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MR. EVANS OF QUEENS TELLS WHY HE CANNOT SUPPORT THE LIQUOR CONTROL BILL

Following is a full report of the excellent speech, delivered in the Legislature by Mr. W. Benton Evans of Queens on the first reading of the bill to regulate and control the sale of liquor:

MR. SPEAKER: The bill which the Hon. Premier has introduced this evening deals with a question of the greatest importance to the people of this province. Therefore I consider it my duty to make my position very clear in relation to it. If this bill passes this House it will bring into force in this Province a system of so-called Government Control of the liquor traffic. Under this Act the sale of liquor for beverage purposes becomes legal. Under our Prohibition Law the sale for such purposes is illegal, so that though this bill may place many restrictions upon the traffic it is entirely different in principle from the law which is now in force in this province.

A Public Scandal. Under the administration of the Foster-Veniot Governments the enforcement of our Prohibition Law had become a public scandal. It was the general opinion at that time that the Government was in sympathy with the law, and wished to discredit it in the eyes of the people. At one time under Premier Foster an attempt was made to put through a Government Control measure, but sufficient support could not be obtained among the Government members.

With these facts before the people the Prohibition Act and its proper enforcement was one of the leading issues in the last Provincial Election campaign. The present Government, then in Opposition, made the enforcement of the Act so long as it remained on the Statute Books one of the main planks in its platform. The people were promised that the law would be given a fair trial. Personally, keeping in mind the laxity of enforcement that had grown up under the old Government I felt that it would take some time to obtain good enforcement, and did not think that a reasonable trial could be given in less than three years. If after such a trial there seemed to be a public demand for a different law, I thought that the people should have an opportunity to vote on the question, and then be given whatever the majority called for. In the campaign throughout Queens County I pledged myself to support such a policy as I have outlined and understood that this was the policy of the party. Being pledged to such a policy I know won me the support of many voters who otherwise would be political opponents.

A Definite Course. During an election campaign each party makes statements of policy on the more important questions, the Candidates promising to support these policies should they be elected. It is by voting for the candidates supporting these policies that each individual voter considers in the best interest of the country, that the people have a voice in the Government. Representatives are elected pledged to a definite course of action. This I believe, is one of the basic principles of our representative form of Government. No pledge should be made during an election campaign that the candidate does not think after careful consideration can be carried out. Once made, no effort should be spared to live up to it. Otherwise, those elected to it truly represent the people.

The Best System. Our Party System is the best means yet devised to give the people good government. In order that the parties may carry on efficiently, it is necessary that their supporters be loyal. There come times, however, when on some important question individual supporters differ from their party. When they do not think that the policy of the party is in the best interests of the country. On such occasions the interests of the people must come first. It is my opinion that such a time has arrived. I am pledged to see that the Prohibition Law is given a fair trial. This it has not had. To be true to the trust placed in me by my constituents,

I must oppose this Bill. This I intend to do.

In Force Ten Years. Our present Prohibition Act has been on the Statute Books for ten years. At no time during that period has it had a fair trial. There has always been too much political influence used in the appointment of Inspectors and Vendors, and in the protection of those who have been law violators. I would like to see this law strengthened where experience has shown that it is weak have it entirely removed from politics, and given a reasonable trial so that the people could see and judge for themselves what real Prohibition was.

Even though the Law has been only partly enforced, I believe that it has brought about conditions that are much better than those existing prior to its enactment.

The Smuggling Evil.

One of our greatest troubles today is the smuggling which is being carried on all along the coast line of the Province. Our Provincial Law is not responsible for the failure to stop this. It is here that the Federal Government is failing to give us the protection to which we are entitled. In this connection I wish to draw attention to the report of the Chief Inspector, who confirms this by saying when speaking of the Law: "It in no way prevents the supply which is pouring in legally and illegally and the illegal supply is or should be prevented by the Dominion Government and not by our staff." Just what legal supply the Chief Inspector refers to I do not know, unless he means that which is coming to the Liquor Commission. When speaking of this report I wish to say that the Chief Inspector seems to have been trying when writing it to discredit the law which he was sworn to enforce. Just why he should think it necessary to make statements about conditions in New York I do not understand. He has also taken a fling at the temperance people. In the next to the last paragraph of the report he says: "That there are none among those who are not in sympathy with the law that will countenance excessive drinking, and the non-success is on account of a large number of temperance people not being prohibitionists." Who then are the people who have been guilty of the excessive drinking that we hear so commonly complained of. This paragraph so far as I can understand it, means that even those whom the Inspectors have convicted of the grossest violation of the law have not countenanced excessive drinking. This on the face of it is ridiculous. Does the Chief Inspector mean that it is the temperance people who are the ones who are to blame for the excessive drinking? This on the face of it is ridiculous. I think if that official had shown more willingness to work with the temperance people and accept their assistance instead of finding fault with them, he would have been more successful in this work.

Not A New Thing.

Government Control is no new system in this Dominion. It has been in force in British Columbia for several years, also in several other provinces. I have endeavored to keep myself informed as to the results obtained and so far as I can learn this system failed to abolish the evils which have always been associated with the traffic in intoxicating liquor.

Government Control.

Smuggling and bootlegging still flourish, in fact it is stated upon the authority of the Attorney General of British Columbia that the bootleggers are selling as much as the Government. The illicit manufacture of liquor still goes on and in addition to the sources of supply the bootlegger has convenient supply houses in the Government Stores. The strongest argument against Government Control is the great desire of the liquor interests to have such a law in force. The brewers and distillers have had experience under both laws, and they must by this

time know which is the better for their business. It is hardly likely that they would welcome Government Control if it decreases their profits. That is does not decrease profits I think it is fully proven by the fact that immediately after the recent election in Ontario which assured the adoption of a Government Control Law the stock in the distilleries and breweries began to soar. Since that time we have heard of new companies being organized to carry on this business and the ones already established enlarging their premises.

Stocks Went Up.

In British Columbia a Brewery Company when selling stock inserted advertisements in the Vancouver Papers, which show the great prosperity that comes to this industry when the selling is done by the Government. Listen to one of their advertisements:

"Do you know that a well-known British Columbia brewery paid its shareholders 900 per cent on their investment?"

"Do you know that the annual report of a Quebec brewery last year showed a surplus of over \$3,000,000 and paid a profit for that year amounting to over \$1,250,000 selling beer at \$8 a barrel less than the price received by the breweries here?"

"Do you know that there is more profit made from a brewery in British Columbia with a sale of 200 barrels a day than from a flowing oil well with a production of 2000 barrels a day?" Apparently the Breweries are very prosperous where the Government Commission is their selling agent. To me the term Government Control is misleading, for we must remember that the Government does not control the manufacture, neither does it control the use. It is only an intermediary between the Distillers and Breweries on the one hand who wish to sell all they can, and the general public on the other hand a good many of whom seem to wish to drink all they can.

Interdicts.

I hold in my hand an alphabetical list of interdicts, dated the 1st March 1927 and published by the Alberta Liquor Control Board. Under the Alberta Act it is necessary for those purchasing liquor at the Government stores to hold a permit. These permits are numbered. In case the holder of a permit or other person, should be convicted of drunkenness or of other offenses which often follow the excessive use of intoxicating liquor they may be interdicted by the Magistrate trying the case.

This list contains 633 names, so it is good evidence that a great many have been drinking to excess even under the so-called Government Control system in force in that province and I notice in looking over the names that there are quite a few women included. Another thing I notice is that out of this total of 633 only 200 held permits. Where did the 433 get their liquor? They must have obtained it illegally. That is two-thirds of those who have been interdicted purchased liquor contrary to the provisions of the law. Then it seems to me as the best of proof that the illegal sale of liquor is still flourishing under Government Control.

Bootleggers and Prohibition.

The Honorable President of the Council has made the statement in this debate that the bootleggers support Prohibition, both by their votes and by supplying funds to the Prohibition forces. Now I might say that I took an active part in the plebiscite held in 1920-21. Some expenses were, of course, necessary and unavoidable. We had in some cases to hire cars to take voters to the polls and such like but my experience has been that some of my Prohibitionist friends and myself had to dig down in our pockets and furnish the necessary money. The bootlegger certainly did not help us as to the monetary end. As to the bootlegger voting for Prohibition—there were even in that time men who were reputed to be handling liquor illegally. I knew some of them, but I was convinced they were in the business. We had them pretty well spotted and we found that when election day came they were very active in taking to the polls those

THE BATHURST COMPANY'S BILL DISCUSSED BY THE CORPORATIONS COMMITTEE

Committee Room,
April 12th, 1927.

The Bathurst Company's bill was next taken up by the Corporations Committee this morning and the Chairman called for a report from the conference arranged for at its last meeting.

Mr. George Gilbert, representing the company, said the parties had not been able to come together. The School Board representatives would not concede anything from their first proposal, but the company were bringing some concessions before this committee for their approval.

The chairman said, while this committee was prepared to do its duty, it was a most difficult position for them and he really felt the members should not be asked to act as jurors on the question of local taxation.

Mr. C. T. Richard and Mr. Lordon maintained that many concessions had been made by the town council and the school board, and the representatives they had sent here had presented these ultimate concessions.

Mr. Richard outlined what had been done by the town council extending over several months.

Mr. Gilbert said briefly the company was prepared to advance their assessment value from \$250,000 to \$275,000 and outlined a scheme whereby as the development of the mills progressed the valuation would run up to \$400,000 for school purposes.

Mr. Michaud was not impressed that a fixed valuation was necessary for a pulp mill's success, as the Fraser Company at Edmundston had no limitation.

Mr. F. R. Taylor said Frasers had thought they had a limit, but the Court ruled otherwise. He understood that the representatives of the town and county at the recent conference had agreed to Mr. Gilbert's new proposition.

Mr. C. T. Richard took exception, saying that he was a town councillor and had not agreed. At their council meeting in Bathurst they had recommended a fixed valuation of \$275,000 as long as the company was fully assessed on their long lumber mill in West Bathurst, but that any reduction made on account of the abandonment of that mill should involve a corresponding increase on the pulp mill. The limitation proposed did not apply to school taxes.

Mr. McLean explained that the company was now paying taxes on over \$200,000 in West Bathurst, and they actually paid 47.7 per cent of all the school taxes paid there.

Hon. Mr. Baxter suggested that if the company's operation in West Bathurst were discontinued that there

who were known to be what is called "wet voters."

British Columbia has a Liquor Control law, as I have previously stated and I think it is well known to all the honorable members that the evidence produced before the Customs Commission in that province showed that some of the firms in the liquor business had what they called an "Insurance and Protection Fund"—out of which they were paying amounts to the political parties. And what do you read the protection was against? Protection against Prohibition.

Private Profits.

The statement is frequently made that Government sale of liquor is a better system than those formerly tried because it eliminates private profit. Such things can be fastened upon the public much more firmly by the reason of public revenue received from it than by private profit. For when the public receive the revenue everyone benefits financially to some extent, and many are made blind to the faults of a system that puts money in their pockets. If only a few individuals profit to the damage of the rest, many of the community will join in an endeavor to put an end to the foul condition.

Favors Present Act.

In conclusion I wish to repeat that I would like to see the present Act amended so as to relieve the weaknesses that experience has shown to exist. Particularly the penalties for violation, that they may be made as severe as under the proposed Act.

The Honorable President of the Executive Council has stated that the proposed law has teeth in it. Why not put teeth in our present Act and give it a chance to bite? And like the proposed Act have its administration placed in the hands of a strong independent Commission entirely removed from political influence.

Then after a fair trial give the people the opportunity to vote on it, as has been the custom with this particular question. A question as important as this is to every citizen should not be decided without consulting the people.

Bathurst were discontinued that there probably would not be nearly so many children to provide for and the cost of schools would be reduced.

Hon. Mr. Tilley said he was strongly in sympathy with the opinion expressed. It seemed to him that there was an attitude that the company was there and that it could be pressed to the limit. That attitude should not be taken. There should be a spirit of get-together.

B. F. Smith that there must be some principle governing such cases.

Premier Baxter said that when the Edmundston agreement was made the late M. G. Teed pointed out to him that over a period of thirty years there were as many exemptions from school taxes as there were impositions. In the matter of industries, the fact that Edmundston had been able to impose school taxes on the Frasers probably had influenced this matter.

Mr. Richard said that there was a spirit of conciliation on the part of the town.

The First Consideration.

Premier Baxter said that the desire of the Province as a whole to have its forest-resources developed to fullest extent must come before the views of any one community.

Mr. Richard and Mr. Gilbert expressed contradictory opinions as to whether fixed valuation related to school assessment.

Angus McLean stated that the company paid taxes on a valuation of \$535,900. That valuation the company was willing to increase to \$685,000.

Mr. Richard pointed out that the town objected to a reduction in valuation in the event of the sawmills in East and West Bathurst going out of existence.

Premier Baxter suggested that an arrangement might be made whereby a fixed valuation for a term of years be set for, the mills in East and West Bathurst which would protect the town against loss.

Mr. Richard said that was what the town wanted.

The Premier said he would suggest that the company make a proposition to that effect.

Mr. McLean pointed out that apart from the mills the company paid assessment on dwellings and other property to a large total. Since the Act had been passed the company never had paid less than 21.5 percent and had paid as much as 32.5 percent of total assessment.

Mr. Gilbert proposed a number of minor amendments governing the filling of plans and description with the Minister of Public Works. He also objected to the proposal made by D. King Hazen at a previous session that piers be erected instead of a dam. Piers would not give sufficient room to hold the logs.

Hon. Mr. Stewart asked for information concerning the closing of Main Street in Bathurst in the event of a new bridge being erected. He wanted a right-of-way provided without cost to the Province.

Mr. McLean said the company would freely give the right-of-way which it controlled.

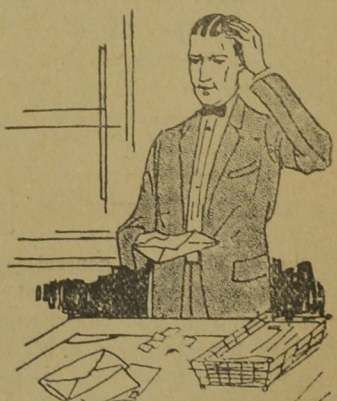
The bill was referred to consideration in private session.

A CANADIAN WRITER WINS BIG PRIZE

Toronto, April 12—High honor comes to Canadian literature through the winning of a \$10,000 prize for a novel by Miss Mazo de la Roche of 86 Yorkville Avenue. The prize which was won against 1,200 competitors from the United States, Great Britain and other lands was given by The Atlantic Monthly which has been for generations one of the soundest and best periodicals in the English language.

The book which wins the prize is "Jalna," which will be published in the autumn by Little, Brown & Co., Boston.

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