that the Government felt that members actually received only return of expenses—and not by any means all of their expenses—in the indemnities. This had prompted the legislation to define the \$2,000 amount as such: An allowance for year-round out-of-pocket costs.