

there are no less than three or four hotels about the market place. Now if the majority of the sub-divisions should decide against the granting of licenses, it does not prevent them from being issued in the town, but it does prevent the hotel licenses being issued to hotels in that particular locality. Now, if we want to give the municipalities power to say in a suitable manner that they do not want taverns within the environs of the place, let us say so. But what object is there in 200 voters being able to say that they shall not be licensed in a particular place, though they may be licensed in other parts of the municipality? The effect will be mischievous, and will not advance in the slightest degree the cause which I think we all have at heart—the cause of temperance. If it were only the character of the applicants which should be the ground of objection I would not object, but I do not think it would be right that his premises or the surroundings of the proposed hotel should be decided in this way.

Mr. BLAKE. I am sorry the hon. gentleman thinks so badly of his own Bill.

Mr. CAMERON (Victoria). The hon. member for South Durham has charged us with inconsistency, because we now object to a decision by a majority, while on Saturday evening, as he said, we objected to one-third as being too large a number for signing a petition in order to obtain the renewal of an existing license. That charge is based on a misstatement.

Mr. BLAKE. I did not say that, on last Saturday evening, objection was made that one-third was too large a number.

Mr. CAMERON (Victoria). Substantially that was the hon. gentleman's statement—that it was difficult to get one-third of the electors to sign such a petition.

Mr. BLAKE. No, no.

Mr. CAMERON. That was the statement the hon. gentleman made as I understood him. We did not object to one-third, or to any particular number, but we objected to existing licensees being required to get licenses signed by any number at all. When we come to discuss the merits of this clause, I have some difficulty in understanding what it means. If I understood the hon. member for Brome (Mr. Fisher) aright, he understands the clause to mean that a majority of the electors may decide that no license shall be granted in that particular sub-division. I think the hon. member for North Lanark (Mr. Jamieson) spoke in the same sense, and though I think the wording of the clause is rather vague, I do not so understand it. If the grounds referred to in the clause are those set forth in section seventeen as I should judge from the remarks of the hon. member for North Simcoe (Mr. McCarthy), then it is clear that the thirty-second clause simply is intended to provide that a majority of the electors may petition against any particular person and not against any license at all being granted; and if that is the meaning I think the words should be inserted "grounds set forth in the seventeenth section." The effect of the clause is simply that it removes from the Commissioners the right to judge as to the merits of a particular application. If this clause be carried as it stands, the effect of it will be that in the event of a majority of electors signing a petition to the effect described in the clause, then the Commissioners shall have no right whatever to consider whether the charges are well founded or not, but they are compelled arbitrarily to refuse the license. Now, I am content to leave the discretion in the hands of the Commissioners, and I do not think that such gentlemen as will be appointed under this Act will be unfit to be entrusted with that discretion. I cannot believe that if it appears that the applicant is of bad fame and character, or of drunken habits, or has previously forfeited a license, or that the applicant has

been convicted of selling liquor without a license within a period of three years; or that the premises in question are out of repair, or have not the accommodation hereby required, or reasonable accommodation if the premises be not subject to the said requirements; or that the licensing thereof is not required in the neighborhood, or that the premises are in the immediate vicinity of a place of public worship, hospital, or school, or that the quiet of the place in which such premises are situate will be disturbed if a license is granted—I say I cannot believe that if a petition is presented to that effect to the Commissioners, signed even by ten persons, they are not more competent to decide that matter than the tribunal which it is proposed to be provided by the thirty-second clause. Moreover, I object to this system of petitioning, as being unsatisfactory and unreliable as the basis upon which action should be taken. I think if anything of this kind is to be done we should accept either the suggestion of the hon. member for Victoria (Mr. Shakespeare), or the suggestion of the hon. Finance Minister, that it should be conducted either by open vote or by ballot; and in any event it should be decided by more than a bare majority. There is another objection which I have to the Bill, and that is, that I believe its effect will be to introduce the greatest possible uncertainty amongst the tavern-keepers as to whether licenses shall be granted or renewed, and the effect of that will be to keep out of the business those men who would be most likely to carry it on in a respectable and proper manner, as such men will not be likely to go into the business without some security of permanence being guaranteed by the Act. If they knew that they are to be at the mercy of the bare majority of the electors in any polling sub-division to have their license taken away, you will not get a respectable class of men to embark in the business. And I think it should be the object of all of us, that if taverns are to be allowed, they should be kept by the most respectable men in the community who can be induced to keep them. For that reason, also, I object to the clause. While I think the amendment suggested by the hon. First Minister would, to some extent, remove the objections to the clause, I think it would only do so partially. For my part, I would prefer to see this clause struck out altogether, believing that the restrictions of the seventeenth clause, and the discretion that will be exercised by the Commissioners, will be ample security to the public that no taverns will be licensed in improper neighborhoods or of an improper character. For these reasons, I should like to have the sense of the Committee taken as to whether the clause should remain or not. If it is decided that it should remain, I think it should be modified in the sense suggested.

Mr. GIGAULT. I would like to make another proposition, by way of compromise. In some countries more stringent measures are adopted with reference to new licenses than with reference to old ones; and I would suggest that against an old license, a petition signed by two-thirds should be required, but that against premises, which have never before been licensed, a petition signed by a majority should be sufficient. We often hear a good deal about vested rights, and when once certain premises have been licensed, it is very hard to get the license withdrawn. I see that in New Zealand new licenses are granted, subject to the vote of the ratepayers; in Victoria, a new license cannot be granted without the consent of a majority of the ratepayers; in South Australia, it is necessary to have a petition signed by two-thirds. I think we should adopt some rule which would not be so stringent upon premises which are to be relicensed, as upon premises which have never been licensed.

Mr. BLAKE. I wish to point out one or two things which have been omitted from this discussion. We have already provided, at any rate in the case of a new license, that a petition must be signed by one-third of the electors