

with the hon. member for Bothwell too as to the propriety of passing laws of this kind, sumptuary laws as he designated them and as they are generally designated, as to which public sentiment may not be in full accord. But where I differ from the hon. member for Bothwell, and where it seems to me the argument obliges us to part is on this point: The hon. member for Bothwell says that with a view to ascertain that he desires at once to test public opinion by a vote. Now what is the logical conclusion of the hon. member for Bothwell on this point? It is this, that although he has been a member of Parliament for a long period of years, a leading and fully informed member of Parliament, better informed and better experienced than the great majority of us here, after all his experience, his reading, his contact with the people and the study of this question, yet he, a public man, is unable at this moment to come to the conclusion as to whether public opinion of this country is strong enough to warrant the passage of this measure, and he proposes to leave it without information to the electors, not one in a thousand of whom has the information and knowledge he has on this question. What is the difference between that proposition and ours? It is that at every phase of this difficult question we shall gather in the most authentic way the largest and fullest information that can be obtained in this country and everywhere else, not for the purpose of informing the Minister of Finance—and that sophistry was in all the arguments we had from the other side—not even for the information of the Government alone, but for the information of this House, as a basis for future action and for the information of the electorate, to whom the hon. member for Bothwell proposes we shall eventually refer this question. If he, with all the study and experience he has been able to bring to bear on this question, is unable to come to a conclusion, surely he may consider that the electors can be enlightened by information obtained by means of a Royal Commission. Then there was the equally illogical strain in the hon. gentleman's argument as to the unconstitutionality, or the impropriety from a constitutional point of view, I had better put it in that form, of this question being investigated by a Royal Commission instead of by the Government. The hon. gentleman declared that the Government was here, that it should give the information to the public, and was the constitutional committee of this House for such a purpose. But the hon. gentleman illogically then came to the conclusion that while the Government was qualified to deal with this question and get the information, this Parliament, which is constitutionally bound to legislate on the question, was incompetent and must ask the people to legislate for it. There ought to be very little uncertainty as to the basis of a proposition of this kind. The resolution of the hon. member for Ottawa (Mr. Mackintosh) sets out on its face more fully than the sub-amendment does the nature of the information which is required in this country. After all the discussions which have taken place on this question it is true that members have been able to tell us what the loss of revenue to Canada will be, but I have not heard any view of the question as to what the provincial losses will be as regards provincial revenue, what losses the various municipalities of this country will be, what the loss to the carriers and other branches of industry and commerce will be,

and also the loss to the men engaged in the industry that will be put out of existence by the adoption of a prohibitory law. Moreover, we have had no information within the last 17 years as to the working of prohibitory laws restrictive of the sale of intoxicating liquors in other countries of the world. If it was right, as I suppose it was, as I have no doubt it was, for the Government composed of hon. gentlemen opposite in 1874, under the report of a joint Committee of both Houses, to issue a Royal Commission and send their commissioners throughout the United States to get information on this point, surely now after, as the Minister of Finance has said, new states have been added to the roll of prohibitory states, after 17 years have elapsed, is there any impropriety, any unconstitutionality in making the same enquiry now, and even enlarging the bounds of that enquiry, so as to ascertain what, under the altered conditions of our country, the effects of a prohibitory measure would be upon our own people? If the Government now is the best qualified body to get this information and lay it before the House, I presume it was so in 1874. . But in that year the course now proposed was adopted. I will not detain the House, as I might have done at an earlier hour in the evening, in showing that time after time in Great Britain, not only on kindred subjects to this, but on this subject itself, enquiries have been made year after year as to the working of laws to restrict the sale of intoxicating liquors even in the British Isles themselves. No less than three Royal Commissions have been issued within the limits of Great Britain as to the working of the license laws in that country, and they have collected information and laid it before the public and Parliament for the purpose of informing the public mind, as well as the mind of Parliament, as to all the facts and circumstances surrounding the question. The hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) expressed to the House a strong preference for a decision of this question by a plebiscite. For a moment I wish to present to the House a few of the objections to that proposition; I will state them very briefly and not elaborate them considering the hour of the night. I think that course is open to a very grave objection, not only because it is or is supposed to be repugnant to the theory of our constitution, but because it practically weakens the power of this Parliament for all time to come, to say that it shall abrogate its functions in discussing any public question and leave that to the people to decide, instead of its being decided by the men whom the people have sent here to deal with that and every other question that may require the action of Parliament. I can easily conceive, to say nothing of the theoretical objections, that in future years when measures may be brought forward to which vigorous opposition will be raised in this House or in the country, a clamour to do the same thing would be raised, and we would find in all our future experience in Canada that the precedent set on this occasion was not only a departure from our constitutional theory but a very inconvenient one in practice; there would be no safety, no security, and very little strength in this Parliament until that precedent was virtually wiped out, so far as regards its authority and its force for all time to come. That is, however, only my opinion upon the question. I say that assuming I am wrong upon that point and that at a future period this Parliament should say