

Tuesday, Feb. 28th

Project of Beer-by-Glass Proves Losing Venture In Legislature Debate

Speaking to Wilson Motion, Premier Says There Will Be "No Tinkering" With Liquor Law to Meet Sentiment in Certain Localities

VOTE ON ISSUE COMES ON TODAY

Windsor Member Asserts That He Is Fulfilling Pre-election Promise — Three Speak in His Support

Frank W. Wilson, Conservative member for East Windsor, fought a determined battle for "beer by the glass" in the Legislature yesterday, but it was a losing one. When the House assembles this afternoon it will deliver Mr. Wilson's resolution, by way of a vote, the knockout punch which was withheld yesterday.

The Ontario Government wants no "beer by the glass." In the words of Premier Ferguson, it wants no tinkering, nor any interference with law, just to meet the demands of some isolated sentiment in certain localities." A thorough trial is what the Prime Minister has in mind for the present law, and after his utterances of yesterday it looks as if the act will get it. Until such time as the Government finds itself unable to maintain it or support it, and public opinion is no longer behind it, it will remain "untouched and unaltered."

Premier Presents Opposition.

The Prime Minister provided the sole opposition to the East Windsor member's resolution, but it was enough. Mr. Wilson, who, in arguing the merits of his resolution, indirectly made out a fine case for opponents of the Liquor Control Act, was supported by W. C. Weichel (Conservative, North Waterloo), and seconder of the resolution, and rather lukewarmly by Edmond Proulx and T. Legault, "wet" Liberal members for Prescott and Sturgeon Falls, respectively. There was little fire in the debate, save that kindled by Mr. Wilson in its closing moments, when he said: "I made a pledge to my constituents that I would support this policy, and, so help me, I'm going to keep it and vote for this resolution."

Not Seeking Bar's Return.

Government control, said Mr. Wilson, could not effectively be obtained unless the act in its present form was extended to permit sale of beer by the glass. No question of return of the bar was involved in his resolution. It stipulated that consumption of beer should be confined to places under Government jurisdiction, subject to local option vote. It was not to be enforced on communities which didn't want it, and it was to be granted to those who wanted it. No set arbitrary rule in this connection, he stated, could be laid down for the whole Province. For one community might want consumption in a standard hotel, while its neighbor might desire it to be consumed in properly regulated rooms without the meals.

His resolution, he submitted, was entirely within everything said by the Prime Minister in the last election

campaign up to the time he had withdrawn the "beer feature."

Mr. Wilson took time to point out that the Liquor Control Act, as he saw it, was a great improvement over the Ontario Temperance Act. There was less of the hip-pocketing of flasks; less drinking at young people's parties. And yet he stressed, the present law was still faulty. That fault lay in its failure to meet the demand for beer—not in bulk, but in lesser quantities.

Sees Danger to Act.

"If you don't make any changes in this act," he warned the Government, "you're going to kill it." All the other Provinces west of Ontario, with the exception of Saskatchewan, had made "beer by the glass" the basis of their Government control legislation.

One of the great tendencies under the present law, he asseverated, was to drink rum, brandy, whiskey, gin, and other "high-powered stuff." There was, he said, a great amount of drinking of "hard stuff" in rooms, which, he fancied, could be eliminated to a great extent, if these hotels were allowed to sell beer. Such sale, he also contended, would wipe out the "killing the crock" practice. Many tourists would readily buy beer in glass quantities where they do not buy at all now, or go to the other extreme, and break the law rather than take out a permit and meet all the inconveniences of the law.

The trouble with the present law, said the East Windsor member, was that it was a rich man's act and smack-ed of "class legislation." Under its operation, the average man was spending altogether too much on liquor. Desirable as it had been to eliminate the bootlegger it was much more desirable now to eliminate his successor—the blind pigger.

Cites Statistics.

Mr. Wilson quoted at length statistics, as supplied him by the Chiefs of Police of the various municipalities, and dealing with drunkenness before and after the new law was introduced in Leamington, Amherstburg, Essex, Ridgetown, Chatham, Toronto, Kingston and Ottawa. In all cases there was a considerable increase in drunkenness in the five or six months following the introduction of the act as compared with corresponding periods before. Toronto, in fact, showed in cases of convictions for drunkenness an increase of 692. Guelph registered a 200 per cent. increase for drunkenness for the first five months following the inception of the law as compared with the five months preceding. In Ottawa, 80 per cent. of the blind pigs raided by officers sold beer.

Mr. Wilson submitted that people wanted their beer. The time was ripe for a change. The Prime Minister wanted the change, he said. The Prime Minister's original election pronouncement had contained the beer feature, and, although he had dropped it overboard, he (Mr. Wilson) had never heard him utter a single syllable in opposition to that feature. Ministers of the Government were ready for the change, too, he contended. So were Conservative members of Parliament who had supported the "control" policy at the last election.

"Speak for Yourself."

"Are you speaking for yourself?" interjected T. A. Murphy, Conservative, Toronto-Beaches.

"That is my intention," said Mr. Wilson.

"Well, do so," said Mr. Murphy.

In conclusion, Mr. Wilson argued that beer-by-the-glass sale would remedy the big fault in the act. Sale of beer in this way might, he said, cut down the Government's revenue, but he would hate to have the impression get abroad, he said, that the Government was more interested in "revenue" than in promoting the cause of "true temperance."