

of the powers of the local legislatures, as they will have no authority over the matter of licensing, or of the sale of liquor in Canada. When—now over three months ago—Parliament was advised by the Speech from the Throne that this subject (the control of the licensing system) was to be assumed by the Dominion, the people of Canada naturally took a very deep interest in the matter. Up till that time the general belief had been that the power of issuing licenses rested entirely with the Provincial Governments, and was under the provincial authority and it will be in the recollection of hon. gentlemen that time and again, year after year, when petitions came before this, and the other branch of Parliament from the people of this country, asking for certain reforms in the Temperance Laws of the Dominion, they were told over and over again, by the highest authority in the Federal Parliament, that they must go to the Local Legislatures, as this Parliament had no jurisdiction or control. If this statement were in any way questioned I could lay my hands upon speeches to that effect, made by gentlemen who now assert that the same power rests with the Federal Parliament—in a directly opposite direction to that indicated by them in previous years. It has been maintained during the past sixteen years that constitutionally the whole control of the licensing system belonged to the Local Legislatures, and I think it was unfortunate when the Federal Government proposed to assume that authority, that the Bill they proposed to submit to Parliament had not then been printed and placed in the hands of the people in order that public opinion might have been expressed upon it. This is really a people's question rather than a legislator's question, and there are very few of us who are familiar with the workings and details of the licensing system, more especially as it has been subject to different treatment in the several Provinces of the Dominion. The principle that has prevailed in New Brunswick has been different from that in Nova Scotia, and the arrangements in Ontario have not been at all the same as those in the Province of Quebec. Each Province was working out this question on its own basis and with the view of attaining those results to which we all feel it is so important to look; that is, the correction of the abuse of

drinking, and the restricting, as far as possible, the traffic in intoxicating liquors. It is, therefore, a question that is much better understood by the municipal authorities and organizations over the whole Dominion, than by members of the Federal Parliament. Though my hon. friend the Minister of Justice has very clearly and in terse language described what this Bill is, still I venture to assert, until he gave his immediate attention to it—even until a few weeks past—he knew comparatively little of the licensing system and the machinery that was in force in the several Provinces. Therefore, I say, it is to be regretted that this Bill was not before the people at a much earlier day; they should have had at least two months in which to consider and discuss it fairly, but I believe that at present but a very small proportion of the people of Canada know what we are doing in this matter. There is a wide spread opinion that this legislation is *ultra vires*, and that the issuing of licenses rests, where we all believed it did for the last sixteen years, with the local legislatures. The people were, as I have already said, told time and again that that was the source from which any changes must emanate, and it was well known that, in 1878, when I had the honor of submitting a Temperance Bill to Parliament, there were very grave doubts as to whether that measure did not trench upon the rights of the provincial legislatures, and there were very many gentlemen for whose opinions I entertain a high respect, who believed that the question was beyond the power of the Parliament of Canada and that we were encroaching upon provincial rights. Unfortunately in the last three years there has been a tendency, I think, on the part of the Federal Parliament rather to narrow the prerogative of the Local Legislatures. In my opinion it is very much to be regretted, and will cause a good deal of soreness and ill-feeling probably in the future, if this question—which was known as "State Rights" on the other side of the line—is to be a prominent one in Canada. So far as this subject is concerned, I think it would have been infinitely wiser and more in the interests of the people of Canada, had some test case been specially submitted to the highest authority which would have decided, once and for all, where the jurisdiction properly