

INTRODUCTION

When Mr. N. W. Rowell, K.C., took the leadership of the Liberal party in the Ontario Legislature, one of the questions that was pressing with impelling force upon the public mind was that of temperance reform—the maintenance or abolition of the bar room in the Province of Ontario. An election was pending for the Legislature, and time did not permit of adequate consideration of the matter.

Immediately, however, Mr. Rowell gripped the issue, and inserted three definite planks in his platform: (1) That during the ensuing parliamentary term they would consider the best form of legislation to deal effectively with the evils of the traffic and submit that policy to the country. (2) They would abolish the three-fifths clause in local option contests and substitute a simple majority. (3) During the continuance of the license system they would secure the removal of its administration from political influence.

In the face of criticism for timorousness the Liberals adhered to this position throughout the campaign. Discussing this point at a mass meeting in Massey Hall, Toronto, on November 14, 1911, Mr. Rowell said:—

“The form of legislation is so important, the interests at stake so large, and the result may have such a vital effect upon the well-being of the people of this Province, I am sure you will agree with me that the most careful investigation and deliberate consideration should be given to the solution of so far-reaching and difficult a problem.

“It is our intention to give early consideration to this matter in all its bearings, and the decisions at which we arrive will be laid before the people and the people will have an opportunity of passing judgment upon our policy at the next general election, not in the form of a referendum, but as the policy of the party, upon which we will