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A Journal Devoted to the Promotion of Social Progress and Moral Reform

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THIS WEEK'S CONTESTS.

FROM nearly every Scott Act County in which repeal voting takes place this week, there come bitter complaints against the action of the Government in fixing the voting for a time of the year in which country roads are at their worst, in some cases absolutely impassable.

It is well known that our rural population is sound on the temperance question, and, as a rule, rural localities give good majorities for the Scott Act. It is also well known that saloon influence is most potent in towns and villages, and in these more populous places the liquor traffic always secures its strongest support. Fixing voting at such a time as will make the rural vote as small as possible, without interfering with the town vote, does really look like playing into the hands of the liquor party. Will not some of our friends in the House of Commons call attention to this unfair action of the Dominion Government?

We are pleased to learn that notwithstanding the discouraging fact, our friends in Scott Act counties are working hard. This paper will be in the hands of some of our readers before full returns of Thursday's votes are received by us, but it will be learned from other sources whether or not the Scott Act has been sustained. Our present information is such as to make us hopeful of the situation. The Anti party are doing their best along the lines which proved so successful in Halton. It remains to be seen whether or not their underhand, and somewhat cowardly policy will win them votes, or will turn against them the better sentiment of even the towns and villages in which the present contest will be to a large extent decided.

Whether, however, the Scott Act is sustained or defeated, it will still be the duty of our workers to stand by the cause they have espoused, and do all in their power to hasten the fast approaching time when the present good—though defective—law of local option will be replaced by a more comprehensive, well-devised measure of total Prohibition.

THE PROHIBITION DEBATE.

It is to be deeply regretted that the discussion in the House of Commons last Monday on Mr. Jamieson's Prohibition resolution was of so undesirable a character. The question when introduced should have been discussed upon its merits, and Mr. Mills' unworthy action in making it simply an opportunity for personal abuse of a political opponent, was one of those unworthy lines of policy which have gone far to justify the frequent assertion that politicians deal with the temperance question mainly from a party standpoint, and are ever ready to make it subservient to petty factional exigencies. We are sorry that Mr. Jamieson, although sorely provoked, followed Mr. Mills' example, and that the important issue placed before the house was lost sight of in an undignified squabble.

The resolution has not been disposed of. Mr. Scriven's motion to adjourn the debate keeps it still before the house, and it will probably be further debated. So far as it went, however, the discussion of Monday was eminently unsatisfactory.

The Dominion Government, representing the Conservative party, has definitely refused to endorse any temperance legislation. We do not refer particularly to its action upon the Mills' resolution, which action was of course to have been expected under the circumstances. Sir John Macdonald years ago refused to make Scott Act improvement a part of the Government policy. With the honorable exception of Hon. Mr. Foster, every member of the Government, present in the House of Commons, voted against the Prohibition resolution presented last year by Mr. Jamieson.

At the present time Mr. Mills seems to be the official mouthpiece of the temperance question, in the House of Commons, of the Liberal party. By a motion introduced by him some time ago, that party definitely placed itself on record as in favor of Scott Act amendment. If his speech of last Monday is to be taken as an official utterance, then the Liberal party is definitely opposed to immediate prohibition. We sincerely hope that further debate will show that this is not the case.

THE EXACT SITUATION.

NOTWITHSTANDING what has been said about the Conservative party, it must not be forgotten that the ostensible attitude of that party is not against Scott Act amendment, but against making the amending legislation a Government measure. Conservative members are left free to vote for or against the Jamieson Amending Bill. If all the Liberals who are committed to the principle of the Bill, support Mr. Jamieson, along with the Conservatives who are known to be friendly to it, then it is certain of success.

The situation is this simply. The Liberal party, as a party, is for Scott Act Amendment. The Conservative party, as a party, is neutral. Members of the Conservative party are divided (of course refusal to do right, is often as totally inexcusable, as open declaration and action in favor of what is wrong. We believe, however that there are active, honest Conservatives who are convinced that such measures as that under discussion, ought not to be made party measures, but that members should be left free to act independently in reference to them.

It is encouraging to find that temperance sentiment is so strong among Liberals as to secure a party declaration in favor of Scott Act improvement, and that liquor influence is so weak among the Conservatives as to be unable to secure a party deliverance in opposition to that badly needed measure of reform.

MORE TEMPORIZING.

We would not belittle the proposed Scott Act Amendments they are desirable and laudable, but they are mainly merely technical. None of them touch the spirit or intent of the law. They simply aim at making the law what it was originally intended to be. In the Scott Act Amendment Bill, there is no inch of advance beyond the position taken by the Dominion Parliament in 1878. Must we stay there for ever?

Is there to be no response from our legislators to the persistent demands coming up from all over the country, for the total Prohibition of the liquor traffic? Ten years ago we were challenged to show that public sentiment was in favor of such legislation, we have shown it by carrying partial Prohibition in 73 out of 95 counties. We have shown it by recording an aggregate majority of 70,000 votes in favor of the Scott Act. Public sentiment in

favor of Prohibition has been more directly, emphatically and practically demonstrated than has ever been public opinion in relation to any other matter.

But politicians have changed their ground. Mr. Mills propounds an altogether new legislative policy. Instead of favoring righteous laws for the whole community, when a majority of the community is ready to enact them, he would carry us back to the tribal system that prevailed before civilization was heard of, and he wants laws that are admittedly good, admittedly right, admittedly beneficial, put in operation, only over people who desire to submit to them.

Will he be consistent? Will he dare to logically carry out these absurdities? Will he repeal laws against theft, wher-ever stealing becomes unusually prevalent? Would he keep the volunteers at home, because the North-west rebels wanted to be independent? Is this country ever to be united, harmonious, and progressive; or are we threatened with a statesmanship that will be content to ultimately shiver it into smaller fragments than even those which were first brought together to form the Dominion of which we boast to-day.

We do not believe that even the men who propound such doctrines believe in them. The politicians of to-day are doing nothing more than was done eighteen years ago. The theory that local option must be regarded as permanent legislation, the repetition of the patriot cry about 'unpopularity,' is nothing more than dodging the question, evading an issue of unparalleled importance, and shirking the responsibility of grappling manfully with a problem that must one day be faced.

Oh! for less of politics, and more of that riotous statesmanship.

A LESSON.

HON. MR. MILLS does not believe that the country is ripe for prohibition. Hon. Mr. Mills believes that the time has come for Scott Act amendment. He believes that the law now on our statute books ought to have taken from it every defect, and that it ought to be put in as workable a form as possible. He believes, in short, in temperance legislation on the lines of perfecting local option. Straightway he rallies the Liberal party in favor of this policy. There is no hesitation about his position. He calls upon the Government to bring in the needed legislation, with the strength of the Government party's power behind it. He says in effect, Scott Act amendment is right, therefore the Government ought to make Scott Act amendment a part of its policy, and the Liberal party will make Scott Act amendment a part of its policy.

So far Mr. Mills is right, logical, considerate. What is right ought to be. And political parties that will not recognize this fact, are hindrances in the pathway of social progress. There are thousands of clear-headed intelligent men in the Dominion of Canada to-day who believe in immediate prohibition. If they do, then immediate prohibition ought to be their party policy. Mr. Mills' action in which he practically says, "I have the manhood to make a political question of that in which I believe, is a standing challenge to every Prohibitionist in the Dominion of Canada, to declare that the political party to which he belongs must have as its policy, PROHIBITION NOW. Will the Prohibitionists accept the challenge?"

PRESBYTERIAN ON PROHIBITION.

THE Presbyterian Church has for a long time been looked upon as thoroughly sound on the temperance question. Its deliverances on Prohibition both in the United States and Canada have been clear and unhesitating. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States some time ago declared

1 That the entire extinction of the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors as a beverage is the goal to which the General Assembly looks forward, and for the accomplishment of which, it expects the earnest, united, determined and persistent labors of all its ministers and people in connection with the religious and social agencies of the country.

2 That under God the removal of intemperance must depend upon the forming of a whole some public sentiment, the power of conscience, enlightened by the Word of God, and the strong arm of the civil law wisely enacted and faithfully enforced.

And the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Canada at its last annual session said

It is clear that the general opinion among more than ever convinced that the liquor traffic must be suppressed, and that throwing the cloak of respectability about the liquor traffic by the continuance of the license system, cannot be much longer tolerated. The conviction is deepening and intensifying throughout the Church and throughout the land, that the liquor traffic is an unspeakable and unmitigated evil, that it is a seductive and corrupting power, making humiliating inroads on the Church herself, and that fidelity to Christ and compassion for men forbid any compromise with a foe so terrible or any method of settling the controversy short of its utter extermination.

In view of these emphatic utterances, it is to be regretted that any effort should be made in any section of the Church to undermine this position and to extend to the unholy, degrading, soul-ruining liquor traffic, any particle of consolation in the belief that the great Presbyterian Church was not decidedly opposed to the iniquitous policy of licensing this infernal wrong.

It is generally recognized by all careful students of the subject, that the liquor traffic is probably the deadliest foe with which the Christian Church of to-day is confronted. The law of our Christian community permits and protects the infamous business. The Presbyterian Church would be false to its duty, did it fail to point out this grievous, national sin. The doctrine, that the Church should admonish a man when he does a private wrong, but let him alone when he commits the public crime of being a party to the liquor traffic, has too liquor flavoring an appearance, to commend itself to either the judgment or conscience of fair-minded and rightly-disposed people.

The situation unfortunately forces to the front this disagreeable view of the case by the fact, that the men who desire to muzzle their brethren who would speak in favor of legislation to suppress the liquor traffic, demand and practise freedom for themselves, in criticising and opposing such legislation. As long as men are ready to declare Prohibition 'expedient or unwise, they ought at least to consistently refrain from endeavor to prohibit their brethren, either as individuals or collectively, from expressing opinions on the question which may differ from those of the afore-said dogmatic anti Prohibitionists.

Let it be supposed that a proposition was made that our Dominion Parliament or Provincial Legislature should enact a law, protecting and permitting, say the Social Evil, would it not be the bounden duty of every minister in the land to denounce the iniquitous proposal? Would it not be equally the duty of these men in conferences and assemblies convened, to declare their belief that such policy was sinful and degrading? Should the fact, that the liquor traffic is wealthy, powerful and influential prevent its being dealt with in the same righteous fashion?

Our Government is supposed to be a Christian Government. Our civil policy is supposed to be modelled—to some extent at least—on the lines laid down in God's revealed law. Our statute books embody principles that were declared on Mount Sinai. If the customs of the community are contrary to these principles, and those customs have become embodied in corrupt and unrighteous legislation, is it not the duty of the Christian Church to demand reform?

Was the Head of the Church wrong when He denounced the authorities that laid grievous burdens on men's shoulders? Did He exceed His Divine commission when He knotted the cords, overthrew the tables, and drove the wrong-doers from the shelter of the Temple? Would not the Church of God be recreant to her trust, if she failed to denounce connivance at sin, on the part of the Governments as well as individuals, and failed to call upon these individuals to exercise their rights and privileges as citizens in behalf of that

which is good. Our hearts have been pained to find that the men who are endeavoring to abolish the Scott Act in counties where it has worked for the diminution of drunkenness, the lessening of crime, and the happiness of homes, and the building up of all that is good, The men who have tried to subvert this law by scandalous misrepresentation, open and disgraceful perjury, and the diabolical methods of the dynamiter, and the incendiary that these men have been actually putting forward as arguments in their favor, the utterances of a famous Toronto Presbyterian clergyman and have been scattering broadcast on fly-sheets these utterances as campaign literature, in their heartless attempt to array the licensed saloon once more against the homes that have been freed from its accursed influence.

Surely anyone who will make statements that can be so used, by the enemy of that which is pure and good, ought not to ask his brethren to refrain from doing all in their power to mitigate the liquor evil, on the plea that the Church has no right to meddle with political questions.

"PROHIBITION PARTY" AGAIN

WE objected to the action taken at Shaftesbury Hall, because we thought it wrong, for a committee, appointed to prepare a platform, to call a meeting to consider that committee's report, and exclude from the meeting even the men who appointed them, unless they would sign a document approving of the platform about to be submitted. We objected also to the making allegiance to political doctrines, other than prohibition a test of party fealty.

We have received another long letter from "Prohibition Party." It covers five pages of foolscap, which fact of itself, makes it almost impossible for us to give it room.

We regret however that the tone of it is not such as we wish to encourage in any discussion of the work we are carrying on; and it makes charges which are so unfounded, that we think our friend would hardly care (on cool consideration) to have them on record.

We regretted, and we stated our regret of, the action taken, because it divided our forces, and gave to the general public an unfair, unimaged idea of the real strength of independent Prohibition party sentiment. For years, almost alone, in the face of bitter partisan abuse and misrepresentation, the CANADA CITIZEN has maintained the doctrine in which it still believes, that Prohibition to be made a practical success, must be a political issue, and cannot be attained unless we have in power a government, pledged to Prohibition, holding office because of its Prohibition attitude, and backed by a dominant political Prohibition party. Holding these views, we regret to see the men who first advanced them, and have urged them for years, excluded, by the dictum of a committee, from what was professedly a meeting to promote action on the lines named.

Contrast with the action of the Toronto men, that of our progressive friends in Nova Scotia who published a largely signed call to an open meeting, and required open endorsement of independent party action as a qualification for co-operation.

Our correspondent is unkind and unfair in charging us with "a wanton attempt to split up the Temperance people." We are anxious and will sacrifice anything except principle to secure such united aggressive action of Prohibitionists as will force to the front, what is really the most important question of the day.

"Prohibition Party" misunderstands even more than our motives, when he imagines we can be influenced to take any position, which we do not believe to be right, by a threat that he and his friends "will likely cease to encourage the circulation of the CANADA CITIZEN." We believe, as already said, that on calmer consideration he will come to the conclusion that no good would result from the publication of his strongly worded letter.