

Is there a home in this whole province which has not been distressed or distressed or sorrow during the troubled years of war now so happily ended? Is there a member in this House who has not, at some time during those four years, heard it said by the supposed leaders of the people that our share in this war was not only because of the outraged Belgium and the fact that we were an integral part of the British Empire, but that, so far as Canada is concerned, and so far as Ontario is concerned, the last man and the last dollar was needed in the cause of democracy to fight military autocracy, so that we might be free instead of becoming slaves? If that is true and democracy and the right to live as free men has been accomplished and won by the gallantry of our army and its allies in France and Flanders, what use was the sacrifice there made if we are coming back to Ontario to find our freedom taken away from us here? As I said before, the mental attitudes of the most of us have changed, and I, for one, say that never again will I heed the politician's cry or harken to the crack of the party whip where I consider in my own mind that I am going against the wishes of the people who sent me here to represent them. And so I say to every honorable gentleman in this House, remember what I have just said: When the legislation that is promised in the Speech from the Throne is brought down, in memory of the gallant dead who assured your freedom forever, assert your rights as men and vote according to your consciences. There are some who are equally as strong on the other side as I am on the side I have spoken of. All honour to them, but do not wobble in between. Take your stand fair and square as men, not as mice; and do your duty the way your constituents would have you. I do not want to give pain, but I am here to-night to speak my mind if it cost me my political life, and I intend to do it. I believe the Province of Ontario is only looking for someone to speak out, and although I do not pretend to be of any importance, politically or otherwise, I do think that I am as fit as anyone else to give expression to these thoughts which are mine and those of many thousands of men and women in this province. On this subject we must face all issues fairly and squarely. Then, Sir, let me say, in my opinion, a wave of fanatical puritanism is sweeping over our Province, fostered and fanned by men and women who no doubt mean well: men and women of the narrowest vision and most intolerant attitude who, by banding together and by continuously shrieking in season and out of season, have convinced this Government, or at least the Prime Minister, that they form a great majority of the people of the Province. I have already stated that I challenge that and doubt it so much that to-day I am staking my political life on it; and if I am wrong, I am willing to pay the price. But I cannot think, Sir, that the people of this great Province—which politicians in this House and outside continue to refer to as the banner Province of the Dominion—I cannot think that these people have become so besotted with drink that it is necessary to save them from themselves.

One danger which we run, and which is rampant under this legislation and is fostered by it, is that as a people it is making us hypocritical and insincere to a degree almost unsurpassed in the history of the human race. I am aware that this form of hysteria is prevalent in this Province. I am aware that there is a reflex action from the terrible tension to which our people were keyed up during the four awful years of war just past. But I am aware also that this great Province is inhabited by a majority of sane common-sensed people who, unorganized and unshrieking, have said nothing all the time the Ontario Temperance Act has been the law of the Province, but have suffered in silence, thinking that the time had not come, on account of the fact that everyone had stated that this was a war measure, to assert their rights as free men and inform the Government that they did not purpose to have taken from them so lightly the greatest gift that has been handed down to them by their gallant forefathers as their birthright—liberty of the subject. It is these people, the sane, common-sense people of Ontario, who have given so freely of their blood and treasure in this war, who will hand down to succeeding generations the cherished possession of which I have just spoken. I am sure that when the time comes for a verdict on this subject the "great silent vote," as it is sometimes called, will be prepared to fight against encroachment on their rights and liberties.