

administration of the licensing laws. The County Licensing Committee, which as you know is a different body, and possesses different functions from the magistracy in petty sessions—a committee, I may say, that was originally brought into existence owing to a recommendation by the Council of the Social Science Association, a recommendation conveyed by myself at the time to Mr. Secretary Bruce when he had his Licensing Bill in preparation—that county committee possesses amongst others this power: that is the power and the duty of declaring what districts in the county are of dense population, which carries with it the result of determining whether or not the licensed houses in any district may be open for an hour longer at night. We have had numerous applications from different parts of the county to declare that certain districts possess density of population. Some of these applications we have granted; many more, I think, we have refused. But I have always felt, in deciding that question—and I have frequently sat in the chair of the County Licensing Committee to decide it authoritatively—that I was in this great difficulty: there is no accurate test of what density of population means. The Act of Parliament has left us to form our own opinion upon the question: “What is density of population?” Some people might say that it is only where a large and long network of streets crowd together many thousands of population; others say—and I have heard them say—that it means every place which has not strictly a rural character; and between those two extremes it is probable that there are many different and varied opinions. Now, the real question that ought to be put on this matter, the real test of the need for keeping houses open an hour longer than they are kept open in other places, is this: whether it is desired by the population of the district. (Applause.) But upon that point we (the County Licensing Committee) have very imperfect means of forming any conclusion. It is true we get memorials upon one side and upon the other, but generally speaking they afford an exceedingly imperfect test of what the real opinion of the population of the district may be. Now I merely give that to you as an illustration, as only one illustration out of several that I could give of what the weakness of the magistracy in the present licensing system is. It is not a weak-