

HOUSE VOTES FOR A COMMISSION

TO INVESTIGATE THE PROBLEMS OF DRINK

Public Service Bill in Committee—Socialist and Speaker Have a Clash.

Legislative Press Gallery, March 4.
A long day of hard work was spent by the House to-day, and the evening sitting lasted till far past midnight. The chief feature of interest in the evening was a resolution moved by the Socialist leader, recommending the appointment of a royal commission to examine into the extent of the Gothenburg system to remove many of the evils incident to it.

The resolution was adopted by the House without debate by a vote of 19 to 12. The members of the government in the House at the time split on the question. Mr. Hawthorthwaite made an excellent speech in support of his motion.

The attorney-general introduced a bill to amend the Police and Prisons Regulation Act by giving power for the appointment of an inspector of police. This officer, it is understood, will have immediate charge of the enforcement of the law in the matter of club regulation under the new act.

The minister of public works introduced a small bill to amend the Steam Boilers Inspection Act.

The Liquor Traffic.
J. H. Hawthorthwaite moved the following resolution, or which he had given notice:

"Whereas it is in the interest of the people of this province and of humanity that some solution of evils arising out of traffic in intoxicating liquors be arrived at:

"Whereas local option, which aims at prohibition in given localities of the sale of intoxicating liquors, is objectionable from certain standpoints and ineffective as a remedy:

"Whereas the government has decided to grant a plebiscite at some future date on this question:

"Whereas it has been shown that the Gothenburg system of manufacturing and distributing intoxicating liquors removes many of the evils complained of; and

"Whereas it is desirable that the people of this province, before taking a plebiscite, be seized of full information on the question:

"Be it, therefore, resolved, That an address be presented to his honor the lieutenant-governor, asking him to take into consideration the advisability of appointing a royal commission immediately to inquire into all matters in relation to the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors in this province, with a view to ascertaining the amount of liquor manufactured, imported and sold in the province, the amount of capital invested, the number of wage-earners employed, the estimated profits obtained by such employment, and further to obtain such information in regard to the Gothenburg system as may enable the people to intelligently comprehend its merits or demerits, with a view to the possible adoption and establishment of this system, or a modification of it, in the province of British Columbia."

In support of his resolution the member for Nanaimo said it was necessary to deal with this question now, as it was agitating the people of the province to a considerable extent. A campaign was being waged in favor of local option at present and representations had been made to the government for its adoption. It was his belief that this government had decided to take a plebiscite, which he considered was a wise decision. The petition which had been presented to the government in support of the request had been largely signed by the workingmen, representing ten per cent of the electorate. It by no means proved that the mass of the people were ready for such a measure as was asked. Indeed, one could get a petition signed for anything; he had known miners to sign a petition against the eight-hour day, and petitions for clemency for murderers were not uncommon. For himself, having no belief in petitions he never signed them.

It was not necessary in this day to discuss the evils flowing from the liquor traffic. All were familiar with them. But this question did not necessarily constitute an objection to the continuation of the traffic. Incidentally he might point out that one of the evils the traffic was responsible for was that many of its opponents were little short of fanatics. The evils were always spoken of by temperance people as the result of over-indulgence, but it must be recognized that in some cases moderate indulgence brought evils in its train also. It was a popular error, however, that medical science had declared against the practice of drinking.

No Basis for Definite Opinion.
Until a year ago medical science had said little on this question and the public had nothing upon which to base a definite opinion. Recently a French physician had published two works, the result of a life's study and observation, in which he laid it down and insisted on it, that in every instance the result of drinking was positively bad and detrimental. Other authorities did not share this view, so that the question was by no means one on which science had said its final word.

Another popular error frequently uttered by temperance reformers was that drink caused an enormous waste of workingmen's strength. It would save money if there was no liquor for them to buy. This was absolutely incorrect and had no truth in it in any shape or form, as anyone could understand by the standard of living, they would not have that much more to spend in other ways, but by the iron law of wages their rate of remunera-

tion would tend downwards. Much was made now by temperance advocates of the case of non-drinking men who had bought themselves a home or other property as a result of their abstinence. But it was forgotten that these men did so at the expense of their fellows, that it all saved the rate of wages would go down and these men would not be able to save as they were now able to do.

In a recent copy of the Pioneer, the organ of the local optionists, was a heading, "What now goes into the saloon till will go over the counter." This was a bid for the support of merchants for local option and it seemed to have had its effect.

Prohibition No Remedy.
Prohibition, whether local or general, was no remedy. Wherever it was in force it was found that as a whole it had not been an entire success. In Maine, the boasted home of prohibition, he had only to quote from the figures of the liquor sold in a year, in other cases it was the same and nothing was clearer than that prohibition did not prohibit. From the standpoint of human liberty, also, prohibition was objectionable. If democracy meant that 51 per cent of the people could "sweep" the other 49 per cent he wanted none of it. But that was what either prohibition or local option would mean. It would mean that the policeman's club, the bars of jail, or even the militiamen's bayonet might be called in for the purpose of compelling a large minority of the world to submit to the doctrines.

Since 1855 what was known as the Gothenburg system had been in operation in Scandinavia, and had resulted in a lessening of drunkenness and the consumption of liquor. In Sweden the state was not allowed to be more than 6 per cent. In Sweden and 5 per cent in Norway, the managers of the saloons were paid a salary and had no interest in the sale, and food and other refreshment had to be sold along in England something of the same kind was being done in the case of some 114 public houses. It was possible something in that line might be adopted here, and so to a way of the evils of the liquor traffic while at the same time avoiding the evils which would be experienced were the attempt made to enforce a prohibitory law.

It was advisable, before the people were asked to vote in a local option plebiscite that they should have some accurate and unbiased information in regard to the many phases of the traffic in intoxicating liquors, and to get that information the governor should be asked to appoint a royal commission.

The question was at once put to a vote and was decided in the affirmative as follows:

Ayes—McBride, Bowser, Carter-Cotton, Ross, Shatford, McPhillips, Hunter, Gifford, Grant, Macgowan, Grant, Behnen, Manson, Garden, Hayworth, Schofield, Hawthorthwaite, Williams, McInnis—19.

Nays—Young, Tatlow, Ellison, Hayward, Macdonald, Oliver, Munro, Jardine, Brewster, King, Eagleson, Kergin—12.

Absent or paired—Fulton, Taylor, Hall, Henderson, Jones, Yorton, Mackay, Naden, Parson, Thomson—10.

Young Men in Service.
The public service bill was taken up in committee, Dr. McGuire (Vancouver) in the chair and a local option was proposed. There was no question raised on any of the clauses until that dealing with the appointment of junior clerks or stenographers was reached.

Stuart Henderson objected to a young man who started in the service at twenty receiving as much as one who started at sixteen got at the same age. It was not only unfair but, he considered, emphasized the artificial character of a great deal of the act.

The provincial secretary argued that, as the young man of twenty would probably have been able to pursue his education further than the one who entered the service younger, he would not be so well equipped as the latter. Education putting him on a par with the other's experience in office.

Mr. Oliver pointed out that the minister could have no guarantee that the man of twenty going in would be as well equipped as the man of twenty who had four years' experience.

J. A. Macdonald held that the "one who entered the service at the younger age had, on every ground, a right to receive the same salary as the other. The fact that he entered so young argued in most cases that he was helping to support the family and needed the money, while one whose parents could afford to keep him at school or college longer had no need of as much.

Dr. Young reminded members that the bill had been very carefully thought out and he looked upon the section as fairly drafted. He contended, however, that it being left over.

John Jardine considered that the bringing in of an expert to grade the service, as the government proposed, would be undermining the present men.

Dr. Young did not see how this was possible.

Special Rewards.
J. H. Hawthorthwaite proposed to strike out section 19, which provides that efficiency may be encouraged by granting for past services such advance in classification or special gratuity or increase of salary as the merits of the case call for. He looked upon this as leading to a feeling that the section was fairly drafted. He contended, however, that it being left over.

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explained that the measure was introduced at the desire of the Federation of Miners, and he was quite willing to hear any reasonable amendments.

J. H. Hawthorthwaite, while supporting the bill on its second reading, pointed out that similar measures from the opposition side of the House had got little consideration from the government. The member for Newcastle had session after session introduced just this bill, and had it killed by the government side in one way or another, but now it was taken holubolus by the member for Fernie, and doubtless would be acceptable to the government. The member for Alberni had introduced a bill last year and again this year to protect miners' wages, but he got no hearing from the government.

Mr. Ross admitted that he had drafted his act on that of Mr. Williams, but had made several important changes in it.

Mr. Hawthorthwaite went on in a manner half badinage, half serious, telling him that similar measures from the opposition side of the House had got little consideration from the government. The member for Newcastle had session after session introduced just this bill, and had it killed by the government side in one way or another, but now it was taken holubolus by the member for Fernie, and doubtless would be acceptable to the government. The member for Alberni had introduced a bill last year and again this year to protect miners' wages, but he got no hearing from the government.

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DO NOT DESIRE INVESTIGATION

HOUSE PASSES COAL QUESTION TO OTTAWA

Will Not Face Local Inquiry—Water Act Difficulties—Case for Loggers.

Legislative Press Gallery, March 5.
Once more the Conservative party in British Columbia has placed itself on record as opposed to any inquiry into the exorbitant price of coal in a province which is such a large producer of that mineral, although in the resolution upon which it voted the House declared its conviction that progress and industry are being retarded because of this condition.

At the same time that this is done a double purpose is served in evading the question by the House. The resolution would be a vote of confidence in the government, on the one hand the provincial government is enabled to make a play with the unthinking people, while on the other it manufactures another fictitious grievance upon which to attempt to arouse feeling against Ottawa.

It was clearly and concisely shown by John Oliver in the course of the debate this afternoon that the federal authorities have not a shadow of excuse for holding such an inquiry as Dr. McGuire's resolution last year and his amendment this year, which in this session calls for. In the Public Inquiries Act it is all the power necessary to enable the government to appoint a commission, and if any coal operators or dealers are found to be violating the law as to combining, it becomes the duty of the attorney-general and not of any federal power, to set the machinery of the criminal law in operation.

In fact, if the attorney-general had the case worked up, without any previous inquiry by commission, in the ordinary way he would be following the excellent example set by his fellow-Conservative and attorney-general in Ontario, Mr. G. H. Williams, who has ordered proceedings in several instances within the past three years against coal operators who were overcharging the public, and secured convictions.

Resolution and Amendment.
Mr. Oliver's resolution, which was called for final disposition, so that the matter set out in the recital of the resolution was proved it was the provincial attorney-general who had the duty of prosecuting those who were guilty in any form of a breach of this section of the law.

These things being so it was idle for the House to again refer to the Dominion government a matter regarding which it had no jurisdiction in this or any other province. As had been pointed out by the Speaker, for whose legal talents and impartiality in the chair he had every respect, when deciding the point of order raised in regard to this resolution: "The resolution asks for a commission to inquire into certain matters of fact which, if true, would be breaches of the criminal law and therefore comes under the administration of justice and the good government of the province."

The member for Delta, summing up, asked the junior member for Vancouver to withdraw his amendment in order that the matter might be dealt with where it properly belonged, in the province and by a commission appointed by the provincial government.

John McInnis (Grand Forks), declared that he was not in the least inclined to charge too much for their product. If they were their competitors from the other side of the line would send in their product and undersell them.

The Divisions.
The question was put on the amendment, which carried on the following vote:

Ayes—McBride, Tatlow, Bowser, Carter-Cotton, Ellison, Ross, Shatford, McPhillips, Thomson, Hunter, Taylor, Macgowan, Gifford, Grant, McGuire, Behnen, Manson, Garden, Hayworth, Schofield, Hawthorthwaite, Williams, McInnis—14.

Paired—Eagleson and Young; Brewster and Fulton.

On the resolution as amended, being put to a vote, J. H. Hawthorthwaite spoke and was understood to profess Socialist support to John Oliver's resolution while maintaining that government interference with trade questions was undesirable and useless, but in the result he and his colleagues voted to establish and maintain prices charged for coal.

"2. Whether or not coal is being sold by producers, or any of them, for consumption outside of the province at a less price than that sold for consumption in the province.

"3. Whether or not the prices charged by the producers, or any of them, for coal consumed in British Columbia is excessive.

"4. Whether or not the prices charged by the producers, or any of them, for coal in British Columbia bears a reasonable proportion to the cost of production.

Dr. McGuire (Vancouver), moved as an amendment that all the words after "province" in the recital be struck out and the following substituted:

"And whereas the legislative assembly of the province of British Columbia, by a resolution passed on the 10th day of February, 1908, prayed his honor the lieutenant-governor to request the Dominion government, through the proper channel, to cause an inquiry to be instituted by the Dominion department of trade and commerce to decide whether there exists a combine or understanding between the owners or controllers of the coal mines of this province, whereby an excessive price is charged to consumers in the province for coal produced from the said mines;

"And whereas said request was duly forwarded by his honor the lieutenant-governor to the secretary of state at Ottawa;

"Therefore, be it resolved, that this House reaffirms the said resolution passed on the 10th day of February, 1908, and that he honor the lieutenant-governor be prayed to again bring said resolution to the attention of the Dominion government, with an urgent request that such inquiry be instituted; and that a copy of this resolution accompany such request."

Duty of the Province.
John Oliver, resuming the debate on Dr. McGuire's amendment, said he must assume the junior member for Vancouver was serious when he moved the resolution which had been placed on the journals last session. The opposition had at that time taken the ground that it was a local matter, that the question of prices charged for coal in British Columbia was a matter for

consideration by the provincial legislature, and moved in amendment for a reference to a committee of the House. In moving his own motion this year he had given Dr. McGuire every credit for being accurate in his recital of the disadvantages worked to the province by the present price of coal, and repeated that recital. The trouble was in a more acute form now than it was a year ago, and to give the House an opportunity to retract the false step taken last year, when it had referred the question to the Dominion government for their consideration, he had proposed his resolution.

It was the duty of the Dominion government solely to investigate into the truth or otherwise of the allegations which were made, alike in his motion and in Dr. McGuire's amendment, and to find a remedy.

The duty was cast upon them by statute explicitly, and it was not within the province of the Dominion government to act. By the terms of the Public Inquiries Act, section four provided that "whenever the lieutenant-governor in council deems it expedient to cause inquiry to be made into and concerning any matter connected with the good government of this province, on the condition of any part of the public business thereof, including all matters municipal or the administration of justice therein, and such inquiry is not regulated by any special law, the lieutenant-governor-in-council may by commission or otherwise cause an inquiry to be made into and concerning any matter connected with the good government of this province, on the condition of any part of the public business thereof, including all matters municipal or the administration of justice therein, and such inquiry is not regulated by any special law, the lieutenant-governor-in-council may by commission or otherwise cause an inquiry to be made into and concerning any matter connected with the good government of this province, on the condition of 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