

It is necessary for you to consider this question. The Canada Temperance Act was Dominion legislation. That Act was brought into force in a county or municipality upon the receipt of a petition from a certain proportion of the inhabitants of that particular county or municipality. I think it was necessary that the petition should be signed by one-third, or at least a substantial proportion of the people, before the machinery could be put into operation to take a referendum. This Bill introduces a new principle altogether. This is an enlarged or glorified Scott Act. Instead of the machinery being put into operation upon receipt of a petition from the people of the country, it is done by a vote of the provincial legislature. There are nine provincial legislatures in the country, and you are liable to have nine referendums on the question. The cost of a referendum is said to be about \$1,000,000, and by this Bill you are putting in the hands of the legislatures the power to indulge in referendums the expenses of which will have to be borne by the Dominion. That is a principle that I think should be carefully considered, the principle which was at the bottom of the old Canada Temperance Act. There you started with a vote of a substantial part of the electors. Here you start with a political vote, and you do not know what may be the motive for putting the machinery into operation. Unless some very strong reason were advanced against it, I would be prepared to vote for an amendment that would require the provinces to pay the cost of the referendum. If the Legislature of Nova Scotia wants a referendum, let the Legislature of Nova Scotia pay for it. There is no reason why they should throw part of the cost of that referendum on the province of New Brunswick or the province of Quebec, or any other province that might not want it.

There is another feature of the Bill that I think is bad. Honourable gentlemen will remember that last year I opposed the Road Bill in this House. My objection was that under that Bill you gave money belonging to the Dominion of Canada to another institution. My view is that that is contrary to sound legislation, and contrary to the spirit of our constitution. I say, that to entrust to others the powers that the constitution and the people have imposed on this Parliament is shuffling and side-stepping. This Parliament should exercise the powers entrusted to it, and should not pass the buck to the provinces. I take the same objection to this Bill. Why should we import the provincial legislatures into it at all? If you

Hon. Mr. ROSS.

want to enlarge the Canada Temperance Act, why not say that the petition must come from a substantial part of the electors to guarantee that they want the Canada Temperance Act brought into force? Under this Bill you become a tool in the hands of the provincial legislatures, who use you as they please. They come in some fine morning and vote for a referendum. They say: "The Dominion Government will pay for it, and we will keep them busy with referendums; the expense is a matter of indifference to us."

This Bill has been brought down in the last hours of the session, and, owing to the fact that there will be another session in not more than three months, I think that this House, in fairness to itself and in fairness to the country, could defer the consideration of this matter until next March or April, or some later date. I move:

That Bill 26 be not now read a second time, but that the further consideration thereof be postponed until the next session of Parliament.

That leaves it open for every man to reserve his judgment on this matter, and gives him plenty of time to consider it. At the same time, it is an intimation to the House of Commons that we expect a little better treatment than we have been getting in that House sending important Bills to this House just a few hours before prorogation.

Hon. GEORGE G. FOSTER: Honourable gentlemen, I do not rise to take issue with the leader of the Opposition when he protests against such legislation as this being introduced at this late hour of the session; nor have I any quarrel with what my honourable friend from Middleton (Hon. Mr. Ross) has said upon that point. I regret that the members of another House have not caused this Bill to be sent here before; but I do not want the Senate, nor do I want, to be placed in a false position in regard to this matter by voting for the amendment which has been proposed by the honourable senator from Middleton.

I find that there is throughout the country a misunderstanding as to just what this legislation means. Many people are under the impression that it is intended in some way to interfere with the rights of the provinces to have local option, prohibition, or partial prohibition. No matter whether this Bill passes or not, I understand that there is nothing in it that does, or that intends to, take away from the provinces the right they enjoy to-day to have prohibition or partial prohibition. I understand that this Bill