

but that is not my position. Why should we not learn the results of the world's experience in all these years. What I propose is not for the purpose of shelving the temperance question or the prohibition question, but for the purpose of getting information as to the most approved, the latest, the most reliable data. I propose that a Royal Commission shall be appointed to embody the results of the world's experience in regard to this question from 1874 up to the present time, and to make research and to collect all the facts and all the experience they can get, and lay before this Parliament the result of the experience of other countries and the data which they can obtain from them, which will be of the utmost advantage to the members of this House and will be helpful to the country as well. That will form a better basis for the consideration of this question than anything we have now before us and will enable us to arrive at a proper conclusion upon it. I have said more, perhaps, than I thought I should at the beginning. What I have said I adhere to. These are my convictions and I place them before the House and the country. I move in amendment to the amendment, that all the words after the word "that" in the original motion, and all the words of the proposed amendment be struck out, and the following words added instead thereof:—

"In the opinion of this House, it is desirable, without delay, to obtain for the information and consideration of Parliament, by means of a Royal Commission, the fullest and most reliable data possible respecting—

"1. The effects of the liquor traffic upon all interests affected by it in Canada.

"2. The measures which have been adopted in this and other countries with a view to lessen, regulate or prohibit the traffic.

"3. The results of these measures in each case.

"4. The effect that the enactment of a prohibitory liquor law in Canada would have, in respect of social conditions, agricultural business, industrial and commercial interests, of the revenue requirements of municipalities, provinces and the Dominion, and also, as to its capability of efficient enforcement.

"5. All other information bearing on the question of prohibition."

And it is only fair for me to state before sitting down that this resolution is drawn out very largely on the lines of the amendment of my hon. friend from Ottawa (Mr. Mackintosh), widened and broadened considerably in the scope which he had arranged for in his amendment; and, although, as he stated, there was no knowledge and agreement between myself or any member of the Government and himself in regard to that matter, his plan, in its essence, recommended itself to the Government, and this is simply a little widening and broadening of the principles on which he based his amendment. I hope that the House will adopt this amendment, and that good results will come to the cause of temperance and sobriety in Canada from the work of that commission.

Mr. LAURIER. It seems to me that if ever a conclusion on any subject was at variance with the proposition itself, the conclusion which the hon. gentleman has offered to us in his amendment is such; it is totally opposed to the principles he has just laid down. The hon. gentleman stated that he was a prohibitionist at heart, and still believed in prohibition; he was not always required, as he said, to defend himself against the charge of inconsistency. Well, I will not go over his record to charge him with inconsistency, I will be satisfied to take his speech to-night and the conclusion at which he has arrived,

because if ever two things were inconsistent, it is the proposition laid down by the hon. gentleman in his speech and the conclusion to which he has arrived. He stated that he was a prohibitionist at heart, that he still believed in prohibition, and that he would be ready to enforce it, but for one fact as to which he was not quite certain, and that was whether the public opinion of this country was ready to sustain and maintain a prohibitory law, if a prohibitory law were passed. In lofty language the hon. gentleman said that he would not hold a piece of gold against a ray of light, not even a handful of gold against a ray of light; but he said that judging from the experience of the past he had reason to believe that if a prohibitory law was passed to-day, it would not be enforced, and that the country would reap no better results from it than it is reaping to-day. What, then, would be the conclusion at which one would expect the hon. gentleman to have arrived? That we should have information as to whether public opinion is ready or not to sustain a prohibitory law. That would be the natural consequence. The hon. gentleman is ready to-day to take the responsibilities of raising a revenue, without the revenue derived from the liquor traffic, and he is ready to undertake the task of finding other sources whereby our coffers could be kept full—he would be ready to undertake all that if he could only know this day that there is in the country such a prohibitory sentiment that a prohibitory law would not remain a dead letter upon the Statute-book. This is all the information the hon. gentleman needs, before he asks Parliament to pass a prohibitory law. Now, Sir, this being the fact—and I put the case fairly, I put it in the very words, I believe, which the hon. gentleman has just used, that is the only proposition upon which he wishes to be informed, this is the only light which he asks for now. Now, let us look at the conclusion of his premises. Does he ask for this commission to enquire whether public opinion to-day is ready to sustain a prohibitory law? Does he ask whether the people would vote for prohibition if they were allowed an opportunity of voting upon the question? No, Sir, there is not a word of that. The hon. gentleman reviewed all the methods whereby public opinion could be tested on that matter. There was the plebiscite, he said, but he does not want a plebiscite, perhaps there might be objections against it. There is the old constitutional method, the old British method, that we employ to settle every question that comes up, that is by an election every four or five years when the people are called upon to pronounce their judgment. There is force, certainly, in the remark of the hon. gentleman that if to-day public opinion was seriously in favour of prohibition, it is probable that the voice of the people would make itself felt to that effect by sending to Parliament a majority of members ready to vote for it. But the hon. gentleman discarded all these methods, and he wants information, so he says, as to whether the people are ready, as to whether public opinion is in favour of prohibition. Let us look at what he proposes. He asks for a Royal Commission to investigate what? To ascertain what is to-day the public sentiment in regard to prohibition? To ascertain whether the people, if consulted, would give their decision in favour of prohibition? Nothing of the kind, but only, to ascertain "the effect of the liquor traffic