

every Province in this country, men who are not engaged for any selfish purpose, men whose expenses have to come out of their own pockets, and whose time is given to this cause, and who work in this cause. This petition embodies the request, the best request of the temperance sentiment of the country, praying that this provision be inserted and the local option for these localities be given as a right which the people hold dear, and a right which if exercised will do much towards the betterment of the country in respectability in every municipality, and so I think that this request should have some weight as well. I will not tire the House by speaking longer on this question. I will only say this in conclusion, I do want this principle of local option; I want it to be embodied, and embodied in a workable way in this Act; and I believe that if we do it, as I believe we shall do it, that it will meet with the approval of the country, and that it will be a decision and conclusion which the people of this country will carry out. I know something of the opinion in the Province of Ontario as well, and I have no hesitation in saying that it is my firm belief that if to-morrow you could poll the Province of Ontario and give a decision with reference to this matter, you would poll a majority in favor of giving to the people of these localities a veto power upon the liquor traffic in their localities.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I am sure that the whole Committee must have listened with great pleasure to the speech we have just heard from my hon. friend behind me; and it must be satisfactory to the Committee who have framed the Bill, that in his opinion—and he was one of the powers of it—it deserves his laudations. However, we are now discussing the forty-sixth clause of the Bill and the amendment; and the question now before the Committee, is, whether the principle of petition is to be adopted, or the principle of open voting as suggested by the hon. gentleman in the amendment. As I have already stated during the discussion of this Bill, I am opposed to the petition system; and I hope that my hon. friend from Hochelaga will reconsider his expressed opinion in that regard. The hon. member from West Durham said: "Oh, but this Committee has already committed itself—twice—to the principle of petition; first on the application for a license, and then on the question of depriving a person of his license, or in refusing a license for a specified purpose;" and therefore he said they have committed themselves in these two cases and should carry out the principle of petition here. Why, there is no similarity between these two cases and this one. This is a license system for the purpose of regulating trade in intoxicants. The whole aim and end of the Bill, with the exception of this single clause, is for the purpose of the regulation of the sale of intoxicants and not for the prohibition of it. Why, in the first case, it is merely to give a *prima facie* color to the claims of the party to get a license, and that petition does not decide the matter. This merely gives the applicant a *prima facie* right to go before the Board of Commissioners and ask for his license—there is the governing power. The first petition only opens the door by which the applicant to keep a tavern can come before the governing, the licensing power; and therefore there can be no comparison, no similarity between that case and this, because this petition is the governing power. If this clause passes as framed, then there is no appeal. The petition is prepared; it is final; it decides whether a party is to get his license—

Mr. BLAKE. The petition decides whether there shall be any license or not.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. Or rather, as the hon. gentleman has said, this petition prevents the possibility of a party getting a license. The petitioners in signing the petition are placed by this clause in the position of authority, and with the power which is ultimately in the other case of

granting a license vested in the Board of Commissioners. I shall not ask the question with respect to the action in the carrying out of this clause by petition. I am strongly opposed to it. I believe that it will not meet with the approbation of the country. I believe that the country will not agree to it. I believe that the country will prefer the system which now exists under the Scott Act, and which is to be carried out under the amendment of my hon. friend. But my hon. friend from Hochelaga says it will be very difficult to carry it out, and expensive. Why, not so very expensive as are the annual elections in every county and municipality. There is a little trouble and a little expense, but that goes on from year to year, and every year in every county, and in every township, where there are municipal institutions, and the people do not grumble at the expense, or at the difficulty experienced in that way. They decide, they meet every year, and they form their whole municipal organization; and why will they not meet for the purpose of settling a question like this? I shall, in the first place, vote for the amendment as against the present resolutions; and I really hope that the majority of the Committee will vote for the amendment. It is a very serious thing to interfere with vested rights. I quite agree with the hon. gentleman who spoke so eloquently last, that there are two sorts of vested rights. The people have vested rights in good Government in the same way that the people who have invested their fortunes in a particular trade, have in it vested rights, and under the protection of the law. When parties have invested their money and gone into a trade, and their wealth, their position, their future, and perhaps the future of their families, depend upon their being protected in that trade, I think that while individual rights must yield to the public good, yet you should take care that in the over-anxiety to press what you think is the public good, you do not ruin the individual or prejudice the individual, if there is any mode by which he can be fairly protected. Now, the great objection to this system of petition under this clause, is the utter uncertainty which must exist in the mind of every publican, every inn-keeper, every hotel-keeper, as to whether he may not at any moment be deprived of his means of existence, and whether his property and his house, in which all his means have been invested—the whole of that may not be swept away and he be ruined; and it is not for the public advantage that this uncertainty should exist. What is the public advantage with respect to hotels?—that they should be large, commodious, and respectable. How can you expect, is it reasonable to expect, as we all know that capital is very timid and easily frightened, that we will have Windsor Hotels, Rossin Houses, or Queen's Hotels put up, and have large sums invested in them, when at any moment they may, by petition signed behind the back of the proprietor, be obliged to close their doors and their houses, thereby rendering them actually valueless. The consequence will be, so long as the uncertainty exists as to whether this clause may be put in force at any time, people will not invest their money in these buildings, and you have all over the country an inferior class of hotels and inferior accommodation. If parties keep these houses upon such an uncertain tenure as the casual feeling of the municipality they will not invest in large, expensive buildings, but rather in an inferior kind of buildings, so that the loss may not be so great if at any time local option should decide against hotels altogether. This feeling that they will be ruined if they erect large and respectable hotels will spread through the country, and a feeling of dread will be produced that the whole business will be destroyed, and this in turn will produce the consequences which I have mentioned. On the other hand, if there is to be a solemn vote taken, if the people come forward and vote on their responsibility, if the will of the people is thus publicly declared in the eyes of the world, then, if these parties suffer it cannot