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Opposition Support Petitions Asking For Total Prohibition

(Continued)

Mr. Targett--Mr. Speaker, I have here eighteen petitions from various parts of Trinity Bay. In all the number of petitioners are about eight hundred, and would represent the sentiment of a large portion of that district.

When this matter comes up before the Committee I shall have a few words to say. Just now I would point out that this feeling prevailing around our shores ought to receive our fullest consideration. Liquor is good neither for the young nor the old; it has always been a curse, and will always be a curse, as long as we have it in this country.

Takes Little

Personally I do not take very much. As a matter of fact, I have not tasted liquor for the past thirty years. There was a time when I had a great liking for liquor, and I had a hard fight to keep against it. I had a strong turn for it, and I certainly pity any poor creature that has a thirst for liquor, and I think it is our duty as legislators to do our best to help our fellow creatures.

In many other ways we are trying to legislate on different matters. We have been trying to make laws in this House to protect the dumb animals, which I have no doubt is a good law, and I think myself, that while making laws for the dumb animals we should make laws to help our fellow creatures, our young people as well as our middle-aged people, and I am sure that this petition has my hearty support.

There is not much need of my saying much as the matter has been pretty fully debated, but I am sure that I shall do all in my power to help out the petition.

Many Signatures

Mr. Halfyard--Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from the inhabitants of Joe Batt's Arm and Barr'd Island on this question, signed by 75 people.

One regrettable feature in connection with these petitions is that it is so late in the session of the Assembly, and I suppose our friends, the movers in this question of temperance, were a little late in sending their petitions to Fogo District.

I have received a message from Rev. Mr. Mercer, of Fogo, and I understand from him that petitions had been signed by quite a number, but it was too late to get them along this session.

I think the advocates of temperance who have listened to the speeches here this afternoon on this question should be encouraged. I think this Legislature should be looked upon as a temperance Legislature, and all we need now for the prayers of these petitions to come into effect is for the Government--the Opposition is all right--to grapple with the question. Let them exert some more labor on the matter.

Great Evil

Nobody will deny that the evil of intemperance is a great evil, and a great curse, and if we can use legislation to retard this evil the outports of the country will certainly back us up.

There is no doubt that Local Option in the outport districts is considerably lessened by the convenience of transportation, and in Local Option districts where liquor is not now sold, the people can send to St. John's and get a case of whiskey or brandy, or whatever it is they wish.

We know that some people indulge in liquor to such an extent that it brings want and misery, not only to themselves, but to their wives and those dependent upon them.

It is not my intention, Mr. Speaker, to detain the work of this house in this particular, because it is a well known fact that if the demands of these petitions were set before the people, liquor would be prohibited from this country in its entirety.

Heartily Supported It

I have great pleasure in presenting this petition, and I give it my hearty support, and I trust that the powers that he will show the country that they have the courage of their convictions in this matter.

If the finances of the country will prevent them from acting in this particular, let them put the duty on tea and sugar and molasses and food stuffs, and I believe they will get the majority of the country to support them in so doing.

We are willing to legislate for animals, but when you come to dealing with a question like this that seriously affects so many of our people, we talk about the difficulty of putting these laws into execution. While we talk like that we will never have any reform, we will stick in a hole and the evils of old legislation will be with us forever.

Mr. Grimes--Mr. Speaker, I have also a petition here from Clarke's Beach in the district of Port de Grave dealing with the matter now before the chair. I have much pleasure in supporting the petition because the district I represent is a strong local option district.

The effect of local option in that district, however, has been almost neutralized by the sale of liquor that has been going on there through the train.

Now Sir, I have had some conversation with quite a number of people there, and they tell me that it is so bad that it would be just as well to have St. John's transferred to certain parts of that district as far as the local option law is concerned, because at certain seasons of the year so much liquor goes in there from St. John's that the local option law is of very little use. That fact has been corroborated by people all over the district.

Carry Out the Act

Now, I think in deference to the wishes of the people and in view of the fact that the people there have declared themselves in favor of local option, that the act should be carried out in the spirit that was meant by those who fought for local option.

A great deal has been said here this afternoon about moral suasion, that it is of more effect than the enforcement of laws. Well, we have been considering many questions here during the present session of the Legislature, and I would ask the hon. gentleman from Placentia and St. Mary's whether he would wait for moral suasion to deal with the question of pure food in this city and country, and I am afraid there would be many in their graves if we had no such legislation as the pure food bill. And the same would apply to other Legislative enactments.

If we had to wait for moral suasion to improve the condition of the sealers; until every man interested in that industry was morally persuaded that these regulations presented by Mr. Coaker were the best, I am afraid we should have to wait a very long time before we would see the adoption of any such regulations as have been passed by the Legislature at the present time.

Not Proven

Statements have been made here this afternoon as to the failure of prohibition, but no case has been cited where prohibition has been in force and has proved a failure.

It is stated that prohibition is in force in the State of Maine and that in certain parts of that State the law is not fully carried out.

Well, there is a difference of opinion on that point, but certain it is that the electors in that State are just as strong for prohibition as they were thirty years ago, and the great majority have found that prohibition is so successful as to warrant their support up to the present time. I do not think that justifies any statement that it has been a failure.

There is assent in favor of prohibition in the Southern and Western

States. In fact in the past seven years it has grown more rapidly than ever before. It is only a question of time when a great majority of the States will be in the prohibition column.

Good For Us, Too

Now, if these people have proved the good effect, I think the time has fairly come when the people in the outports of this colony should recognize the need for total prohibition, and it has been suggested that the only effective way of dealing with the liquor question in this colony is the total prohibition of the importation and sale of intoxicating liquors.

As at present fifteen or sixteen out of the eighteen electoral districts of the colony have declared themselves in favor of local option. I think this House ought to consider the matter of putting the machinery in force, so that the people can show their sentiments on the question of prohibition.

(To be continued)

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