

ment in this country is so strong, whether it is ill-advised or wisely directed, that it is impossible to resist it. I do think, however, that in voting for legislation on this very important question we should be careful about its exact wording and about its effects upon the rights of the provinces, whose rights we are here to protect. It was for this reason that last year I voted against the measure of prohibition which was before this House. I felt that it was an interference with provincial rights, and that, as I was here a representative of one of the provinces, it was my duty to stand for provincial rights. Therefore I felt justified in voting against that legislation.

This session a measure is introduced which leaves the matter entirely in the hands of the provinces. I would have been prepared to go further than this legislation goes, and provide that if a resolution asking for prohibition were adopted by a provincial legislature, it should be granted them. Perhaps it is better that the question should go to the people and that they should have a voice in deciding it.

Personally I believe that the prohibitionists are going too far. I believe that if some liberty were allowed to the workman to obtain light beers and wines of a reasonable strength, it would have been far better and wiser in the interest of prohibition itself. Mr. Gompers, the great labour leader in the United States, for whose opinion I have the very highest respect, argues very strongly that the extreme measures of prohibition that are being enacted are having a very bad effect upon the labouring people in the United States; that men who work in factories and other places where they are under great mental and physical strain require some stimulant, and that the extreme prohibitionists who are preventing this will at some future day have to pay for their extreme views on this question.

But in the meantime it is quite evident that the overwhelming majority of the people, I may say on this continent, are in favour of this prohibition. The members of this Senate are justified in deciding these questions solely upon their merits. What the prohibitionists may think, or what the liquor people may think, should not weigh with us at all. We are to consider the best interests of the country at large, and if we think that public opinion in this country is behind this measure, and that it is in the best interests of the country, then it is our duty to pass the measure as it stands. I quite agree that the Bill

Hon. Mr. GIRROIR.

has been brought down at a very late date in the session. I quite agree that it is undesirable to bring in Bills of such importance at this late hour, when so little time can be given for their discussion. But, as has been said, the question of prohibition has been before the country and before both Houses of Parliament for a long time now. The press has informed us as to the different measures that were to be presented to us for consideration, and, viewing the importance of the question and the desirability of having a proper test made of this legislation within a reasonable time and within as reasonable limits as possible, I think it is best for us to pass the measure as it stands. I wish to make this explanation in view of the fact that last year, when prohibition came before the Senate, I voted against it. I voted against it because I felt that it was an interference with provincial rights, which it was my duty to protect. This measure does not so interfere with provincial rights, and therefore I deem it to be my duty to support it.

Hon. GEORGE GORDON: Honourable gentlemen, I also have much sympathy with the views expressed by the honourable member for Middleton (Hon. W. B. Ross); but, representing the province of Ontario and noting the overwhelming feeling of the people of that province in favour of prohibition, if I am to give my support to that overwhelming majority there is only one thing for me to do. Only recently we have had a referendum in the province of Ontario, and, while I do not know what was the majority in favour of prohibition, I know that it was very large, and I think it would be extremely unwise for a member of this Chamber to oppose the will of the people. I shall vote in favour of this Bill. At the same time I feel that we are being imposed on, inasmuch as we have not had this measure before us until this morning, and have had little opportunity to know what it really contained. However, even with that handicap I feel that it is my duty to do what I can to give effect to the wishes of the majority of the people in the province of Ontario.

I travel about considerably, and notwithstanding what my views, or the views of others opposed to prohibition, may be, we must come to the conclusion that, by hook or by crook, the majority of the people in the province of Ontario are determined to have prohibition, and if we do anything to prevent them from attaining that end it seems to me it will not be to our advan-