

HON. MR. GOWAN—I think that my hon. friend from Sarnia has made out a very clear case in favor of the measure that is before us. He has shown in detail that the measure is not one for the introduction of any substantial variation in the law as it exists, but merely to give completeness to the Act that is upon the statute book. Everyone who is familiar with these matters knows the difficulty of expressing clearly and accurately in appropriate language, everything that is necessary to cover circumstances that may arise, and by reason of that not always being done, questions are every day occurring in the construction of the law, that are due to the imperfect expression of Parliament in framing the laws, or due to the fact that certain circumstances and conditions in different parts of the country were not adequately considered, or were not fully in the mind of the Legislature at the time the Act was passed. Hon. gentlemen well know that it is the individual litigant who pays for settling those questions, it is not the country at large. The litigants have to pay for the settling of those questions as they arise—questions growing out of an imperfect expression by the Parliament of the country in the Acts that they have passed. I shall guard myself in speaking on this subject. I do not think that this is a question as to whether the Scott Act is, or is not, based in all particulars on just and sound principles, or is framed with a proper regard to vested rights. I desire to separate that entirely from this discussion, and I think the hon. gentleman from Sarnia has, in his remarks, put forward the same view. The object of this Bill is simply to complete that which was left incomplete by the Parliament of the Dominion. I may say, with regard to the Canada Temperance Act, which my hon. friend from Ottawa introduced when he was a member of the late Government, that it is a marvellous thing that it has stood the heavy strain which has been put upon it. Not merely conflicting interests have opposed it, but it has been opposed by a thoroughly organized opposition, and yet it has been found that only in those few particulars it is required to be amended. My legal friends will know that the Statute of Frauds, consisting of some twelve or thirteen clauses, cost half a million pounds

sterling to settle the meaning of it. Every single word, I was almost going to say every single letter, in that celebrated statute was subject to judicial construction, for settling which the individual litigants had to pay. Of course it affected very large interests, and it touched the many contrivances of those who resorted to fraud to carry their purposes; but it had no organized opposition to meet as this measure, the Scott Act, has had; and I think it is a marvellous thing that the statute has stood so firmly against the numerous assaults that have been made upon it. I think it reflects the highest credit on the care, prudence, ability and skill of the hon. gentleman from Ottawa, and I think it is almost the only Act now on the statute book, with the exception of some that Sir John Macdonald introduced years ago, which remain to this day, having stood the severe test of practical operation. The hon. gentleman from Sarnia has not sought to make any substantial alteration in the law. He asks what is very reasonable—that Parliament should give effect to its own enactments, and that the language that is imperfect in it shall be made clear. There are persons claiming that they have not infringed the law, and various suggestions have brought almost every part of this Act into dispute, and those few points that are referred to are all, so far as I am capable of forming a judgment, which the Parliament did imperfectly when the Act was being passed. I cannot say that I attribute any fault to the draftsman who prepared the Act, nor is there any fault to be attributed to Parliament for those errors. Some of them involved local knowledge which my hon. friend from Ottawa could not have had when he brought in the measure. Even now in the Bill introduced this session, my hon. friend on my right has discovered that there are slight verbal alterations required to suit his province, so that local as well as general knowledge is necessary in order to frame a law of this kind. I have gone over every single clause of this Bill, and I can see in it no substantial alteration of the law as it stands. To open a discussion upon the general merits of the Scott Act, I think would be out of place in considering this Bill. There are differences of opinion amongst those who are most earnest and strictly temperate people, with respect to