

Some have urged that the best results would be secured by removing the present handicap of the three-fifths vote on local option, putting an end to political interference with the administration of the liquor laws, and that with these handicaps removed we might look forward to the almost universal adoption of local option throughout Ontario. Others have urged that nothing short of Provincial prohibition will meet the situation or really satisfy the demands of the people; still others that banish the bar is the policy which should be adopted; others banish the bar and place under Government control the residue of the traffic; still others a steady and progressive reduction in the number of licenses issued, so that at the end of say ten years, we should have no liquor licenses in the Province. I might go on multiplying the suggestions that are made, all by men sincerely interested in the cause of temperance. The form of legislation is so important, the interests at stake so large, and the result may have such a vital effect upon the well-being of the people of this Province, I am sure you will agree with me that the most careful investigation and deliberate consideration should be given to the solution of so far-reaching and difficult a problem.

It is our intention to give early consideration to this matter in all its bearings, and the decisions at which we arrive will be laid before the people and the people will have an opportunity of passing judgment upon our policy at the next general election, not in the form of a referendum, but as the policy of the party, upon which we will stand or fall, but we shall not fall. The promise I now make is that I shall enter upon the investigation and consideration of the question with the sole desire to reach a conclusion which will best promote the real interests of temperance, and every step taken will be a step in advance.

Meanwhile, we now submit for the judgment of the electors two very important specific proposals. The first is the abolition of the three-fifths vote in local option contests. Before the present Government came into power the electors could adopt local option by a simple majority. If the three-fifths vote were necessary to guarantee the permanency of the law, there might be something to be said in its favor. But if it is not necessary to guarantee the permanency, it should not be retained to block the progress of temperance reform.

Experiences of the Past.

Speaking generally, there has been no difference so far as repeals are concerned between the municipalities which carried local option by a simple majority and those which carried it by a three-fifths vote. The permanency of the law has not been guaranteed by the majority with which it was carried, but by the success of local option when put into practical operation. The experiences of the past six years prove, as the Dominion Alliance, the organized voice of the temperance forces of the Province, has repeatedly declared that the three-fifths vote is not necessary to guarantee the permanency of the local option laws.

What has been its effect on the progress of temperance reform? Since 1906 local option has been voted upon in 387 municipalities with 1,235 licenses. In 306 municipalities with 913 licenses, the local option by-law secured a majority vote, but by reason of the three-fifths requirement it failed in 120 municipalities with 421 licenses.

By the action of the Whitney Government 120 municipalities have been prevented from putting a stop to the sale of liquor, and 421 licenses were authorized to continue in business, though the people voted by a majority to close them up. Do you approve of this barrier of the progress of temperance reform?