

Ross that "the principle of the referendum had been adopted by Sir John Macdonald and Sir Mackenzie Bowell for the last ten or fifteen years." I am at a loss to understand what grounds he had to justify such a statement. I have no recollection or knowledge of Sir John Macdonald ever advocating the principle of a referendum in Canada.

Hon. G. W. Ross—I said voting.

Mr. Whitney—My honorable friend can put it any way he likes. (Mr. Whitney continues reading):

For myself I have in Parliament, and through the columns of the press, opposed the principle, not only of a referendum but also of a plebiscite as being schemes by which Ministers could avoid that responsibility, which under our system of Government it is their duty to assume. In this respect a referendum is much worse than a plebiscite, for the reason that in the latter case the Government would assume the responsibility of acting after the will of the people had been ascertained. In the former, that of a referendum, the responsibility is shifted from the shoulders of a Government to that of the people. I know of no greater violation of the principles of responsible government than the course which is being taken by the Ross Government on the question of prohibition. (Opposition cheers.)

Let us see what further we have in this wonderful argument of my honorable friend the other day. After these statements as to Sir John Macdonald and Sir Mackenzie Bowell, about which we will not hear much more in future, my honorable friend goes on to say: "If, therefore, we are making a departure we are making it upon high legal sanction, the sanction of the British House of Commons." Think of it! He makes the statement here boldly, "We are making this departure on high legal sanction, the sanction of the British House of Commons," and in his speech there is not a syllable to show that the British House of Commons expressed itself on this question, not one word or syllable. Then, he claims the sanction of the Australian Commonwealth, the sanction of the Canadian House of Commons, the sanction of the great leaders in constitutional law on both sides of the Atlantic; there we no more worlds, Mr. Speaker, for him to conquer. (Opposition cheers.) If there had been available one million planets, each having hundreds of thousands of leaders of thought on constitutional practices my honorable friend would have had them on his side too. (Opposition cheers.) He quotes Lord Salisbury, too, but he is very careful to make his quotation separate from the context. He does not give us any explanation of what Lord Salisbury was talking about. He talks about a leaflet which was issued by the British Conservative party in which the referendum was made a party plank. Very well, all I have to say about that is this: when the question of the adoption of the referendum as part of our constitution comes up for discussion we will all be able to take sides upon it, and if the honorable gentleman will send to me that upon which he bases his criticism of Lord Salisbury and the Conservative party of Great Britain perhaps I may be able to let in some light on that question. There was not one quotation given by my honorable friend declaring that in the opinion of any man of note or repute we should adopt the referendum in a case of this kind. The only quotations which were at all in point were as to the propriety of the idea of a referendum, not that it was an idea which could be admitted into our present constitutional system—and set it all out of gear—and provide whenever there was a timid or a weak, or a dying Government that that Government could decide they would not assume the responsibility of certain questions, but they would put the responsibility over on the shoulders of the people, and they would stay in their places. (Opposition cheers.) Honorable gentlemen will not forget in connection with the submission of questions to the people in the United States and in Switzerland—there is no case of its having been done in England—it is one thing to submit an abstract question to the people