

out, under your present system, a majority of the registered voters; and therefore the hon. member for East York (Mr. Boulton) is proposing, not a means by which this law can be enforced where there is a strong demand for it, but a means by which it can never be placed in operation.

SIR LEONARD TILLEY. I will not occupy the attention of the House during more than a few minutes. In the first place I wish to express my regret that the hon. member for East York (Mr. Boulton) should have thought it proper to use language with effect to the character of the hon. members who are supporting the principle of prohibition or limitation with respect to the liquor traffic in the Dominion. I think it is but right, having been associated for the last twenty or twenty-five years with men who entertained those views, to say that so far as my knowledge goes they compare favorably with the class of men who have differed with us on this important question. They are among the most liberal-minded, and the best educated, and include the clergy of various denominations of the philanthropical and benevolent men. The hon. member for East York would have rendered his measure greater service had he used somewhat different language, I think, in describing the character of the gentlemen in Canada who opposed his Bill. Reference has been made to the State of Maine. It was not perhaps necessary to bring it up; but it has been brought up and statements made with reference to the action on the prohibitory law there and the character of the inhabitants. I cannot understand why, if the effects of a prohibitory law—it may be imperfectly carried out—have been such as described, such a law remains on the Statute-book for 27 years. With respect to the subject under consideration, I am opposed to the Bill, because it is a virtual repeal of the Scott Act. It may be said that when we make that declaration, it is an admission on our part that a majority of the people are not in favor of the Scott Act. We know, however, from past experience, that it is impossible in constituencies, even where there have been strong political contests, to get out a sufficient number of people to record their votes. There is another point which has not been fully brought out during the debate. It has been said that a majority, by their energy and earnestness, may carry the Act against an overwhelming majority. When the framers of the Scott Act prepared the measure they exercised a very wise precaution. Myself and an hon. member know it, because I was in communication with him on the subject of prohibition when out of Parliament. We felt so strongly that it was necessary for the enforcement of this law, in any locality that a majority of the people should be in favor of it, that I was willing that three-fifths of the voters should be required to record their votes for it; and the framers of the Act, in the same view, decided that before the Government could issue a proclamation for the polling, twenty-five per cent. of the whole electors eligible to vote should sign, with their own signatures and attested to by witnesses, a declaration that they are in favor of the vote being taken, and therefore declare themselves in favor of the Act itself. That is a great protection against a verdict being given by a mere minority of the people. Let us recollect that the passage of that Act was the result of agitation for years throughout the country. Thousands and tens of thousands of petitions were laid on the Table of this Parliament in favor of such legislation. The friends of the cause and the moderate men united together and prepared the Scott Act, which became law. It has practically been in operation only a twelvemonth, and what we, who are believers in the principle of the Act, ask, is that it may have a fair trial. I do not hesitate to say that after it has had a fair trial—not after three years during which the Act is in force, but after a twelvemonth—if it is found to have a bad effect, we shall not ask that it be allowed to remain for three years, but we shall go for its repeal. But, after thousands and tens of

Mr. BLAKE,

thousands of petitions have been made in favor of it, after both branches of the Legislature have voted in favor of it, and after it has only had a twelvemonth's trial, I feel that I would not be doing my duty, as a representative in the House of Commons, if I voted for the repeal of the Scott Act, because you would practically repeal it if you required a majority of the ratepayers to come out and record their votes in its favor. You must recollect, in the first place, that the men who favor this measure have no pecuniary interest in the matter. Somebody must travel through a district and obtain the signatures of twenty-five per cent. of the voters. They may be fanatics, and they may be wrong, but they have no special interest in the matter. They have no establishments for the manufacture and sale of water out of which they may make a fortune. They act for the best of motives, and it requires a great sacrifice of time and money to accomplish what they desire. Notwithstanding all the interest they may feel in this matter, I believe there is not one place in twenty where—though a majority of the whole people might be in favor of the Act, and would sign the petition if you took it to them—they could all be induced to travel eight or ten miles to record their votes. Therefore, because I feel that the passage of this Bill would be a practical repeal of the law, and that after all the labor that was given to this matter, and the strong opinion that was expressed by every Province of the Dominion, I feel bound, so far as I am concerned, to record my vote against any proposition that would be a practical repeal until that law has proved itself inoperative for the accomplishment of the object in view, and injurious rather than beneficial to the cause we desire to promote by legislation of this kind.

Mr. ANGLIN. When hon. gentlemen say that if this Bill passes the Scott Act will be virtually repealed, they virtually admit that there is not a large majority of the people of this Dominion in favor of the continuance of that Act. The zeal of those who are active in the temperance cause is such, that if there were anything like a majority, there would be no reason to apprehend any danger to their beloved Act from the passing of this amendment. The number of registered electors throughout this Dominion is, at the outside, but one in every seven or eight of the population, and if the Act is to remain on the Statute-book, it is not, surely, too much to ask that it be so amended that one-half of the sixth or the seventh of the population should be required to vote in favor of the imposition of this Act upon the rest of the population. We should thus be confining the voting to those who are the most intelligent of the people, and who have the largest interest in the welfare of the country. We have seen this law put in force in some districts by a very small portion of the population, and those who have seen its operation are disposed to admit that it is a mistake. For my own part, I am entirely opposed to this law on principle. I do not believe that one portion of any district or country have the right to prescribe to another portion what they shall eat, drink or wear. Nor do I agree with the hon. member for Bothwell, that those who build distilleries or hotels are entitled to do so by virtue of the law. The law is not intended to permit the erection of hotels or distilleries, but it is intended to restrict the natural privilege of people to sell ale, wine, brandy or whiskey, as well as broadcloth or any other article. One of the reasons why these restrictions are imposed is precisely the same as that for imposing similar restrictions on the sale of tobacco, namely, for the purpose of raising a revenue and preventing frauds on the revenue. And the reason was that it was thought desirable to restrict the sale of liquors to prevent abuses which are likely to arise. While we all admit that the excessive use of intoxicating liquors is a very deplorable evil, while we all wish to see this evil