

fer one and some the other, but I am most anxious, not only for the cause of temperance, but for the goodwill afterwards of the public to this Bill, that it shall not disturb those long-continued vested rights which are held very dear by the people who have them. I tell you that it is something after a country has through fifty years of struggle and difficulty risen to the height of this social legislation, of being able to prevent a license being granted unless two-thirds of the electors sign a certificate for it in any small area. In the county represented by my hon. friend from Yarmouth, I think there has not been a license granted for forty years. I think in those districts and in the smaller places which have the right under Provincial legislation to prohibit the sale of intoxicating liquors, it would be too bad if we were to take those rights from them and give them nothing in return. "Oh, well," but says one, "you have the Scott Act and can apply that." But there is this difficulty: the Scott Act only applies to counties or cities, and not to small municipalities. "We must have a majority," says one, "in order to carry out the law." This very provision then is to ensure a majority in favor of prohibition, otherwise it cannot be carried, and a majority has to be got in the district where the law has to be carried out, which is very different from having a majority over a county and in portions of which county where there is no majority in favor of the Act. All these difficulties arise with respect to local option and the Scott Act, and I beg hon. members to bear them in mind and be perfectly fair in considering the question. It is asked by some: Why are these laws not enforced? Why? Because no machinery is provided to enforce them. It is more than any Legislature can expect that any people will, even after years of long-continued conflict, themselves carry the law into execution. Take the Canada Temperance Act. If it is adopted in a county, there is no machinery by which it is to be put in force. I know hon. members will be fair enough to say that, before you judge the merits of an Act, and of the principles embodied in an Act, adequate machinery must be employed to enforce the law, and if it does not work well, then, and not till then, can you find fault with the Act, because before that you have not given it a fair trial. I wish to call attention to some of the parties who have asked for this. Not only is there this strong demand with respect to vested rights, but there is coming up a strong demand in favor of the principles contained in this measure. One thing is significant: I have never seen a measure brought before Parliament or legislation discussed in the country, treated by the press of different parties with so much unanimity of sentiment as this measure now before the House. There have been differences of opinion as to Provincial and Federal jurisdiction; but after those differences the ideas expressed have been almost unanimous—an acclaim of sentiment that this is a good Bill; and one of the features most favorably commented on, more favorably perhaps than any other, is that which strikes the popular heart, which appeals to the popular mind, and which we can never erase from it, and never should—that in the ultimate analysis the people of the district who have to support the taverns and bear the brunt of all the evils that may come from them, are the proper persons to say whether they will have them or will not have them. I want to say something in regard to the licensing power. I believe this Licensing Board is almost an ideal Licensing Board, and I do not think hon. gentlemen will find fault with the Board as appointed, as compared with any other licensing authority there is in this Dominion. But I want to say this as well: it is not perfect and is not balanced until you place over and against that somewhat irresponsible authority the will of the people as well; and when you place the veto power of the people in connection with that somewhat autocratic Board which gives the licenses, you will have a proper balance, and then you will have an ideal license-granting power. And I do hold and argue for this

Mr. FOSTER.

in order to make a balance in this respect. We have it stated on one side of the question that it may be hard for a man who has been engaged in business for a number of years to be by the will of the people prevented from any longer carrying it on. But will any hon. gentleman deny this proposition: that there never is a bar opened in any community and continued for one year, but some home had to feel the danger, anxiety and evil results that come inevitably from the opening of that bar. That is another side of the question. Financial injuries on the one side must be balanced and weighed against social injuries on the other side. We must look at the matter fairly, and if there comes a period when the majority of the people in a community feel that their morals will be better, the order and happiness of society will be increased, in the name of all that is democratic in the Government, all that is good in social life and in morals, do not let us put them outside of the power of being able to gain that for which they ask. Why is it that this traffic fears to face the people? Is it for fear of condemnation? If that be so, I say no legislation of ours will ever avail in the long run to keep alive a traffic which fears the public voice, and which does not care to have the public will expressly declared without any intervention or subterfuge in regard to it. We must recollect that there is an advancing tide in the opinions of this country, and of England and other countries as well. The Legislature which legislates on the liquor traffic to-day dare not retrograde on the legislation of yesterday, but by every impulse of public opinion, growing and increasing daily, it is inevitably forced to a higher tide-mark than it reached yesterday in its legislation. So it is not sufficient to say that this Bill goes just as far as the most stringent legislation we have. In order to meet that rising public opinion it must go a little further, and this Bill does go further, and I, as a member of this party and of this House, hail the day when this Bill will have passed through Parliament with its principal provisions undamaged. It shows to me not only that temperance sentiment is increasing in this country, but it shows also that the public mind of the Parliament of the country holds itself, as it always ought, somewhat sensitive to public opinion, and determined to go as far as that public opinion would carry. That it should go further, I think, no legislator and no wise man would assert; but that it should come up to that point, I think, every legislator and wise man would assert. I say, let us heed the representations of men who have much to do in connection with this matter. We, moving about in our technical and professional pursuits, having little, comparatively, to do with the work of society and the world, do not know all the evils going on in every grade of society as do those who are doing the work—for what? Not for their own interest, but in order to make public morals better, and to carry out the principles of the religion which they profess. I hold in my hand a petition which, I think, is of very great importance. It is a petition from a number of the clergy of the Province of Quebec, the Catholic clergy, the Church of England clergy, and the Protestants as well. It is signed by the Archbishop of Quebec, the Bishops of Three Rivers, Rimouski, Montreal, Sherbrooke, Ottawa, St. Hyacinthe, Chicoutimi, Cethère, and clergymen of other denominations; and that petition contains among others a provision embracing this request, that in any legislation here no retrograde step should be made as regards privileges enjoyed under Provincial legislation, and that in the Bill there should be a clause that every certificate necessary to obtain a license should be signed by one-half of the ratepayers, or that at least the signatures of at least one-half the ratepayers against the application should prevent the license being granted. I ask attention to that petition which has been laid before the House from another large body in this country, the Dominion Alliance, a body which has an organization in