

"Whereas it is desirable that opportunity should be afforded to the electors of this province to express a formal opinion as to whether or not the importation, manufacture or sale into or within this province of intoxicating liquors as a beverage should be immediately prohibited; and whereas such opinion can be most conveniently ascertained by ballot hereinafter mentioned; therefore her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the legislative assembly of the province of Ontario, enacts as follows:—

The house had received 199 petitions from Methodist churches, 77 from Presbyterian churches and a great many from other churches, besides petitions from a great many of the best men and women in the country, and it was thought that some attention should be paid to the prayer of these petitions, and that the house would only do itself justice in recognizing the importance of that prayer and the propriety of granting it. The object of the bill as set forth in the preamble was to ascertain formally the views of the people of Ontario in respect to the question of the prohibition of the importation, manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors as a beverage. It was proposed that the poll should be taken on the first Monday of January, 1894, at the time that the municipal elections are held, and in all portions of the province where there is a municipal organization. It was not proposed to take a poll in unorganized districts. That would necessitate the appointment of returning officers and the number of deputies and the printing of ballots at considerable expense. Besides, the population in these districts was so sparse that when an expression of opinion was got from the municipalities of Ontario it would add very little to its significance. It was proposed to spare the expense of taking a poll in these northern districts, but another reason was that it was desirable that the poll should be simultaneous. The rule in parliamentary elections in these districts is that the vote should be taken between the first of May and the first of November, while the municipal elections were generally held on the first Monday of January. The poll would be postponed if they followed the precedent of parliamentary elections, and accordingly, rather than take this course, considering that the expression of opinion would be relatively small, it was considered unnecessary for the object sought that a ballot should be taken in these districts. It was provided that the persons qualified to vote should be of two classes—first, those who were qualified to vote in elections to the legislative assembly of this province, and second, unmarried women and widows whose names are entered on the voters' lists as qualified to vote at municipal elections. It was desirable that this expression of opinion should be full. If they limited the expression of opinion to those qualified to vote at municipal elections only, the vote would be much smaller than if it were open to voters in provincial elections. The municipal franchise was limited, while the franchise for the legislative assembly was manhood franchise. They believed that every man who was qualified to vote for members of the house was interested, either directly or indirectly, in the petitions submitted to the house, and they believed that as he was qualified to vote for a member of the house he was eminently qualified to express an opinion on this question. As many petitions had come in from the women of this country, and so far as the women of the country had not the same privilege of franchise as the men, they proposed to go as far as the law recognized their right to the franchise and give them an opportunity of expressing their opinion. It would serve the purpose of making the expression of opinion more general; it would give the moral opinion of the country as expressed by the women in so far as they had the right to express it, and would enable the house more completely to comprehend the extent of the demand for prohibition.

TO AVOID CONFUSION.

The ballot being taken at the time of the municipal elections it was necessary to guard against confusion in the count or the designation of the ballot. It was provided that for this vote the ballot papers to be used by men should be printed on yellow colored paper. The elector who went into the booth to vote in the municipal election would be presented with an ordinary municipal ballot. If a man he would be presented with a yellow colored paper ballot on which to register his vote if he desired to do so. The women would be given a blue ballot. In counting the ballots there need be no confusion. The ballots would all be placed in the same box,

but the different colors would avoid the confusion in marking and counting that would result were the ballots all the same. This practice had been followed in the city of Toronto in taking a ballot on questions not necessarily of a municipal character. In order that the parties

interested in the question, and the vote yea or nay on it may be represented at the ballot box, to prevent improper voting, and see that persons presenting themselves to vote were duly qualified, the clerk of the municipality was authorized to appoint agents as the candidates at an ordinary election were authorized to appoint agents on their behalf. The proposal, as shown in section 11, was:—
"The clerk of the municipality shall attend at his office on the second Monday in December, 1893, at the hour of 12 o'clock noon, for the appointment of persons to attend at the various polling places and at the final summing up of the votes by the clerk on behalf of the persons advocating the affirmative and negative of said question respectively."

Section 12 provided the mode of appointment:—

"The clerk shall appoint from among the applicants for such appointment, or on behalf of applicants for each municipality, ward or polling subdivision in the said district, in writing signed by them, two persons who may be members of some recognized temperance organization, on behalf of the persons interested in and desirous of obtaining the affirmative answer to the said question, and a like number of agents on behalf of the persons interested in and desirous of obtaining a negative answer of the said question, to attend at each polling place and at the summing up of the votes by the clerk."

Care was also taken that in the summing up of the votes, and the returning of these votes to the clerk of the legislative assembly, a due discrimination was made between the different classes of voters. The retiring officer should in the first place send to the clerk of the municipality a statement showing the total number of voters on the list for the legislative assembly, a statement of the total number of women entitled to vote, a statement of the total number of men who had voted, and a statement of the total number of women who had voted, so that when the returns reached the clerk of the legislative assembly everybody could see the relative strength of the vote polled. The ordinary pollable vote for the legislative assembly was about half a million. If two or three hundred thousand people voted for the affirmative, then it would be easy to make a comparison of the relative strength of the vote. In the same way there would be submitted the number of widows and spinsters who were qualified to vote, and the number who had voted, so that the strength of their vote could be seen at a glance. The expenses connected with the ballot would be borne by the municipal councils concerned.

Mr. Meredith—Hear, hear.

Mr. Ross, continuing, said that the form of the ballot was given in the bill, there being a separate ballot for men and a separate ballot for women, as he had already explained. Then directions were given to the voters, following very closely the directions given in the case of municipal elections, with the addition that electors voting "yes" to the question should be considered as expressing an opinion in favor of prohibition to the extent to which the legislature of this province or the parliament of Canada has jurisdiction, as may be determined by the court of final resort. It was not desirable that any elector should say "no" to the question because of the doubt as to the jurisdiction. If he voted "yes" and if jurisdiction was found in the legislative assembly, that was a mandate to the assembly or a call upon it to support prohibition legislation. If per contra he should answer "yes," and the jurisdiction was found to be in the Dominion parliament, this would mean, "Go to the Dominion parliament, and urge the Dominion parliament to pass an act for the prohibition of the manufacture, importation and sale of intoxicating liquors." The suggestion had been made in some quarters that the vote did not mean what it was intended it should mean. It meant prohibition wherever the power to give prohibition was. It did not mean prohibition in the future, for the question read:—

"Are you in favor of the immediate prohibition by law of the importation, manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors as a beverage?"

It would be a command or a request to those authorized to grant prohibition to do so without delay.