

Tuesday, Feb. 28th

Mr. Proulx's Argument.

Edmond Proulx (Liberal, Prescott) expressed disappointment that the Government had not carried out what he had understood as a plan to establish beer and wine shops in small communities where large liquor stores would be impracticable. In rural counties, he said, there was frequently only one liquor store, and many of the citizens had a long distance to travel to make a purchase, and for this reason he expressed the hope that the Government would open stores of this kind in remote villages.

"A man is being forced to buy ten times more liquor than he wants at the present time." T. Legault (Liberal, Sturgeon Falls) declared in supporting the resolution. It was frequently the case, he said, that a man wanted only one drink, or perhaps two, but he was forced to buy a bottle. This was the only fault he had to find with the Liquor Control Act.

Mentions Montreal.

W. C. Weichel (Conservative, North Waterloo), and seconder of the resolution, referred to his own personal observations of beer parlors in Montreal last summer. He inspected 22 of them, and never saw a drunken man emerge from one of them. He thought it was the duty of the Legislature to promote sale of beer rather than hard liquor.

In conclusion, he said he had been one of the members who had talked "beer by the glass" after the Prime Minister had dropped it from his platform. He would continue to talk it, he said.

Act Not Perfect, Says Premier.

Premier Ferguson was greeted with considerable applause when he arose to speak. He thought it wise to bring the whole question of beer-by-the-glass sale into the Legislature, to see if there was any justification for it—to ascertain if there was any real foundation in the Province for such an outcry. Personally, he did not think there was any clamor, appreciating, however, the fact that in certain localities there might be some sentiment along this line.

The Prime Minister reviewed at some length the change from the Ontario Temperance Act, and its "abuses," to the present law. The Government in passing the Liquor Control Act, had carried out to the letter, he said, its election policy. He was not arguing for a minute that it was a perfect law, and he thought it very unfair that those who advocate prohibition should constantly criticize it and endeavor to undermine the sentiment behind it. It had been in effect only nine months, but in that time conditions had been improved wonderfully, and the big bootlegger operator had been put out of business.

"It is true," he said, "that a man can buy two or three bottles at a store, dilute them with water, then sell them in a blind pig after hours. We've always had that condition with us. And it's a condition we've got to meet, not only by developing sane, strong temperance sentiment, but by putting these fellows in jail as fast as we get them." (Applause.)

Some Good Features.

The law, while not perfect, he said, was "doing very well so far." Whereas the old act was always a topic of discussion, everywhere, people had quit talking about the liquor control law. The general practice of hip-toting was disappearing, too, he said.

"These things" said Mr. Ferguson, "are some of the good things to look at."

It was unfair, submitted Mr. Ferguson, to expect that the new law could in nine months' time reach a maximum of usefulness and perfection, whatever its defects might be. "Until," said he, "it has a reasonable time to be understood, to be enforced, and to play a real part in upbuilding public sentiment and promoting public welfare, I don't think it should be changed."

The people, he said, who carried the present Liquor Control Act were not extremists either way, but the great central body between the two extremes—thinking people—many of them total abstainers, many of them prohibitionists, who felt that a position had been reached where conditions were intolerable and who turned to a system of "control" they thought would rectify these conditions. The law, he emphasized, was barely out of its swaddling clothes. The Government was still try-

ing to meet a great variety of conditions the Province wide. Now, to bring in something that would combat and recreate public opinion—would revolutionize the whole scheme of things—was in effect unthinkable.

Government Determined.

"The Government," he said, "is determined, having accepted so emphatic a mandate from the people, to give this law a thorough trial. It doesn't propose to have it interfered with, or altered in any way, until it has to say to the people: 'We've given it a fair trial; we find it impossible to maintain it or support it, and public opinion is no longer behind it.'"

Sees Labor Divided.

All legislation, Mr. Ferguson agreed, was experimental. But, he said, there would be no going back in the present law before the Government had made a full and complete test of it. The member from East Windsor, he said, had argued that Labor was in favor of beer by the glass. Well, he said, he had different Labor deputations wait on him. And Labor was just as divided on the question as were churches and communities.

"And," said he, "in the opinion of this Government, it shall not be tinkered with or interfered with just to meet the demands of some isolated sentiment in certain localities of Ontario."

In conclusion, Mr. Ferguson asked the House to reject Mr. Wilson's resolution. He thought that the vote could be postponed a day, in order that members then absent would have a chance to participate in it.

Vote Is Postponed.

In a brief reply Mr. Wilson declared that he had received his nomination when "beer by the glass" had still been a part of the Conservative party's platform; his constituents had received it favorably and he had promised to support it. "I even went so far before the election," he said, "as to offer to run on that policy, and then, if any Cabinet Minister were defeated, to resign my seat in his favor; so you see I am not playing politics. 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."

The vote was stood over till today.