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George Neal.

Opposition Support Petitions Asking For Total Prohibition

Tuesday, March 3, 1914.
Mr. Coaker.—Mr. Speaker, also received a number of these petitions. Mine are from Bonavista and Musgrave Harbor in the district of Fogo. They are signed by about 600 people. These are all that have reached me up to the present time.

I may say that all my life I have been a temperance man. I have never taken any liquor in any shape, and anything that I can do to assist the cause of temperance will be done. It is not easy to accomplish the prayers of these petitions.

The first request is for the prohibition of the transportation of liquor to what is known as Local Option districts. That is a very difficult matter to carry out, and even if we did pass such a law I don't think you can prevent the outports from getting liquor as long as it is sold in St. John's.

Would Support It
The other and the larger question of prohibition is one that will receive my support whenever it comes before the House in any shape, as long as it is to be an effective measure. I don't agree with the remarks of the Rt. Hon. Premier with regard to prohibition. If I ever vote for a measure of prohibition it must be one which prohibits not only the sale of liquor, but its importation. I shall never support any measure that will permit a man with means to import liquor for his own use, and will not allow the poor man to use it because he has not got the means to import it direct.

I believe that the sale of liquor is a curse. Of course, it is only natural that the man who has never used it is going to look at it in that light. Men have used liquors in moderation, and if every man would use it in moderation there would not be very much evil in it. But the whole trouble is, that so many men indulge in it to excess and cannot use it in moderation.

The Premier in his observations stated that he had never known of any country prohibiting the importation of liquor in the manner that I have just described. Now, why do we prohibit the use of poison? We won't allow men to import poison—we allow certain people to do it, but not the general public. In thousands of cases the use of liquor is just as great an evil as the use of poison, because when a man indulges in the use of liquor to excess it brings him down to the level of the beast.

Of course, I appreciate the fact that it is a pretty difficult question to deal with, but the only cure to my mind is to do away with it altogether. Some men like it and can use it in moderation, but the men who do not use it at all are the better men. Most of those who use it go to destruction through it. How many thousands of children have been reared without education and with scarcely any food or clothes, simply because their fathers indulge in liquor? How many thousands of bright, able, and brilliant men have gone to destruction through it? Nothing has been said about them.

Temperance Man
Now, I have no intention of giving a temperance address. I merely want to say that I am a temperance man and intend to do all I can to promote the temperance cause, but I am above all a total prohibitionist, and as long as I have the right to cast a vote in this House, the vote shall go for total prohibition. But I will never vote for any measure that will allow one man to use liquor because he has the means to import it direct, while it will not allow another man to use it because he has no means and is not able to import it. What I want is a measure that will keep it out altogether.

Mr. Clift.—Mr. Speaker, I have today several petitions similar to those I have just heard read by the hon. Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, about which I desire to make a few remarks.

They relate to the bringing in of legislation for the purpose of preventing the transportation by steamer or railway of intoxicating liquors as well as the business of providing machinery therefor.

Presented Petitions
The matters have both been so fully discussed by their introducers that little is left for me to say. The petitions that I have the honor to present come from various parts of my district.

When the matter comes up for the consideration of the Government or Committee of the House, I shall be very glad to give it my fullest and most ardent support.

Mr. Jennings.—Mr. Speaker, I am entrusted with the presentation of three petitions from the District of



Twillingate on this subject, and had it been at any other time of the year many more signatures would have been obtained.

I also can speak from personal knowledge that the sale of spirits in St. John's largely nullifies the benefits of Local Option in Twillingate District. Increased facilities or travel at present in vogue such as extra steamers and railway trains, make it easier for people to import liquor in Local Option Districts, and it is very easy to obtain liquor from St. John's at any time of the year.

Result Obvious
As far as the question of prohibition is concerned, I do not think there is any doubt as to the result of the

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plebiscite vote. The difficulties of carrying it out would soon be overcome. There were always difficulties surrounding every great benefit, and if people were stopped from undertaking good works very little good would ever be accomplished.

I beg to give to this matter my most ardent support.

Ardent Supporter
Mr. Winsor.—Mr. Speaker, I have here a few petitions from my District to which I beg to give my most ardent support. I see here the names of some men who have succumbed to this terrible temptation and who cry out now for help and protection.

I realize the fact that the way to reform is best with many difficulties, but these must be overcome, and ought not to be considered.

Although I have never tasted liquor I have suffered much by adhering to my principles. The struggle ought not to be put before every youth in the Colony. The weaker minded must give in.

I have every sympathy with this Bill and beg to give it my most ardent support.

Remove Temptation
Mr. Stone.—Mr. Speaker, I have here three petitions on the subject now under discussion, and so much has been said, that I need not go deeply into the details of this question. I think we ought to remove the temptation from our people, especially from the young men.

I agree with the hon. member for Bonavista, that if this is to be successful Local Option must be in force all over the island.

I beg to give this petition my most ardent support and hand it over to the Department to which it relates.

Mr. Lloyd.—Mr. Speaker, I have much pleasure in presenting several petitions on the same subject from the District of Trinity, which I have the honor to represent. The names attached to the petitions aggregate about eight hundred, and this fact alone insures my most earnest consideration.

I may say that I am not altogether in sympathy with the idea of prohibiting intoxicating liquors being carried on subsidized trains and steamers. This is my own personal opinion, but when I have before me petitions signed by eight hundred of my constituents, it makes me pause and consider whether or not these petitioners are entitled to have their views carried out.

Should Get Their Desire
If the people desire that subsidized trains and steamers should not carry intoxicating liquors, I would be bound by the sentiment of the district. Whenever it appears to me that the majority of the people of Trinity Bay desire protection in the way of Prohibition or Local Option, I am prepared to give the matter my support, but the sentiments of the majority of the people of that district is not represented by those petitions.

I am speaking now as to the evidence before the House. It may be that people from other parts of the district may have an opportunity of expressing themselves in other petitions. I find that these particular petitions come from a few localities in the neighborhood of Clarendville and Shoal Harbor. If it will be shown that the people of the other portions of the district also are in support of the movement, I am prepared to give it my support.

In reference to the other matter, I am not adverse to the question of referendum or plebiscite, nor do I think it would be degrading in any way to this House to consult the people by such a method. It is merely referring the question to the people who sent us here.

When the people of Newfoundland express themselves in favor of prohibition, I will consider myself bound by their decision, and I see no objection to this House providing machinery to carry out the wishes of the people.

(To be continued)

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