

SPEECH

— OF THE —

HON. FRANK SMITH

DELIVERED IN THE SENATE OF CANADA, APRIL, 1885,

— ON A RESOLUTION RELATING TO —

Canada Temperance Act and Liquor License Act Amendment Bill.

Reported by HOLLAND BROS., Official Reporters of the Senate.

CANADA TEMPERANCE ACT, AND LIQUOR LICENSE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

THE DEBATE CONTINUED.

The order of the day having been called for—

Resuming the adjourned debate on the Hon. Mr. Dickey's motion in amendment to the Hon. Mr. Vidal's motion for the second reading (Bill 92), Canada Temperance Act 1878, and The Liquor License Act 1883, further Amendment Bill.

HON. MR. SMITH said: I do not intend to detain the House long on this subject, but I think it my duty, when this Bill is before the Senate, to make a few remarks on the temperance question. I am sure that the members of this House, as well as the people generally—at all events the majority of the people of Canada—are in favor of temperance. Combined with other virtues, it is an admirable thing for any public man to advocate; but temperance, combined with hardship and injustice, and total ruin to many of our fellow citizens wherever this Act is forced upon a municipality, is another matter. No matter how much ruin it may bring to many who have heretofore served their country faithfully, those temperance people do not hesitate to force their views, and enforce this Act at the sacrifice of vested rights, in many cases turning people from comfortable homes on to the road. I do not consider that temperance, advocated and enforced in that way, is a virtue. If the temper-

ance people would advocate their cause in a moderate way, I, as one who has served this country for upwards of 52 years, would be with them. Standing in my place here to-day I can say that I have never advocated intemperance. Although I have never been a teetotalter, I defy any man in this country to say that I have not always expressed myself in favor of temperance, and assisted that cause in every reasonable way; but I have never given my support to a wholesale measure to wipe out every man whose calling heretofore has been that of a dealer in liquor. The liquor dealer comes honestly by his business. His father before him, perhaps, kept a hotel in some part of the Dominion, where it was of good service to the travelling public before railroads were established in every part of the country. In those days, taverns were a benefit: in fact, they were a necessity to the travelling public, and nothing was more cheering to the weary traveller than a comfortable hotel, with its bright log fire, open at all hours for his accommodation. Those temperance gentlemen who advocate this Act have themselves benefitted by the old-fashioned taverns that are by degrees going out of existence as the country is opened up by railways. The hotels of to-day were, in many cases, built and established by the capital acquired through hotel-keeping by the fathers of the men who own them, yet in every part of the country wherever the Sobriety Act is carried, these comfortable hotels, which

did no harm, but supplied the traveller with necessary shelter and entertainment under license, are being closed, and their owners are being ruined. I say that those men are not to be despised or wiped out; I say that their interests ought to be protected; that they have a right to the protection of Parliament as British subjects, and if their business is to be destroyed they ought to have compensation. Many of them are turned out in the street; they have to lock their doors, and seek some other occupation, while their wives and families are virtually reduced to beggary. I say that this is a hardship to which they should not be exposed, and which would not be inflicted on them by any honest man, even to advance the temperance cause. Then, we will take another class of people whose interests are affected by this Act—the brewers. They have invested an immense amount of money in their business in this country. When the Scott Act is adopted in a municipality it totally ruins the brewer. The banker says to him, "your credit is gone. I cannot discount any more of your paper. Your property will not be worth 25 cents on the dollar, or 10 cents on the dollar in some cases, of our first estimate, and we cannot advance you any more money." Yet all this is done in the name of temperance by men who pretend to call themselves the model men, the honest men of our country, men who pretend to teach the community all the virtues as well as temperance. Those men are ruining more people than hon. gentlemen are aware of. I know brewers who have had already to mortgage the houses they live in to raise money to carry on their business, in consequence of the injury done to it by the adoption of the Scott Act. It not only ruins the brewer, but it ruins every man who is depending for a living on the working of the brewery. It ruins the cooper who makes the barrels; it injures the man who cuts the staves in the woods; it injures the teamster, the book-keeper and every man connected with the business; it drives them out of the country to seek for work, and beggars some of them before leaving the country. Is this a desirable state of things? Temperance is

a virtue that I admire. I would advocate temperance at the table; temperance in the pulpit; temperance in every school house, and in every social gathering; but the temperance that is built upon the downfall and ruin of a large class of respectable citizens is one that no honest man can admire.

Hon. Mr. FLINT—Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. SMITH—My hon. friend who in his zeal cries "hear, hear," knows whether he was ever able to take his glass or run a distillery, or able to carry on a legitimate liquor trade. There are many gentlemen here who call out "hear, hear"—I will not say in this House—but there are many gentlemen occupying high positions in this country who owe their positions to the fact that their fathers before them made their money out of legitimate hotel business or in the liquor traffic. Those gentlemen say that they despise hotels, that they despise the taverns, and despise the brewer, and every man whose calling is in any shape or form connected with the liquor traffic. I say that the liquor dealers are a class that are not to be despised. The old-fashioned country tavern is going out of existence as the circumstances of the country no longer require it; and the Scott Act only drives it out a little ahead of time. The children of those tavern keepers are drifting into other callings and occupations, but the Scott Act cuts off their source of living for the present, and leaves their property worthless, and drives them out of the country to seek a living. These are facts that no man can deny. What is the necessity for this zealous advocacy of temperance? What is the necessity for the hon. gentleman from Sarnia to bring down this Bill with its nine amendments? It seems to me that he and his friends have in the Scott Act a very large engine, and they cannot work it, and they come here to Parliament to ask our assistance to run the machine. I say if it is a bad and unworkable machine, let us do no more harm to the country with it than it has done, and let us all unite in some moderate scheme that will really benefit the country. I am one of

the first that will join in a scheme to promote temperance by abolishing strong liquors, and permitting the use of beer and light wines. Let us have a universal law that will apply all over the Dominion, so that the people in one county will not be prohibited from using liquors while their neighbors on the other side of the concession can have it when they want it, while I at a distance can send all I want into either of them. To temperance men, who pretend to be the model men of the country, no other subject is of equal interest to this; they are now on the way to glory in the temperance cause, and, as I said before, I am prepared to meet them in a moderate measure that will permit the sale and use of beer and light wines. We have heretofore advocated immigration, and we have been paying a great deal of money to bring people into the country. Will the Englishman, who has enjoyed his pot all his life, desire to come to a country where he cannot have his beer? Will the German come here who cannot have a glass of lager? Will the Scotchman want to come to our country, where he cannot get his toddy? and will a Frenchman come to a country where he cannot have a glass of light wine, such as he has been accustomed to all his life? I ask you, as sensible men, is this country going to be governed by a few extremists who are on the road to glory in this temperance cause? Are we going to do ourselves an injustice? Are we going to injure the farmer, the mechanic and the brewer, and drive those people out of the country? What will they say of us? That we are men without courage or backbone, and that we bow to everything the temperance men thrust upon us, and dare not say "no." This Temperance Act not only effects the vested rights of the different classes that I have mentioned, but it also affects the revenue of the country to a greater extent than perhaps many hon. gentlemen imagine. First of all, it affects the farmer, because the moment the breweries are closed the farmer must stop growing the barley; he will have no market for his grain, and he can do nothing with it but feed it to his hogs. He cannot

grow barley at a profit unless it is grown for the purposes of malt. The farmer not only suffers loss in this way, but he suffers because of the deficiency in the revenue through the abolition of the liquor traffic. A revenue must be raised on other articles that the farmer and the mechanic use, and the deficiency will have to be met mainly by them. Where is the great necessity for this temperance movement? Our people are temperate in their habits. Take for instance the great annual exhibition at Toronto, where during the two weeks that it is held thousands of people are congregated, and you will not find that five per cent of them are drunkards. Last year, during the exhibition, there was scarcely a case of drunkenness the whole two weeks, and very few were seen at all the worse of liquor. I heard a person remark that while many thousands had been carried on the tramways during that exhibition, not one drunken man was to be seen in the streets. It speaks well for the sobriety and morality of the people of this country, and shows that there is no necessity for this temperance crusade, and this demand for legislation. The country does not require it; it is doing harm to the people, and eventually we will be sorry for what we have done. Take the city of Toronto, with its 100,000 of a population, and I would like to ask if there is five per cent of that population drunkards? I say that there is not, and you may take any town in the province, or from one end of the Dominion to the other, and you will not find that proportion of the people drunkards. In Ontario, you may see the people coming in from the country to the yearly exhibitions comfortably clad, apparently well fed, driving good horses and handsome carriages, the personification of health, happiness and good health. Are these the people that this Bill, with its nine amendments, is being asked for? The hon. gentleman who has charge of this Bill ought to accept some compromise that would be in the true interests of temperance. I think he ought not to act stubbornly; that he should say to the Senate, "I will accept any reasonable amendment to my Bill that will allow beer and light

wines to be sold in a municipality where the Scott Act is in operation, and in municipalities where the Act is likely to be brought into operation." I do not like the idea of throwing the Bill out altogether, because I have great respect for the temperance people; but I certainly cannot vote for those nine amendments, and if they are insisted upon, I shall have to vote for the amendment of the hon. gentleman from Amherst. I could give many illustrations that would show the great hardships that result from the adoption of the Canada Temperance Act, but I do not think it is necessary to do so. It might do some gentlemen, who are not here, a great deal of harm if I exposed some of the facts that have come to my knowledge, and I do not wish to do so.

HON. MR. ODELL—Can you give us any idea of the loss to the revenue by the operation of the Scott Act?

HON. MR. SMITH—If the Temperance people obtain what they are working for, the loss of revenue in a short time will be very great—no doubt it will be equal to four or five millions of dollars.

HON. MR. DICKEY—It will be more than that.

HON. MR. SMITH—I am speaking moderately.

HON. MR. DEVER—It would be \$6,000,000.

HON. MR. SMITH—I want to keep within bounds, but I dare say it may reach six or seven millions of dollars before long, and this deficiency will have to be made up; it will have to be levied on the country, and the farmer and the grain producer will have to sustain the additional burden.