

ladies connected with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. But I think it would be well for the hon. member for North Norfolk to show that the Act as it stands at present does not work well, because no doubt there is great objection to making changes unless they are required.

Mr. CHARLTON. I would not attempt to show that the Act as it stands now does not work well. On the contrary, I would say that it works exceedingly well, so well that it is desirable to extend its provisions and embrace in its operations a larger number of young females. The Act has proved to be beneficent for females between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, and I think it would be just as beneficent for females between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. That is my answer to the hon. member for East Durham.

Mr. CLANCY. Would the hon. gentleman allow me to ask him, by that method of arithmetical progression, where would he fix the age in the end?

Mr. CHARLTON. I would be content to leave it at eighteen years.

Mr. CRAIG. I wish to say that I do not object to increasing the age to eighteen years. I only say there is a great deal of force in the objection raised by the Minister of Marine and Fisheries. I am prepared to support the Bill as it stands.

Mr. CHARLTON. Those who support this kind of legislation are almost unanimously in favour of extending the age to eighteen years. We received last year hundreds of petitions, largely from the Women's Christian Temperance Union, from every province and almost from every town and village in the Dominion, asking for the extension of the age of consent from sixteen to eighteen years. In various states, where the law has been called into operation to protect the chastity of young females the age of consent has been fixed at eighteen years. This is the case in the state of New York, with over 6,000,000 inhabitants. That law has been in operation in that state for many years, and has been found to be satisfactory in its operation. If it is necessary to protect young females at all, I can see no reason why that protection should not be extended to females up to the age of eighteen years, as is done by the laws in the state of New York, and in many other states. Of course, that is a matter that has not any particular bearing on this Bill; only it shows that human experience in many states has led to the adoption of this provision. Now, I would be willing, as the hon. member for East Durham suggests, to limit the Bill to the first section. I do not know that I expected to get more, but I did expect to get that; because, as the hon. member says, the Premier of this Dominion intimated to a highly respectable delegation that waited

upon him last year, that he would give his sanction to the provision raising the age of consent to eighteen years, though he did say that he doubted the propriety of granting the other features of the Bill. The same position was taken by Sir John Thompson. If this Bill is permitted to go to the committee, and the first section is, as I believe and hope it will be, sanctioned, and any objection is made to the other two sections, they could be dropped at once. The important feature of the Bill is that raising the age of consent from sixteen to eighteen years—a feature which has been before the House a number of sessions and which received the sanction of Sir John Thompson and, I believe, the sanction of Sir Oliver Mowat. It certainly has received the sanction of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Under the circumstances, I think we may fairly assume that it is proper at least to commit this Bill to the Committee of the Whole and let the committee deal with it. The committee will probably deal with it by expunging all portions except the first section raising the age of consent to eighteen, and then it will pass to the Senate, and the hon. Minister of Justice may deal with it there.

Mr. CAMERON. I think the position of the hon. member for North Norfolk is very unreasonable. He heard the opinion of the Minister of Marine and Fisheries (Sir Louis Davies). He was told by him that the matter was now engaging the attention of the Minister of Justice, and that the Minister of Justice proposed, when he had leisure, to deal with the whole question. Surely my hon. friend cannot want any more. He wants us to take the second reading and go into Committee of the Whole. By doing that, we affirm the principle of the Bill, and I am opposed to it. Surely what the Minister of Marine and Fisheries said ought to satisfy any reasonable man and ought to satisfy the hon. member for North Norfolk. I propose to discuss the matter fully, but do not propose to do so now, because I am still in hopes that the hon. member for North Norfolk will adopt the reasonable suggestion made to him.

Motion agreed to, and debate adjourned.

FREIGHT RATES ON RAILWAYS.

Mr. REID moved second reading of Bill (No. 7) to regulate freight rates on railways. He said: We all know that in the last few years the building of railways in our great Dominion has considerably increased, and I believe the time has come when we should have some law and rule for adjusting differences that arise between shippers and railway companies more effective than what we have at present. Also in cases where railways discriminate to the injury of different sections of the country and different classes of shippers, we ought to have some means