

1873.

NEW ZEALAND.

# THE PROHIBITORY LIQUOR LAW,

(REPORT OF CANADIAN PARLIAMENT ON).

*Laid on the Table, by permission, by the Hon. W. Fox.*

THE following is the report of Mr. Bodwell's Prohibitory Liquor Law Committee, presented to the House to-day:—

Ottawa, May 9, 1873.

Your Committee, to whom were referred the petitions presented in favour of a Prohibitory Liquor Law, beg leave, in presenting their second report, to call the attention of your honorable House to the following considerations, the result of their most careful deliberations, and based upon the facts to which they have had access so far.

1. That the traffic in intoxicating liquors is an unmitigated evil, wide-spread in its effects' reaching with more or less virulence every class of the community, destroying and blighting with its baneful influence the existence of many of the most useful and promising members of society, producing untold domestic misery and destitution, and leading to the formation of habits alike opposed to the moral and intellectual advancement and prosperity of the country.

2. That the petitions presented, 384 in number, to your honorable House, and signed by 39,223 individuals, as well as the petitions from 82 municipalities and the Legislature of the Province of Ontario, praying for a Prohibitory Liquor Law, show that the people of the Dominion are very strongly impressed with the enormity of the evils alluded to, and that, in view of this strong and unequivocal demand, your Committee feel bound to urge the necessity of some action on the part of your honorable House to meet the wishes of the petitioners, and if possible remove the evils complained of.

3. That in examining the answers received from the Sheriffs, Prison Inspectors, Coroners, and Police Magistrates, 114 of whom have voluntarily given evidence, your Committee find that four-fifths of the crime committed in the Province of Ontario (answers have not yet been received from the other provinces) is directly or indirectly connected with the manufacture, sale, and consumption of intoxicating liquors.

4. Your Committee further find, on examining the reports of the Prison Inspectors for the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, that out of 23,289 commitments to the gaols for the three previous years, 21,236 were committed either for drunkenness or for crimes perpetrated under the influence of drink, thus corroborating the statements of the magistrates and others above alluded to.

5. Your Committee find also, from the reports of 153 medical men, as well as from statements made by medical practitioners in the United States and Great Britain, that the use of intoxicating liquors as beverage is not essential to the health or well-being of the community, but on the contrary it often leads to disease and premature death.

6. Your Committee have also to report that they have made, as far as time would permit, inquiry into the operation and effect of the Prohibitory Liquor Law in the State of Maine, accepting its operations there as the fairest test of its success, and find that although there are violations of the law, in many cases flagrant and glaring, yet from the evidence received your Committee is convinced that a Prohibitory Liquor Law would mitigate, if not entirely remove, the evils complained of.

7. In considering the immediate effect which the passage of a Prohibitory Liquor Law would have upon the revenue of the country, your Committee are bound to admit that for some time at least there might be a falling off, yet, in the face of the evils arising from the liquor traffic alluded to in the first paragraph of this report, they cannot recommend any other course to your honorable House than a ready compliance with the prayer of the petitioners. The reasons on which your Committee base this recommendation are the following:—Although the revenue arising from the traffic is now very large, amounting last year to \$5,034,543 58c., yet the expense of the administration of justice, the maintenance of asylums, hospitals, and penitentiaries, consequent upon the habitual use of intoxicating liquors, would be largely diminished, thus furnishing a very considerable offset to the amount lost to the revenue; that the capital now invested in the traffic, large as your Committee believe it to be, would, if diverted to other purposes of trade, add largely in a very short time to the general wealth of the country, and open up new and even more profitable sources of industry, which, in their turn, would contribute to the revenue without those baneful associations which vitiate the returns accrued

from the liquor traffic; that the effect upon the industrial prosperity of thousands who are now impoverished by their dissipated habits would be such as to enable them to consume other dutiable goods, the law of supply and demand being such that wherever there is a surplus of capital it will find for itself some field for investment; that it is clearly the duty of the Government, when the social, moral, and civil standing of the subject are imperilled by the existence of any traffic or trade, that, apart from all considerations of the gain or profit, the interests of the subject should not be sacrificed even to the expansion or maintenance of the revenue; that the principle of protection to the subject against evils which may be and which are sources of revenue is already conceded in Acts passed on former occasions in the Legislature of Canada, such as the Dunkin Act, sanitary laws, and other laws of a similar nature.

8. In view of these facts, your Committee would most respectfully submit to your honorable House the importance of speedily removing the evil complained of, by the enactment of a prohibitory liquor law; that is, a law prohibiting the importation, manufacture, and sale of all intoxicating liquors, except for medicinal and mechanical purposes, regulated by proper safeguards and checks.

---

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBURY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1873.

*Price 3d.]*