

cient argument to show that we have the moral as well as the legislative right to pass these enactments we are now asking you to pass. Last year, Sir, this Parliament passed a License Act. By one of the clauses of that Act the people of the municipalities were allowed to prohibit the sale of liquor within their limits, which is giving to the people the right to legislate according to their desire in this matter; but that Act went further. Not only did it give to the people the right to prohibit the sale of liquor within their own limits, but it went so far, in the Province of Quebec, as to give to the representatives of the people in their municipal councils the right to prohibit the traffic in liquor within their municipal limits. If it is allowable to give a small body of men, such as a municipal council, the right to interfere with the liberty of the people to obtain liquor when and where they like, surely it is the right of this Parliament to decide that the people shall not obtain liquor when and where they choose. We also have in this country, in the North-West Territories, an absolutely prohibitory law. That was passed by this Parliament. That was not passed by the representatives of the people who were to be affected by it, but it was passed by the arbitrary power of the Parliament which ruled that country, as it was thought, at the time, for its own good, and as Parliament still, I think, considers it was done for its good, and it has been productive of good. Then, also, on Government works connected with our railroads, the Parliament of this country passed a law prohibiting the selling of intoxicating liquors, so that these works might be the better prosecuted. If I asked for any argument, I could not ask for a better than this very Act, to show that it is the opinion of this Parliament, and the opinion of the people of this country, that the liquor traffic in itself is obstructive of good; that it has a tendency to deteriorate the work the people do, and a tendency to interfere with that work. I think that, from these things to which I have alluded, these various laws which already hold in this country, and are already in force in regard to the restraint of the liquor traffic, I may fairly conclude that this Parliament has not only the legislative right, but the moral right, to interfere in this way with the liberty of the individual to obtain the liquor whenever he may desire it. There is another question which has agitated the minds of a good many, and is looked upon as a very serious objection to the passage of a prohibitory law. I allude to the loss of revenue to the country in consequence of this. I will not go into the moral question as to whether this revenue is obtained in a legitimate manner, as to whether it is right or wise for this country to batten upon the proceeds of this traffic, but I will simply quote the authority of a gentleman whom I am glad to see sitting in his seat opposite to me to-night, a gentleman whom a large majority of this House consider to be a very high authority upon financial matters—I allude to the hon. the Finance Minister, who last summer, on August 9th, at the Westminster Palace Hotel, in London, made a speech upon Canadian liquor legislation, and in that speech he said:

"It has been my misfortune, or fortune, having been a great many years in the Government of my native Province of New Brunswick, and in the Government of the Dominion, to hold the post of Finance Minister in all these Governments, and I have never heard but one opinion about the revenue question, namely, that it is of quite secondary importance, though it is, I admit, a more difficult matter with you. The revenue we obtain in the Dominion of Canada is probably five or six million of dollars a year, and it costs the people \$20,000,000 in providing it for us. No Finance Minister would remain long in office who would, in this day, propose a scheme for raising a revenue of \$5,000,000 that would cost \$20,000,000 to collect."

Mr. Speaker, I think that coming from such an authority as this, this House will accept the view I have propounded; and I do not believe that there are great many people in this country who would not be prepared for the statement that the hon. Finance Minister there made. There are not a very great many people, I think, who would

Mr. FISHER.

not fully understand, that although direct receipts from this traffic would certainly be expunged from our revenue, still, the improvement in the general commerce of the country, the improvement in the general welfare and well-being of our community would be so great, that the receipts in all other branches of our revenue would be increased correspondingly, and there would, practically, after the first year or so, not be any diminution whatever in our revenue from our tax payers. There is another point which I now come to, and that is when we ought to prohibit. It is generally said that we should not prohibit until the country is quite prepared for that action; until there is not only an evident desire on the part of the country for prohibition, but also that the country should be prepared to sustain the prohibitory measure and to assist in carrying it out. I believe this is, to a certain extent, true; but I believe also that one of the very best means of obtaining that happy period in the country's history is to commence by prohibiting. I believe that the very fact that a prohibitory law is in existence is one of the very best educating powers in the community. I believe that, by the legislative action of Parliament, we may have a better influence upon the people of the country to bring them to that opinion than we can in any other way whatever. It is true that in years past moral suasion has been tried, and moral suasion has accomplished a great deal. Far be it from me in any way to detract from the noble efforts of those who have spent their time and labour in trying to improve the principles of the community upon this question, but I believe that, in conjunction with moral suasion, as an assistant and a help to moral suasion, it is absolutely necessary that the Government of the country should propose a law and should assist those who are trying this moral suasion to carry out that law and to enforce it. What has been the result in those countries where we have had a prohibitory law? We find universal testimony to the fact that, in those States and countries where the prohibitory law has been in existence, the people have found the education which it exerted upon the community was the very greatest possible to be imagined. I find that, in the State of Vermont, where for some twenty years past there has been absolute prohibition of the liquor traffic, and the use of liquor as much as was possible, Governor Peck, who was an ex-Governor of the State, and Judge of the Supreme Court, says:

"In some parts of the State there has been a laxity in enforcing it; but in other parts of the State it has been thoroughly enforced, and there it has driven the traffic out. I think the influence of the law has been salutary in diminishing drunkenness and disorders arising therefrom, and also crimes generally. You cannot change the habits of a people momentarily. The law has had an effect upon our customs, and has done away with that of treating and promiscuous drinking. The law has been aided by moral means, but moral means have also been wonderfully strengthened by the law. I think the law is educating the people, and that a much larger number now support it than when it was adopted; in fact, the opposition is dying out. All the changes in the law have been in the direction of greater stringency. In attending a court for ten years, I do not remember to have seen a drunken man."

This testimony, I think, is very strong in the direction of the argument that the law is the best educator of the people. I also have the testimony of Governor Convers, in the same State. He says:

"The prohibitory law has been in force about twenty-two years, the enforcement has been uniform in the State since its enactment, and I consider it a very desirable law. I think the law itself educates and advances public sentiment in favour of temperance. There is no question about the decrease in the consumption of liquor. I speak from personal knowledge, having always lived in the State. I live in Woodstock, 60 miles from here, and there is no man having the least regard for himself would admit selling rum, even though no penalty attached to it."

I have here in my hand another testimony to the educating effects of the law. That is the Convention of the State Temperance Union in Rhode Island. Governor Howard, Governor of that State, said: