

connected with the enactment of the Ontario Temperance Act, and particularly those facts relating to the submission of the questions to the electors of the Province.

This Government and Legislature had no mandate from the people to pass a prohibitory law in 1916.

#### O. T. A. a War Measure.

The Ontario Temperance Act was introduced into this House by the Government and passed by the House as a war measure.

That was the justification for the passage of the bill without a vote of the people.

Subsequent events have amply proved that the Government and the House acted properly in taking the course we did.

In the time of war, when the fate of a nation is at stake, a Government is justified in taking any and every course that in its judgment will preserve the financial and industrial strength of the country and increase its fighting force.

A Government that would not take that course in a world's crisis, like the one through which we have passed, when civilization was threatened, would stand condemned, and rightly so, in the minds of all patriotic citizens everywhere.

The Dominion Government had no mandate from the people to prohibit us eating white bread or bacon; to tell us we could only take one lump of sugar in our tea; to say we must work or go to jail, and the many other things it did under the War Measures Act.

#### Greatest Measure of War.

But had that Government failed to enact these stringent measures, curtailing on every hand as they did the liberty of the subject, calculated to strengthen the fighting force of the nation in the world's hour of need, it would have stood condemned by public opinion, not only in Canada, but throughout the Empire and the world at large. And I say without hesitation I do not know any one act or measure in this Province that increased the efficiency of our people, conserved our financial strength, aided thrift, and generally contributed to our fighting power to a greater extent than the Ontario Temperance Act.

If the House will permit me, I will refer to the exact words used by myself in the debate on the second reading of the bill:

The bill before the House would not now be before the House, at any rate in its present shape, but for the war. The war has not only changed, at least for the time being, the sentiments of the people on this question, but it has imposed obligations and emphasized the duty of economy and efficiency that did not exist before. My contention is that if the bill would bring no benefit to the Province from a moral standpoint, if the results that follow its enactment would add nothing to the health and happiness of our people, as a war measure, for the purpose of aiding economy, thrift and efficiency, it is justified—it is made possible—yea, it is demanded by public opinion. I want to state frankly and clearly to the House and to the country that I would not think of urging the passage of this bill through the House without a vote of the people but for the war and the obligations imposed thereby.

And again, I said on that occasion:

#### "Give Prohibition a Trial."

The question of prohibition and all the evil effects of alcohol has been a burning one for many years in this country. We have tried the license system; we have tried restriction; and every person agrees to-day that the situation is not entirely satisfactory, having regard to the conditions that now exist. Therefore, what I say to the prohibitionist and to the anti-prohibitionist, to the man who believes in this legislation and to the man who is dissatisfied with it, is this: We have tried the license system for many years in this country, let us try prohibition. Let us abstain from intoxicating liquors for

time), and above all, when our boys have come back from the front covered with glory and honor and laurels won on the bloody battlefields of France, Flanders and Germany in maintaining for us the priceless gem of liberty and freedom, if they feel that it is in the best interest of this Province to repeal this legislation and return to the present system or some other license system, then we all must and will bow to the judgment and wish of the people in this great democratic country. The people then will be enabled to pass a more intelligent verdict upon this question than they could at any other time.

#### Must Take Vote.

It was distinctly understood when the bill was passed that as soon as the war was over and the necessity for the act as a war measure at an end the question would be submitted to the people for their decision. Let us again refer to what I said on this point on the second reading of the bill:

The Government, therefore, has decided, as provided by the bill, to bring the act into force without a direct vote of the people, but after a period of about three years, when the people have had an opportunity of judging as to the efficacy or failure of the act as a temperance measure—when we hope that the war will be over and our soldiers back from the front and conditions generally have assumed their normal character, then the people of the Province will have an opportunity, by their free vote, to decide this question for themselves. If the war should, unfortunately, not be over by the time named, the vote will be deferred for a reasonable time after the war.

Three years have elapsed, and while the terms of peace have not yet been signed, actual fighting has ceased and hostilities cannot be renewed, at all events on a large scale again, and our soldiers are rapidly returning home. It is not possible yet to say when our soldiers will be back, but we hope and expect within a very few months. It is, in my opinion, important that this question should be settled as soon as possible, and the Government intends to bring on a vote as soon as that can be properly done. It is not possible to more than guess now what the exact date of the voting will be, but it would seem probable that the vote might be taken in September or October, in November at latest.

#### Form of Submission.

Then, as to the form of submission, I desire to refer again to what I said on the passing of the bill:

I am of the opinion, and strongly of the opinion, that this question should be eventually decided by the direct vote of the electors of the Province by means of a referendum. In a democratic country like this, public opinion is the last supreme arbitrament on every question, and it seems to me a question of this kind, so closely affecting the people, is particularly one in which public opinion should have an opportunity of expressing itself in the ballot box as freely and as untrammelled as possible.

The act sets out a form of question to be submitted. Little thought was given at the time the act was framed to the form of question. It was, I think, copied into the act from the Macdonald Act, Manitoba, which was the foundation of our act. At that time the bar and public drinking generally was the question uppermost in our minds and in the minds of the public. Now, practically no one suggests a return to old conditions. The distillers, in a recent manifesto, say that they themselves are opposed to it. Many hotelkeepers say they are opposed to it. The brewers say they are opposed to it. Honorable gentlemen in this House and out of this House, who are opposed to the present act, say they are equally opposed to the old order. The Labor men who ask for stronger beer say they don't want the sale of hard liquor. The