

pared for the motion moved by the hon. member for Guvborough (Mr. Ogden). This question was discussed at considerable length during the last Session of Parliament. If the proposition now before the House is, as the hon. member for West Middlesex claims, an absurd proposition, it certainly received the sanction of a majority of the members last Session when it was fairly and fully debated. If it was an absurd proposition, my hon. friend (Mr. Ross), with that acuteness of logical reasoning which he has shown in the course of his speech, will readily admit that he charges a large majority of the members with a want of knowledge of what they were about in accepting that proposition last year, and I have no doubt but they will prove themselves absurd in the same direction when the vote is taken upon this proposition. I think it is useless to enter into a temperance argument, and I do not intend to follow the remarks of the hon. member for West Middlesex (Mr. Ross), or of the hon. gentleman who introduced this Bill. I place my support of the proposed amendment of the Scott Act upon an entirely different ground. I hold that sumptuary legislation, in order to be effective in the community, must have the moral support of that community; and if the friends of the Temperance Act are sincere they will admit at once that it is desirable that it should have at least the support of a majority of the voters of any district in which it is put in operation. That is a perfectly reasonable proposition to be made by the best friends of the Temperance Act, and every one who wishes to see it applied will feel that the only chance of its being kept on the Statute-book—for it can only be applied in isolated counties as it is not a general Act—is that communities will feel the effect of the moral power which has put the Act into operation; and I think hon. gentlemen who are opposed to the Bill beg the whole question when they say that to require a vote of the majority will virtually repeal the Act. I say if it rests on such a foundation, that the sooner it is repealed the better. I would, however, be very sorry to have it repealed until it has been tested. There is no hon. member who will rise and attempt to gain away the arguments which have been advanced setting forth the evils of intemperance. They are known and admitted among all of us who have any moral sentiment at all; the only difference of opinion is as to how to deal with these questions. I have, I believe, an honest opinion that this is not the true way of dealing with it, but I am willing to let it be tested. I am satisfied, and I believe I am in accord with many other gentlemen who have watched legislation on this subject, that, as a rule, legislation is ineffective for the purpose of suppressing this evil; but as we have legislation upon the Statute-book, I desire that the principle of the Act should be tested, and I think it cannot be fairly tested except by requiring that a majority of those who are entitled to vote for municipal officers in each county, who are registered on the voters' lists, shall be required to record their votes in favor of the Act before it is adopted. That is a proposition which seems to be an eminently fair one, and I do not propose to support it, because I intend by a side wind to kill the Scott Act; but I say that the advocates of the Act could not make a greater mistake than to attempt to force on the community that which may be repugnant to them, by the fact that they have an active organization and can bring to the polls a small minority of the votes of a district, and thus force the Act on the community. They take the initiative, it is not the public who take the initiative. In regard to the question of voting raised by the hon. member for West Middlesex (Mr. Ross), I am willing to support any amendment to the Act whereby duplicate votes shall not be counted and to have the Act thus perfected; but it is unfair to bring people from their homes to vote down a proposition, and if they failed to do so, a minority would be able to force the Act on the community. It was a blemish in the Act from the beginning. We were powerless to change it. The

Act came down from the Upper House cut and dried, and it was accepted by this House. My hon. friend says it has been brought about by slow degrees—that it is not something which has been suddenly forced on the country. I am perfectly willing to admit that a large portion of the community by petition called for this Act. We know perfectly well what petitions are and how they are got up. We know that petitions for a Temperance Act would be such as many men, though opposed to them, would not have the moral courage to refuse to sign; we know that they represent in no sense a majority of the community; but a minority; and it is useless to cite them as evidence of public opinion. They are entitled to just as much credit as they bear when taken in connection with the circumstances to which I have alluded, and they are entitled to no more. The argument of my hon. friend was largely one applicable to the general temperance question. I believe sincerely that the Maine Liquor Law has been a failure in the State of Maine. A revelation was made by the Mayor of Bangor four years ago, which was most damaging to the arguments of my hon. friend, and I have no doubt he has it among his papers. That gentleman stated that he had been the temperance candidate, and that it was as much as his political life was worth to make a true statement on the subject, but he felt his conscience compelled him to do so; and he made a statement which my hon. friend from West Middlesex (Mr. Ross), would not dare to repeat here in reference to the state of temperance in Maine. I say it is in the interest of temperance, in the interest of the effective enforcement of this law itself, that the Bill before the House should pass. I believe it would strengthen the hands of the temperance men more than anything else they could do. I am not arguing in favor of any association; I am entirely free from connection or influence whatever; but I wish to explain why I shall vote in favor of this Bill. I shall vote for it because I conscientiously believe that if this experiment is to be tried, it should be tried in such a way as to have the moral force of the community to back it, and not to be thrust upon us by a minority, however large. In some cases this Act might be carried by one-fourth or even one-tenth of the registered voters. That small minority could force on the community that which was utterly repugnant to it, and we know what the consequence would be. It would be exactly as it was in the State of New York in 1853 or 1854, when a Temperance Act was forced on the community so utterly repugnant to the majority of the community, that when it went into operation on the night of the 3rd of July, everybody purposely violated it, and it became a dead letter and was never enforced at all. I admit that it is desirable, now that this Act is on the Statute-book, that it should be tested; but the gentlemen themselves show that they have no confidence in the weight of their principles, or in their hold on the community, or they would consent to that rough principle—which I do not altogether believe in, but it is a necessity—that the majority should govern. I presume the rule of the majority is the only way by which we can sustain a principle of legislation, whether political or moral. I do not believe it always expresses the intelligent will of the community; but as we have accepted that as the basis of our general system, I am perfectly willing to accept it here; and in any district where a proper majority should wish to carry that Act, I should certainly do my best to further the wishes of that majority. But until the temperance advocates in this House or elsewhere are content upon a question like this, affecting the private rights and the private habits of individuals—a sumptuary law, by which a man compels his neighbor to do that which he may not desire to do—until they are willing, when they force that law on the community, to subject it to the will of a majority, I do not believe they are sincere in their contention that the country wants such an enact-