

Governments have done in times passed, submit the questions to this House and have them incorporated in the act of the Legislature. The Legislature should use its mandate and not leave this matter to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. We are here as the elected representatives of the people. They look to us to act on their behalf, to do what in our best judgment is best for them, and they do not for one moment send 111 men here to hand over all their judgment and wisdom and authority to a Cabinet of seven or eight men."

**This Act Is a "Repeater."**

"This act," he proceeded, "is a repeater. The Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council may from time to time, it says, take these votes. It can be brought out at any time, and the Legislature has nothing to say about the matter.

"When you analyze the powers conferred in this bill, it is wonderful the ingenuity that a Cabinet must have who ask us to pass this bill. I have made a thorough analysis of Subsection 2, and I find there are 32 alternatives within the four corners of this subsection—32 alleys up which the Government may go.

"What I submit is that those who wish to have a vote want something more than this act. Those who want a vote want to know the date and what the vote is about when this is going through the Legislature. Those who do not want a vote also want to know when the date is and what the vote is about."

Mr. Sinclair said he thought it was a fair interpretation of public understanding to say that everyone expected a vote under conditions similar to those obtaining at the last vote. But he noted that Premier Ferguson had stated it was to be a plebiscite. He submitted that the Premier was not now acting up to the usually high standard he set for himself.

**Complains of Wide Powers.**

"What I complain about is the wide powers which this act gives the Government," he said, "and it departs entirely from the principle laid down in this Legislature in regard to these questions in its previous legislation. It leaves the whole thing open. There is nothing settled or final about it, and I do submit that a Government with 47 of a majority should be strong enough and brave enough to say to this House what it is going to do and why it is going to do it and when it is going to do it.

"There is no reason why members of this House should be asked to support a bill of this kind, brought down on this important question, although the Government, as I have said, has thought it desirable to incorporate a clause so as to give it a good appearance about the retention by the members of their rights.

**"Steam Roller," Says Raney.**

Continuing the O. T. A. debate, former Attorney-General Raney said that no other matter on the order paper could rival in importance the one now up for discussion. A bill of such a character should have incorporated in it some means of expression of public opinion; instead, it laid down no form of questions and the Government was endeavoring to "have the steam roller put over the House" on the bill when, even as recently as two hours before, one very intelligent member had confessed to him the fact that he did not know the difference between a plebiscite and a referendum. The people of the Province would know no more after the bill came before the House than they did before its contents were known.

Premier Ferguson interrupted with the statement that notice of the legislation, which was "purely enabling," had been on the order paper for two weeks. There was not a municipality in the country which had not the power to submit any question it liked to its electors. The present bill was very similar to the one brought down in the Saskatchewan Legislature this week, except that the Ontario Government was taking upon itself the full responsibility of the administration of the measure.

**"Where Is the Question?"**

"But," protested Mr. Raney, "the Saskatchewan bill fixed the questions to be asked. Where is the question in this bill?"

"It's a very questionable bill all through," commented Sam Clarke, Northumberland, from the Liberal benches.

Mr. Raney—These questions, then, are to be framed by the Prime Minister?

Mr. Ferguson—Yes. We are taking the responsibility.

Mr. Raney—Steam-roller responsibility, with elections four years distant.

Mr. Raney then tried to draw out Mr. Ferguson on the intent of the Government, but Mr. Ferguson countered with the statement that he could not disclose Cabinet Council secrets.

"Why doesn't he take the House into his confidence?" asked Mr. Raney. A storm of hand-clapping and emphatic statements, "He did!" came as his reply from the Government side of the House. Later, when Mr. Raney mentioned the word "conviction," Mr. Ferguson gibed: "You can't get that word 'conviction' out of your head," while Mr. Raney retorted with the

suggestion that the Premier had no convictions on the O.T.A. issue.

**"When Do We Settle Down?"**

"In a period of five years we have had five Province-wide referenda besides many scores of municipal referenda," Mr. Raney declared in opening. "When do we come to the end of referenda? When do we settle down? On this precise law as we have it today we have had two referenda since the war. We had three years' experience of the law, and then the referendum of 1919. Then two more years, and after that, the referendum of 1921. And now we are to have another referendum.

"Why a third referendum in a period of five years? Because I assume that if this bill is passed there will be a referendum by next autumn. If not, why this bill at this session of the Legislature? Has the law failed to meet the test prescribed by Sir William Hearst? Is there an honorable member of this House who in his heart does not know that it has met that test?"

"As Sir William Hearst predicted, there are, of course, violations of this law, but on the whole it is being observed and is doing incalculable good. So far as open sale is concerned, the law is not difficult to enforce. So far as clandestine sale is concerned, enforcement is difficult in just the same sense that enforcement of the law against bank robbers and pickpockets is difficult."

**May Be More Difficult Now.**

Perhaps, he suggested, his successor's difficulties were greater than his had been, because a considerable number of Conservative members, including some members of the Government, were not in sympathy with the act. That situation, he declared, had been further coupled with the vicious patronage system, which the Government had reintroduced in the appointment of License inspectors in some parts of the Province who were not only unsuited to the work, but who were known to be unsympathetic to the law.

Figures which he quoted he held as proof that the O.T.A. had not failed. Liquor manufacture and consumption had decreased enormously. "Is it any wonder," he asked, "that the breweries are clamoring for a change?"

**Decrease in Convictions.**

Quips from the Conservative benches became frequent as Mr. Raney quoted figures showing the decrease in convictions for drunkenness in various cities of the Province. In Belleville in 1914 there were 63 jail sentences for drunkenness. "Is that all?" came from the Liberal benches. "They didn't get them all." Again, when the speaker quoted figures for Toronto, showing a decrease of from 3,073 to 2,011 between 1914 and 1922, Col. Currie interpolated that the dangers of bootleg whiskey today constituted a greater penalty.

Results of investigations undertaken among various sections of the community were also quoted to show that a general state of satisfaction existed. "Therefore," he said, "I do not at all agree with those good people who say that prohibition is still in the experimental stage, and that the popular vote ought to be postponed until the experiment has worked out. The experiment has already been worked out, and the experience of Ontario has vindicated the statesmanship of Sir William Hearst."

**Government Back in Bondage.**

Why, he asked, was the Government putting an interrogation mark after the law? It was because the Prime Minister of the Province had heard "his master's voice." Nine years ago a Government achieved its independence of the liquor trade, and now the Leader of the present Government was leading—in fact, had already led—the Government back into bondage.

After he had "traced the Prime Minister's descent from the table-land of moral reform" by quoting the Premier's speech of several months ago at the Toronto Conservative Club, where he said: "Means must be found to remedy such a dangerous condition—some means to allow people to exercise a God-given freedom under reasonable restrictions," he invited members of the House to "applaud that." A number accepted his invitation.

"Now," he declared, "pick out the wets."

**Protests "Juggernaut" Methods.**

Mr. Raney asked if the Government intended to crowd the question through to a vote during the evening. If so, he would again protest against the "juggernaut" methods which the Government was adopting.

Premier Ferguson replied that he did not know what might happen.

Mr. Raney continued: "You have it that in February, 1922, the present Prime Minister had slipped off the table-land—he had no principles at all on the liquor question. He was without compass or rudder. He was on the way, but didn't know where he was going. But, he did see a beacon light ahead—and by some means or other, by hook or by crook, the wine and beer goal of the Toronto Conservative Club must be attained.

The whole House rocked in convulsions for a few minutes when Mr. Raney recalled Premier Ferguson's references, made just before the election, to "petty tyranny." The phrase, held Mr. Raney, was applied to the O.T.A. But Conservative members interrupted to claim that the reference was not to the act, but to the administration of the act by the former Attorney-General.

"In all these months, from Mr. Ferguson's Hamilton speech in February, 1922, until May, 1923, I have yet to discover one word in any of the reports of Mr. Ferguson's public utterances—one word of friendliness toward the O.T.A.," said Mr. Raney.

**Difficult Law to Enforce.**

Mr. Raney then pointed out that all the men who, under his regime, had been engaged to enforce the Temperance Act had been returned men, who had honestly worked to the enforcement of the measure.

"Is that to include my friend Plaxton?" asked Premier Ferguson.

"As I knew him," replied Mr. Raney, "he was a model officer. If he has since gone wrong he is not the first man who has succumbed. It is a difficult law to enforce in the sense that the officers are continually open to temptation."

Referring again to the Premier's

references, made before the last election, to the Provincial enforcement force and to his statement that he "would not go to the cesspools of vice to recruit his police" if he (the present Premier) were elected, Mr. Raney asked:

"What was Mr. Ferguson's motive in broadcasting these abominable and transparent falsehoods? What motive could he have had except to serve the ends of the men who were then, and are now, bent on the destruction of this law?"