

able to have it put into operation, I will be prepared to support a prohibitory measure, not deterred by any question of its effect on the revenue. Of course, the ex-Finance Minister and myself would naturally look to the matter of revenue, but that, in my judgment, is but a feather in the scale when compared to the beneficial effects that would follow the practical working of prohibition. I would vote for it most cheerfully and, as Finance Minister, prepare ways and means to make up any deficiency that would arise if we were in a position to say that if such a law were enacted it would be sustained. I can understand the delicacy of an hon. gentleman voting against the last amendment, as a temperance man and a prohibitionist, because, as such, he would seem inconsistent, and I noticed cheers when my name was called as voting against the immediate adoption of prohibition; but I did so, because I believe it is in the interest of temperance that we should not enact a law that will not be enforced. I speak with the experience I had thirty years ago, and have had ever since 1856. When the convention was held in Montreal, I was written to by one of the leading friends of temperance asking my opinion. I was unable to be present, but I wrote a letter in reply, which letter Mr. Ross read at a convention held in Ottawa. What was the opinion I then expressed? I stated that if they decided to submit the proposal to the popular vote they should not suggest less than a three-fifths vote, because, if carried by a bare majority and without public sentiment behind it, the law would fail and the cause of temperance would be damaged instead of benefited. That has been my conviction since 1855. I do not hesitate to say that the success of the principle of prohibition depends very much on the judicious enforcement of the Scott Act; that is, the judicious selection of the places where the law is to be brought into force. Take my own Province as an illustration, a county where the Act has been in force for some time, but where it has not been enforced; in that county the cause of temperance has been damaged rather than benefited. If we would select the counties of the Dominion in which public sentiment is really strong enough to sustain the law and enforce it, I am positive the result would be such that it would extend widely throughout the length and breadth of the Dominion the advantages of the prohibitory principle, and by thus educating the country, section by section, a Dominion prohibitory law might be put in force and carried to a successful conclusion. Take any county in which the law is in force, but not executed, and you will find that the effect is injurious; but, on the contrary, in any county where the law is practically carried out, the effect is strongly in favour of extending generally the principle of prohibition. I say that I will be prepared to record my vote on any occasion in favour of prohibition, when we can say honestly that the public sentiment of Canada is so strong that we will be in a position to enforce it. But from my experience of what has taken place in the past, I cannot help being convinced that we are not to-day in that position. If a prohibitory law were enacted to-morrow, I am satisfied it could not be enforced, and nothing could do more damage to the cause of prohibition than the enactment of a law, followed by its non-enforcement and ultimate repeal. It would then take us a century to get back to our starting point. We must carry prohibition step by step, and that can only be done by the judicious enactment and successful carrying out of the Scott Act, through a careful selection of the counties in which public sentiment is strongly in favour of such a law. In such a way, our people will be educated, step by step, and the day will then not be far distant when Parliament will be able to say, wisely and judiciously, that the time has arrived when the Act can be successfully enforced throughout the whole Dominion. Having a strong feeling on this question, I wish to explain distinctly

that my reason for giving this vote is that, at present the public sentiment of the country is not in such a position that we could enforce the law if enacted. I may say I believe that if a vote were taken, a majority of the people would vote for prohibition, but with the social customs as at present, I do not believe that a prohibitory law could be enforced, and I therefore give my vote in what I believe to be the true interest of prohibition and the cause of temperance.

Mr. IRVING. If the statements made by the last speaker be correct, I cannot see the propriety of introducing the Resolution at all. Now, Sir, what are the reasons given by the last speaker why the country is not ready for it? Simply, that a law was passed some thirty-five years ago and repealed immediately without giving it a trial at all.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Question.

Mr. IRVINE. I will stand here until I get a hearing.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Question, question.

Mr. IRVINE. I will be heard, or I will stand here until to-morrow morning. I will not go on as long as there is this noise.

Mr. BAKER (Missisquoi). If we are going to make a night of it, permit me to ask what motion is before the Chair?

Mr. SPEAKER. The main motion as amended. Shall it be adopted?

Mr. IRVING. Five minutes will do me if I get a hearing. The reason the hon. gentleman has given why the country is not ripe for a prohibitory law is that a law was enacted in New Brunswick thirty-five years ago and repealed immediately. The hon. gentleman is very well aware that, when the people of New Brunswick were appealed to enter the Union, which has not been found to be very beneficial to New Brunswick, they declined the proposals then made, but a year or two afterwards they willingly accepted the proposition made to them. However, I will refer to a State where there is a prohibitory law enacted—that is Maine. Maine enacted a prohibitory law in 1851, the law remained on the Statute Book until 1855, and the people of Maine had the law repealed, the law was again enacted in 1858, and it has remained on the Statute Book from then till now, for a period of twenty-eight years. The people of Maine changed their minds and re-enacted the law which was first repealed, and I do not think there is a party in Maine now bold enough to stand up and ask the Maine Legislature to repeal the law which is the law of Maine.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Question, question.

Mr. VAIL. We will have to retaliate on this side.

Mr. MILLS. It means a longer Session, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. CASGRAIN. If you want to adjourn at Easter.

Mr. IRVINE. I stated that no portion of the people of Maine can be found to stand up and ask the Legislature to repeal that law, and for the Finance Minister to state that the fact that the people enacted a law thirty-five years ago and found it unpopular, shows they still enjoy the same view in relation to a prohibitory law, is absurd. I will say now what I have said heretofore, that the sentiment in reference to prohibition in this Chamber is not very strong. I do not think it is quite the reflex of the sentiment of the country. It is very true that, a few years ago, when this country was ruled by another Government, the people of this country were very clamorous for a prohibitory law and they did not appeal in vain to the Government of that day, led by the Hon. Alexander Mackenzie. He gave them what is known as—

Some hon. MEMBERS. Question, question.