

be the act of a fool, but some men claim the right to act the fool, if they so desire, without outside interference. And it is possible that a community would say that it would not interfere if a man could act the fool without injury to himself and others. Drinking may not be absolutely a sin in itself, for even an admitted poison is allowed to have value as a stimulant in certain cases of emergency. But it has come to be very widely recognized that no one can take liquor habitually without injuring himself and others in a way that even the state is compelled to notice. If waste is the arch enemy of a good economic system, then the drink must be put in the category of the enemy of the commonwealth. It is the great waster. It is the wanton destroyer. It lowers a man's capacity for labor, mental or physical, and in no day has it been so necessary to prevent the dissipation of capacity as in these days when the weak go to the wall. Drink attacks the home, which is the heart of a nation, and it throws endless burdens on the state in connection with the administration of justice, and the maintenance of all kinds of restraining, preventive and benevolent institutions. And this is not touching the question of moral waste, which the state, as such, cannot very well prevent. But the state is getting very tired of the presence of an establishment which is licensed to destroy. And the state is beginning to say that while men may have in a sense the right to drink, they have no right to demand that the state provide a regular trough for them, with all the contingent and resultant expenditure. And so this Province is, frankly, and without apologising for its action, discussing the whole problem. If any one objects to the policy of the state in seeking to restrict the drink traffic, we ask such to remember the right of the state to protect itself has never been denied. As a matter of fact, the license law is a recognized assertion of that right in connection with the liquor business. A license law is a measure of prohibition. The state does not license a grocery store, but it does license a saloon in order that the number of saloons may be limited, and that they may be under state control. Our license system practically is the chaining up of a dangerous dog that should not be allowed to run free, but which can be destructive within the length of his chain. And there is a growing conviction that it would be better to kill the dog and have done with it.

No licenses have been issued to permit the sale of strong drink in the mining centres of Northern Ontario such as Cobalt and Porcupine and Elk Lake. Ralph Connor once told me that he had become a more intense prohibitionist when he saw the miners of the Kootenay, who had worked all day in the slush and cold, robbed of their earnings by the saloon men, who did nothing but stand around and wait to annex the miners' wages, and at the same time lower the whole tone of the miners' lives. But the Ontario Governments which have refused licenses to the mining camps may not have reached that viewpoint. They have refused licenses because mining is too dangerous an occupation to be trifled with by men under any degree of the influence of drink, and because the preservation of order in a mining camp where drink is allowed is a very difficult and expensive process.