

I am wrong, I do believe that if this question in all its intricacy is to be submitted in the form of a plebiscite, then the information which it is proposed to get by this commission and to circulate by this commission throughout the country is more important than ever. To come back to the argument with which I have started; if this information is needed here—and this debate shows it is needed—for these considerations, and this evidence, and these facts which we desire to enquire into have not been discussed by anyone here who pretends to be a master of them, if they are needed for the deliberations of this House, undoubtedly they are ten times more needed by the people who are to vote upon this question should a plebiscite be adopted. For these reasons I trust that the amendment which the Minister of Finance has made will be adopted. I am reminded by an hon. friend near me that the proposition to submit this question in the form of a plebiscite, even if we are disposed to it, would not settle the question, and that mode of disposing of it—if it can be called disposing of it, but I should rather call it a shirking of the question—that mode of disposing of it for the present has been denounced and discountenanced by the very organization which has entrusted this resolution to my hon. friend from Lanark (Mr. Jamieson). For these reasons I hope that the amendment will be adopted, I hope, to use a simile which I will borrow for the occasion, that this House either upon the question of a plebiscite or upon the broader question of prohibition, will not risk the safety of the ship of State in seas the soundings of which have never been taken. I do believe, Sir, that the information which will be asked for and obtained by this Royal Commission will do a great deal more to form and enlighten public opinion throughout the country on this question than any member who has spoken on the other side of the question has been willing to admit this evening.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) I beg the House to be assured that at this early hour of the morning I do not propose to enter upon any lengthened discussion of the question before us. I have one or two ideas to present and I shall present them in very few words. I may be allowed to remark with reference to the opening sentences of the Minister of Justice's speech that his promise was sadly marred by his performance. He attempted to lecture hon. gentlemen on this side of the House because they did not confine their arguments to the question in dispute, that they had entered on the question as to the consistency or inconsistency of the Minister of Finance and he deprecated that the time of the House should be wasted with such fruitless discussion. He had no sooner ended his denunciation of hon. gentlemen on this side of the House for their supposed breach of parliamentary rules, than he himself entered on a criticism as to the consistency of my hon. friend from Huntingdon (Mr. Scriver). The hon. member for Huntingdon needs no defence at my hands and I should imagine that the course he took on the occasion to which the Minister of Justice refers would need no defence in the mind of any lawyer. The hon. gentleman knows that at that time the question as to the powers of this Parliament on the liquor legislation was in dispute. He knows that the question had been carried to the Supreme Court of this Dominion, that it was *sub judice* and the opponents of Government for the purpose of

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snatching a party vote had asked the House to pass a legal judgment upon a question which was then *sub judice* before the Supreme Court of the Dominion, and my hon. friend the member for Huntingdon (Mr. Scriver) acting with a discretion which I should expect from a gentleman of his prudence and years, declined to usurp the position or to exercise the functions which should be discharged by the judges of that court. That is the amount of the inconsistency of the hon. member for Huntingdon. I have to make a remark on a personal matter which has arisen very unpleasantly to-night. The Minister of Finance is charged with having used language of a most personal and offensive character against one of the most respected members of the Opposition in this House, a gentleman who has sat here for many years with credit to himself and to the constituency he represents, and a gentleman whom I think both sides of the House will unite with me in saying, that, whatever may be thought of his political opinions, there is not a man in the House at present or a man who ever sat in the House with him, who does not respect his personal character. I am quite sure that when party passions subside there is no one on the other side of the House who will defend the unwarranted attack made upon him in an indirect way, and if the hon. the Minister of Finance did not intend to make that attack personally offensive, when the opportunity was afforded him by the member for Grey (Mr. Landerkin) it would have become his position and his dignity if he disclaimed any offensive intention. This is a matter of opinion, but the hon. gentleman knows that if that kind of innuendo is introduced, it is a two-edged sword which can be used by both sides of the House. Now, as to whether we should vote in favour of a Royal Commission, or vote to refer this question to the people, I am in favour of referring it directly to the people, because this House has already passed its opinion upon the subjects which you now desire to refer to a Royal Commission. If my recollection serves me aright, the last time the House discussed and voted upon the question of prohibition, it decided that it was prepared to carry out the necessary legislation to enact prohibition on one condition and one only. The House was satisfied with regard to the information it had, the House was satisfied with regard to the effect prohibition would have, but the House was not satisfied as to whether public opinion was ripe for it, and subject to that qualification, and to that qualification alone, the House declared, by an enormous majority, that if public opinion was ripe for prohibition, it was quite prepared to carry it into effect. If the country is now ripe for prohibition, I ask the House to have the manliness to do what it said it was ready to do three years ago, and to carry out the pledge it gave to the country. I call the attention of hon. gentlemen to the fact that the reference to the Royal Commission does not embrace any mode of testing public opinion, and that the only point upon which you are not satisfied is the one point that you did not refer it to the Royal Commission to decide. You refer to that Commission to take evidence and to find out what would be the effect of the prohibition, but you have already determined that you know enough about that, and the Minister of Finance in his speech to-night declared that he himself was ready to vote on the effects