

BIG DEPUTATION CALLS ON PREMIER.

Will Not Repeal Three-fifths Clause.

GOVERNMENT'S POSITION.

Claim That Handicap Has No Justification

Legislative Chamber Filled With Mem-
bers of the Ontario Alliance—Har-
mony of Purpose Apparent—Hon.
Mr. Hanna Claims Net Gain for
Temperance Cause

The repeal of the three-fifths clause of the local option by-law was the desire that animated one of the most remarkable delegations which ever took possession of the corridors and hallways of the Provincial Parliament buildings. Too numerous to find possible access to the Premier's reception room, the doors of the Legislative chamber were thrown open for the delegates to the Ontario Alliance in response to his order, and into the members' seats and galleries they poured themselves until a sea of faces seemed to look down upon the richly-carpeted floor, waiting with expectancy the opening of the ceremonies. On almost every delegate was in evidence the white badge and anti-bar inscription. There was scarcely a point in the Province unrepresented, and there was evident a unity of purpose and harmony of action that, unhappily, has not always marked gatherings of a similar character. The Premier, Hon. J. P. Whitney, and the Provincial Secretary, Hon. Mr. Hanna, occupied seats to the right of the Speaker's dais. They anticipated something of an ordeal and appreciated the fact that they were almost alone in the viewpoint that they represented in that great gathering. The countenances of both were set and impassive, Hon. Mr. Hanna looking almost Napoleonic. The Premier in the course of his address stated that it was not the Government's intention to repeal the three-fifths clause. He would not say that the majority required would be more or less, and any change that might be made in future would depend upon the experience gained in the working out of the measure.

Harmonious Meetings.

Mr. Marter stated that the meetings of the convention had been most harmonious, and the discussions had been moderate. They had tried to look upon this question sanely, and gave the officials of the Government credit for having done their work well. They came to see if they could not get the Government to go a step further and do some things which they thought were in the interests of the people of the Province.

Voice From Ingersoll.

Mr. Joseph Gibson of Ingersoll, with a ready humor, stated that the world moved rapidly, and perhaps this year the Government had received some information to warrant them in changing their views in regard to the liquor traf-

fic. He traced the development of the license act, showing that by means of legislation the number of licenses had been reduced by half in a very short while. When the Conservative Government came into power Mr. Hanna had said he was going "to make them keep hotel," and for this the Minister deserved credit. Mr. Gibson pointed out that Mr. Hanna had said there "was no property in a license at the end of the year"; therefore the argument of Premier Whitney in a comparison with the three-fifths majority required in Chicago for the taking over of the street railway by the municipality was not sound, because no vested right was at stake regarding the license, according to Hon. Mr. Hanna.

Wanted a Fighting Chance.

Mr. Gibson stated that the authorities Hon. Mr. Hanna had for his three-fifths clause were not in touch with the conditions. Rev. Dr. Potts had been quoted in support of the clause, said Mr. Gibson, but recently Rev. Dr. Potts had characterized the clause as an outrage. Quoting from The Presbyterian, Mr. Gibson advised the Government "to keep the law in harmony with an enlightened public opinion. The Scott act had been legally worried to death, but to-day they were on constitutional ground. "For God's sake, for our homes' sake and for our country's sake protect us and give us a fighting chance," concluded Mr. Gibson, amid a burst of oratory.

Was an Incongruity.

Rev. R. J. McAlpine, M.A., pastor of Knox Church, Owen Sound, expressed the delight of the temperance people at the enforcement of law which the present Government had accorded. The public sentiment as expressed a few years ago against the liquor traffic and the three-fifths majority was a strange incongruity, Mr. McAlpine claimed.

Wanted Abolition of Clause.

Mrs. McKee of Barrie, representing the W.C.T.U., said the motherhood of the land in their efforts against the liquor traffic were severely handicapped by the three-fifths clause.

"We want you to give us something more moderate or abolish it altogether," said Mrs. McKee. Loud cries of "Abolish it" were heard from every part of the chamber, showing the temper of the gathering.

Doubt regarding the value of the three-fifths clause was expressed by Rev. Mr. Hughson of Windsor.

The very success of the present Government had shown that a three-fifths majority was not necessary, said Rev. Dr. Chown. In fighting the barroom the temperance people had to fight the other part of the hotel business, which was perfectly respectable. He thought the Government should be asked to separate the two. Mr. George A. Montgomery of Collingwood also spoke.

Premier Whitney's Reply.

Prolonged applause greeted the Premier as he rose to reply. "The members of the Government of this Province are glad," he said, "to meet at any time with delegations of the people, whose trustees we are, with reference to the consideration of any public question, and I think the position of the Government can be easily understood by men of ordinary common sense." Continuing, the Premier said that the visit of the delegation was doubly welcome because this Government considered itself in entire accord with the object which they had in view. "We will not be considered second in the desire to realize the objects you do, and I venture to say that when the Government goes out of power thirty years from now—though we did not set the precedent—there is no act of ours carried out during the continuance of office which will give us such satisfaction as the recollection that we did something to lessen the effects of the drink traffic." (Applause.)

The Premier pointed out that no two people were constituted alike; that without healthy difference of opinion life would be a stagnant pool. He did not propose to argue the question of the three-fifths clause, but would say to Mr. Gibson that he was mistaken entirely in his allusion to the vote on the

street car question in Chicago. His use of that reference was in reply to an assertion respecting the consideration of local option by-laws as money by-laws, and he cited the case of Chicago. It did not affect this question at all.

A Misapprehension.

"There seems to be a misapprehension," said the Premier. "Nobody pretends that the three-fifths requirement was necessary to the enforcement of the law. What we contended was that the three-fifths vote was necessary to the permanency of public sentiment; that it shows the overwhelming sentiment of a community, and that for a repeal they would have a very heavy task before them to get a three-fifths vote.

"It was only yesterday that I was told that we had made the law that the vote of two barroom bums was equal to that of three Christian men. Why draw the line under the law? I was brought up in the belief that the immortal souls of two barroom bums were just as valuable as those of an equal number of Christian men. The men who make such statements as that forget that we make the vote of two opponents equal to three of those who favor a repeal."

A voice—We don't want it.

The Premier—It don't make any difference, you have it. There has got to be Christian charity in this matter. I am convinced as I am standing here that the cause you desire has been kept back for years by that very spirit of intolerance and uncharitableness which was expressed yesterday. I believe that if there was one grand accord by the people of this Province with reference to the attaining of this grand object, I honestly believe that the rural districts of this Province would be under local option. The tendency is more and more to lessen the evils of the drink traffic. Why not steer our boat along that stream instead of drifting slowly behind on a raft?

A voice—We want the dam removed. (Cheers and laughter.)

Premier Quotes Precedents.

The Premier then went on to state that in Queensland a two-thirds vote was required to carry local option measures. In West Australia a majority of those on the list was required. In New Zealand and Manitoba a three-fifths vote was required. Besides that there was the legislation that had been proposed in England. Sir William Harcourt brought up the claims of local option there, and a three-fifths vote was required. Sir Wilfred Lawson for forty years brought up at almost every session some temperance legislation, and he recognized the fairness of the same principle. The bills of the member for P. d'lington, Westminster and Manchester were also cited in support of the Government measure.

Continuing, the Premier asked if it was not a fact that the air was at this moment full of the local option question. There had been many contests, and the atmosphere of the campaign was prevalent. Mr. Whitney then spoke of the election in West Middlesex, drawing the deductions that have already been published to the effect that, eliminating the Strathroy vote, the Government's local option and school laws had been approved by the rural vote of the constituency.

Will Watch for Results.

"The duty of the Government," continued the Premier, "will be to watch how this law works itself out, and if the Government is convinced that an increased majority is necessary more than a three-fifths requirement will be enacted. But if they should find that less will do they will have to consider that. We are not bound to say that the majority will be always three-fifths or four-fifths, or an even majority, but we don't propose to make any hasty change in the present legislation. Suppose we are wrong in that; is it not our duty and yours to make the best of it and get the best results from what we have? We expect detraction. We have no complaint to make. We have tried to do our duty. Is it not better to help us in all that is good, in order that time may give practical agreement with relation to this great subject?"

The Premier concluded by asserting