

province in the Dominion of Canada absolutely to prohibit the sale of intoxicating liquors within such province. Under these circumstances the very important question arises, and one to which the present Government have given a great deal of attention in regard to other matters, of how far it is proposed by action of this Parliament to override and overrule the opinions of a province in regard to a question on which the Minister of Justice declares the legislature of any province now possesses the absolute right to act in such a way as to enforce prohibition within the bounds of that province. That is one question, and a most important question, and I would like to ask the right hon. gentleman who is leading the House, and the Minister of Agriculture who is in charge of this measure, to ask them for my own information and for the information of the country, how far it is proposed that the decision of the whole electorate of Canada shall operate to override the pronounced opinion in another direction of any particular province of the Dominion. Is it intended to coerce an individual province by the power of the Dominion Parliament on a question in which, as I have just said, the Minister of Justice has given his opinion that the legislature of a province possesses, under the law and under the constitution as interpreted by the Committee of the Privy Council, the right absolutely to prohibit the sale of intoxicating liquors within the bounds of that province. Another question, and one of vastly more importance, is that the Government should state to this House, as I think they are bound to state, for the information of the House and the country, under what conditions they propose to carry out by law of the Dominion Parliament, a verdict of the country when that verdict shall be rendered by the result of the plebiscite. Before the people enter into this struggle, both those who are strongly in favour of prohibition and those who are opposed to it, are, I hold, entitled to know what the result of the vote is to be, whether, in case a bare majority of the whole electorate decide in favour of prohibition throughout Canada, the Government, in that event, are prepared to say now to the country, as I hold they are bound to say whether they will carry that verdict into effect by legislation of this Parliament. I say that before the people are called upon to incur this great expense involved in a plebiscite, they should be informed whether they are endeavouring to accomplish something which will be bootless in the end, they should be informed how far, in the opinion of the Government, a favourable vote should preponderate, or whether a bare majority in favour of prohibition would be taken by the Government as a mandate to pass a prohibitory law. I hope I will not be thought by my right hon. friend to be unreasonable in asking from the Government an explicit statement, first, as to the question of pro-

vincial rights, as to the question of whether in case there is a majority in the whole Dominion in favour of prohibitory law, and a majority in any one province against it, it is intended to enforce such a law throughout the whole Dominion, to enforce it in a province which, by a large majority, may have declared its hostility to such a measure. The second question is, whether, in case only a bare majority supports a prohibitory enactment, the Government will take measures to enact a prohibitory law and enforce it, either throughout the Dominion, or only in such provinces as may, by a majority of the electors, have declared that they are in favour of it. A third question is, what must be the preponderating influence and how great the majority must be, in order to warrant the Government in undertaking to deal with prohibition. We are all, I believe, sincerely desirous of doing everything possible to promote the cause of temperance throughout the Dominion; we are all, I believe, fully alive to the great advantage that the propagation of temperance principles, the inculcation of such principles, would be to the whole country. But as my right hon. friend knows, there is the greatest possible difference of opinion upon the question of how far a prohibitory enactment is practicable, how far it would be effective in promoting the great object aimed at. I regret very much not having had it in my power to be present when this subject was discussed, and I must ask the House to excuse me in bringing this subject up at this late hour, although I have done so as briefly as possible, in order to present the reasons why I think the Government should make an avowal of their position on the points I have mentioned.

The PRIME MINISTER (Sir Wilfrid Laurier). My hon. friend, in putting to me the questions which he has just set forth, ventured the expression that I would not think him unreasonable. I am sorry to say, Mr. Speaker, that, with every desire to think well of my hon. friend, I consider his questions at this time most unreasonable, and he can scarcely expect me to answer them at this moment. My hon. friend said a moment ago that the object we all had in view was to promote the great cause of temperance. I believe this is the object which is animating every one of us, whether we are in favour of this Bill or not, whether we may vote in this plebiscite for prohibition, or whether we may vote against it. But my hon. friend will permit me to remark that on this occasion he is more Catholic than the Pope, and more prohibitionist than the prohibitionists. My hon. friend is asking me at this moment to answer questions which no one of the many temperance organizations who are actively engaged in promoting prohibition, have yet asked the Government to pronounce upon. I say to my hon. friend that the temperance societies, at whose instance especially this legislation