

# The Canada Citizen

## AND TEMPERANCE HERALD

A Journal devoted to the advocacy of Prohibition, and the promotion of social progress and moral Reform.

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TORONTO FRIDAY, JANUARY 18th, 1884.

### THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

The legislative season has come. Municipal Councils, Legislatures and Parliament, are all getting ready for the usual annual task of making, unmaking and mending laws. Bills are being drafted, returns are being prepared, speeches are being studied, electors are pressing their views upon representatives, and representatives are trying to catch the drift of public sentiment, unprincipled men are working out schemes by which political exigencies may be made subservient to their private advantage, and men of principle are earnestly preparing themselves for determined efforts towards evolving promotion of the public good from the medley of conflicting opinions and interests. The liquor question will no doubt receive an unusual amount of attention. Public sentiment, antagonistic to the whole drink system, is rapidly assuming such dimensions that politicians dare not ignore it, and the liquor interest wields an influence of such importance that politicians are afraid to alienate it. Even to men who are merely ambitious and selfish the situation must be embarrassing and uncertain, and no doubt they would vastly prefer leaving the matter entirely alone; while many of those whose motives are purer, feel it necessary to move cautiously, fearing that precipitation might bring disaster to their cause. The latter are mainly strong party men, who believe their party the more favorable of the two to what is right, and hence they feel that their first duty is to make that party as strong as possible.

The great danger in this state of affairs is that there is not likely to be much real progress made at once. Dread of the whisky-power will prevent decisive action, respect for the temperance sentiment will prevent inaction, and a vast amount of the time and energy of legislators, and of temperance workers, will be expended in the discussion of feeble attempts at further restriction. Brain-power and golden opportunities will be thrown away, in pruning at the twigs and branches of the deadly Upas-tree, while the solid trunk and roots are growing larger and stronger, and the wretched victims groan in agony beneath the unprevented curse of its polluting influence. Worst of all, we will be in danger of

congratulating ourselves upon having accomplished some good, when we have really only added to the respectability and legal recognition of the dire plague. We want to say very emphatically that while limitation of the traffic, pure and simple, may do good, anything in legislation more than this is not progress towards prohibition; and the liquor business may well laugh in its sleeve to see us fortifying its legal embankments instead of boldly and persistently demanding and working for the only legislation that it really dreads. We have in Canada at present no distinctive political party. There are staunch Conservatives in parliament who believe in prohibition, opposite them sit strong Reformers, who believe in prohibition; they all tell us this is the right remedy for intemperance, and the only remedy; but the men will not break from the party, and each party finds a pretext for delay; and pretexts will be found, and delays will be made, till patriotism somewhere rises above a miserable, jealous partizanship. There is no other question before the country to-day that is half as important as this. What would be the result, if our temperance men in parliament to-day joined hands and said, "We unite for this, we want no indefinite resolutions, we want no to-take-effect-in-the-future legislation, we will stand by the party that will give us immediate, unconditional, total prohibition"? The Government would be compelled to yield to their demand at once, or else give way to a Government that would yield, for our men would hold the balance of power, and there is no such possibility in Canadian politics, as a union of existing parties to support the liquor traffic and oppose the temperance reform.

The situation, then, really is plain. A manly, independent stand is needed, and must be taken if anything is to be accomplished. Shall we find in our House of Commons the courage and principle that will take it? We have men there to whom we look anxiously, and who are eloquent advocates of our cause. Will they prove themselves equal to the emergency? We are not seeking to form a third political party, but some party must respond to the sorrowing wail that goes up from broken hearts and ruined homes, and the stern demand that justice makes for the protection of our homes against a cruel and merciless foe. If no existing party will respond, the temperance representatives of both parties must unitedly compel a response; but if this is not done, there are thousands of temperance electors who are ready to sink party prejudices when they conflict with great national interests, and who, if driven to do so, will not for a moment hesitate to break old party ties, and ignore old dividing lines in their holy zeal for "God and Home and Native Land."

### LEGAL SANCTION.

There is no doubt whatever that the sanction of law is one of the most powerful strongholds of the liquor traffic. The fact that law permits a certain traffic is to the minds of many people *prima facie* evidence that such traffic is something that either ought to be tolerated or cannot be prevented. Even with people who recognize the drink system as a terrible evil, the fact of its permission tends to prevent as much appreciation of its enormity as there would be if it were outlawed and disgraced. Besides, most people are inclined to leave the performance of disagreeable duties to some one else, as far as possible, and law having taken hold of the liquor traffic, it is left in the hands of the law. If any other evil of half the magnitude of this were to be suddenly put into operation without the approving seal of Legislative permission, destroying life, ruining morals, abetting crime, and generally cursing the whole community for the enrichment of some few grasping money makers, society would rise at once in overwhelming and practical indignation that would utterly destroy the whole institution and bring swift vengeance upon the heads of its promoters.

It is strange to see good men, with sympathetic hearts, sound-intellects and philanthropic motives, discussing plans for the man