

has been brought forward, have, in all their representations upon this subject, agreed that the consequence of this vote should only be taken up to be dealt with after the vote has been taken. My hon. friend asks me what will take place in case another thing takes place, what will happen if the vote shows a small majority in favour of prohibition, and what will happen if, on the contrary, it shows a large majority against. Let me ask my hon. friend this question: What will happen if there is no majority at all? Of course the whole matter would drop. But that is one of the possibilities which we have to bear in mind when we are called upon to pronounce an opinion beforehand. The people may pronounce a verdict for or against prohibition. If they pronounce against it, the matter ends at once, and therefore there is no occasion to trouble ourselves with the consequences of such a contingency. But if there be a majority for prohibition, whether large or small, then it will be the duty of the Government to consider whether the time has arrived for the Dominion Parliament to place such an enactment upon the Statute-book. I have only this to say to my hon. friend, that, after the will of the people has been ascertained, if the Government does not then perform its duty, it will be open to my hon. friend to call the Government to a very severe account for failure to perform that duty. My hon. friend remarked that he was not present when the matter was discussed on a previous occasion. If he had been present on a previous occasion he would have remembered that the hon. member for York (Mr. Foster) took the Government to task and contended that every promise made should be implemented and every responsibility fulfilled.

Mr. FOSTER. I did not take such a large order as that.

The PRIME MINISTER. The hon. gentleman does not do himself justice. He has only to ask the hon. member for Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron), who on that occasion pronounced some words that he would have preferred not have heard him utter. When the time comes for the Government to perform its duty, after the expression of the public will has been given, then we shall be able to give an answer to the question of my hon. friend.

Mr. CRAIG. I suppose the great art of a politician is to be able to conceal his views. I am not a politician, at least I am not a politician on this question, and I do not think I am a politician on other questions, because I state my views very clearly to the House when I state them at all. I should have been glad if the Prime Minister had given his views as to the question of majority, as to what majority might lead to the introduction of a prohibitory law, if any majority could do so. The hon. gentleman has not done so;

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.

but I will give my views, and I believe they will express his views also. We must admit that this question is a most difficult one to politicians. But it is a most difficult one without regard to politics, this question of prohibition, and men who are strong temperance men and who differ in politics agree that this is a somewhat difficult question to settle. There are three classes in the community who hold three different views on this question. The first class is opposed to prohibition, for different reasons. Some because they are interested in the business financially. Some because they do not believe in curtailing a man's liberty. I know strong temperance men who are nevertheless entirely opposed to prohibition in any sense, for they believe it is curtailing a man's liberty to say that he shall not drink so and so. Then there is a second class, those who would like to see prohibition, but do not think it practicable. I believe these people form a large class of the community. There is another class who say prohibition is right and is practicable. This class, and here I differ with the Prime Minister, who think prohibition is right and practicable, did not ask for the plebiscite vote; they have not asked for it, they do ask for prohibition. I am confirmed in this opinion by the result of a meeting held upstairs, when people belonging to this class declared they were not responsible for the plebiscite; that as it was offered to them, they should try to make it a success, but in their opinion the country is now ripe for a prohibitory law. The first class say the country is not ripe or ready for prohibition and that a prohibitory law could not be carried out; and another class says we do not know whether the country is ready or not. This latter class wanted the plebiscite, and in answer to their request the Government have granted the plebiscite vote. Some people, again, say that the Government are not honest in desiring prohibition, that this is another effort to get rid of the question; that the Government simply state they do not know whether the country is ready for prohibition or not; and they give a plebiscite so that the question will be put off a few years longer. We know that it has been put off for a few years in other ways previously, and now the present Government have a chance of disposing of the prohibition question in this way. I am going, however, to give my views plainly on the question, and I believe they are the views of the Prime Minister, although I do not expect he will tell us so. The question is, will this plebiscite vote settle the question of a prohibitory law? I answer that this depends to a very considerable extent on the largeness of the vote and the majority given. A couple of weeks ago I asked the First Minister what he would consider a majority, whether it would have to be a majority of the votes cast or a majority of the total votes on the list. Of course I did not get an answer, and I did