

BEER IS TO BE NO STRONGER

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penters and Joiners of America; Fred. Saul, Toronto Muniton Workers; H. Halford of Hamilton, Chairman of the Ontario Executive of the Trades and Labor Congress; H. G. Fester, President of the Cigarmakers' Union, Hamilton; William Lodge, of Ottawa, Secretary of the Allied Trades Council; J. H. Gunn, Toronto Electrical Workers' Union; Joseph Dean of the London Trades Council; W. J. Driscoll, President of the Kingston Trades and Labor Council; F. Greenlaw, President of the St. Catharines Trades and Labor Council; Robert Potts, Secretary Windsor and Walkerville Trades and Labor Council, and George Slinchombe, President of the Brantford Trades and Labor Council.

Plea of Labor Men.

Mr. Thomas Moore said the workmen wanted a decent beverage, declaring the beer sold in Ontario combined with the Ontario Temperance Act had cultivated hundreds of whiskey-drinkers who never took whiskey before. Prohibition also encouraged the use of cocaine, ginger essence and wood alcohol. He said the deputation was asking for beer of 2½ per cent. alcohol instead of 2½ per cent. proof spirits.

Mr. Fred. Saul of the Toronto Muniton Workers said the workmen were disgusted by attacks on their sobriety which had been made by temperance fanatics. The workmen viewed with regret illicit drinking which was due to prohibition, he said, adding that the Temperance Act was driving former beer-drinkers to whiskey.

Mr. H. G. Fester, who said he represented 15,000 workers in Hamilton, complained that the beer now on the market in Ontario was flat. He pointed out that beer of better quality would not involve the use of any more grain than poor beer.

The other speakers representing Labor unions took much the same line.

No Change Till After War.

The Prime Minister, in reply, paid tribute to the part Labor has played in the war, both in the workshop and on the battlefield. He again denounced the recent utterances of Captain Bailey, which had been referred to by one of the deputation, and added that many things were said by temperance workers with which he did not agree, "but we must not judge a cause by the intemperate remarks made by some adherents of that cause; we must judge it on its merits," he said. A remark had been made with reference to the fact that the views of the people of Ontario had not been ascertained on the subject of prohibition before the Ontario Temperance Act was passed by the Legislature. Sir William said it was the announced policy of the Government to submit the question to the people, but those opposed to the measure urged that the vote should not be taken in war time when conditions in the Province were not normal, and when many of the electors were away on active service. On that account the taking of the vote had been postponed until such time as the soldiers were back from overseas, when the "free and sovereign voice of the people will be heard." (Cheers and hoots.)

Supported by Public Opinion.

If public sentiment was in favor of the act it should remain on the statute books. With reference to the question of beer of 2 1-2 per cent. alcohol instead of 2 1-2 per cent. proof spirits, that was not a new question. The Government acted after the best expert advice possible had been obtained, and came to the conclusion that 2 1-2 per cent. proof spirits was the best. Not only was that the law in Ontario, but it was the law in practically every Pro-

vince in the Dominion. It was difficult to gauge public opinion, but if he could judge it public opinion was behind the Ontario Temperance Act as never before. Supporters of his for a lifetime who condemned the act when it was first introduced came to him now and said it was right. He could quote them a large number of letters from men in their own organizations approving of the act. (Cries of "Jimmy" Simpson.) They had presented their views in a fair manner, but other people in Ontario were also entitled to their views. Only the other day the Labor men of British Columbia had opposed similar action to that they were now asking him to take. There was a meeting in Ottawa a few days ago in which the President of the Privy Council had announced the judgment of the Dominion Government was to the effect that liquor or beverages containing more than 2 1-2 per cent. proof spirits should be regarded as intoxicating.

Refusal Was Definite.

"Now, what is the position at the present time?" asked the Prime Minister. "The Dominion Government has said that after the first of April no intoxicating liquor may be imported into the Province, and that after a date to be fixed none will be permitted to be manufactured, and they have stated that the standard of intoxication will be 2½ per cent. proof spirits. Only the other day in Massey Hall Mr. Calder told us they were going to stand by that policy. Then it seems to me that any suggestion such as you make could serve no useful purpose—asking as to permit the sale of a beverage which is prohibited from being imported and prohibited from being manufactured in the country. But let me make myself clear. I am not going to shelter behind any other Government or throw responsibility on any other Government. I am not giving you any unconsidered answer. This has been under consideration for weeks and months. The proposition has been put forward by your organizations time and again, and I must tell you candidly that I do not see my way clear to permit any change in the statute book."

Crowd Created Disorder.

This statement was greeted by a howl of disapproval and the crowd commenced to surge toward the spot where the Prime Minister stood. Leaders of the Labor men and the police force, under Inspector "Bob" Geddes, tried in vain to restore order. Sir William decided it was useless to continue. He had intended going on to enumerate the beneficial results to the Province since the introduction of prohibition, but the crowd became so threatening and the noise so great that he ended his speech abruptly and retired with his Ministers into the Parliament Buildings, the police making a lane through which the members of the Government passed in safety. Whether the crowd would have resorted to violence it is difficult to tell, but certainly several hundred got quite out of hand. After howling for five or ten minutes outside the Parliament Buildings the crowd dispersed without any damage being done.

Free Tickets From Brantford.

Brantford, March 3.—(Special.)—Seventy-five return tickets to Toronto were distributed locally for the use of any workmen who desired to take part in the trip to wait on Premier Hearst to agitate for the increasing of the alcoholic strength of beer. It is alleged that local liquor interests were behind the distribution. At its last meeting the Trades and Labor Council voted in favor of such a deputation, only one member protesting, but the Typographical Union since took a decided stand against any such appeal on behalf of its members. The Royal Templars of Temperance here sent a resolution to Premier Hearst protesting against any such action.