

Ontario Provincial Liberal Party

Temperance

1919

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TEMPERANCE

The Liberal Platform.

Liberalism has been the pioneer of Temperance Reform in the Province of Ontario. Conservatism has been the consistent ally of the liquor interests. The platform of the Liberal Party was the subject of careful consideration by the Committee on Resolutions and by the Convention itself, as a result of which the Convention unanimously adopted a resolution by which now, as in the past, the Liberal Party in Ontario gives the lead. This resolution was one that had been carefully considered and framed as a result of conference between William Proudfoot, M.P.P., J. C. Elliott, M.P.P. (Chairman of the Resolutions Committee), Major J. C. Tolmie, M.P.P., H. H. Dewart, M.P.P., and Mrs. J. W. Bundy, as well as others. The result of these consultations was the enunciation of the policy of Provincial Liberalism in the following resolution:

Moved by Wm. Proudfoot, M.P.P., seconded by Mrs. J. Wesley Bundy—

“Whereas, the people of the Province of Ontario by referendum vote will decide the question of Provincial prohibition;

“And whereas after the referendum vote is taken it will be necessary to see that proper legislation is provided and will of the people is carried out;

“Therefore, be it resolved, that the Liberal Party of the Province of Ontario, in Convention assembled, affirms its attitude **in favour of progressive legislation to the fullest extent of the Provincial jurisdiction**, and pledges itself to take all necessary steps to **vigorously and effectively carry into effect the will of the majority** of the people as expressed by the said referendum vote.”

The Consistent Liberal Attitude.

The history of the movement against the liquor traffic from 1912 to 1916 shows how consistent has been the stand taken by the Liberal Party in favour of advanced legislation. The following is a summary of what took place, adapted from the leaflet of the Ontario Women's Liberal Association published in 1917:

- 1912—The Liberals introduced "Abolish the Bar" policy into the Legislature. Government rejected it.
- 1913—The Liberals re-introduced "Abolish the Bar" policy. Government rejected it.
- 1914—The Liberals re-introduced "Abolish the Bar" policy. Government rejected it.
- 1914—Liberals fought General Election on "Abolish the Bar" issue. Government opposed it.
- 1915—The Liberals re-introduced Abolish the Bar policy. Hearst Government rejected it.
- 1916—Government and Opposition united to unanimously put Prohibition into effect.

Prohibition and the War.

"The war was in progress for nineteen months before the Government finally adopted Prohibition. They rejected it in the session of 1915. They also rejected in that year a number of other Liberal proposals including the closing of the bars at 7, 8, 9, and 10 o'clock.

"Even after the passing of the Prohibition Act the government in South-West Toronto supported a candidate favouring wine and beer licenses, and it was only the defeat of the government's own candidate in that contest which saved the Province from wine and beer licenses."

The present attitude of the Liberal Party on the question of Temperance cannot be better explained than by quoting from a speech by Mr. Dewar, the Liberal leader, delivered at Newmarket on 20th September, 1919, when he used these words:

"There is no question that is more important so far as the politics of the Province is concerned than the question of temperance and prohibition, and I may perhaps crave your attention for a few moments to this particular question and to the position and policy of the Liberal Party, particularly because of some unfair remarks and criticisms which have been directed at some of its leaders. To-day, as in 1914, the Liberal Party in this Province is giving the lead to the people of the Province so far as the principle of prohibition is concerned. Look back to 1914 and what do you find? You find at that time the Liberal Party as a party took its political life in its hands and went to the people upon the question of the "Abolition of the Bar". Where did the Conservative Government stand at that time? We all know that there was not a bar-room in the Province of Ontario that was not a Committee-room for the Conservative Party. There

was not a constituency in the Province of Ontario in which the Conservative Government did not owe its success to the liquor people in 1914, and these men are in power to-day and governing the country, not because of the will of the majority of the people of this Province, but because of the vote which was given them by that influence in 1914 and by virtue of which they are still retaining their position in power. We find in 1915 after the Liberal Party had failed to succeed upon the question of the abolition of the bar resolution after resolution was introduced in the House looking to the curtailment of the sale of liquor—resolutions that were calculated to check the liquor evil as it existed as result of the election. In 1915 we were at war just as much as we have been at war in 1916, 1917 and 1918. Division after division was taken and in every case the Conservative majority voted down the resolutions in the interests of temperance and the cause of prohibition. Do you tell me that the men who in 1915 voted as they did against the Liberal resolutions had a sudden change of heart in 1916? Do you tell me that it was because of some principle, that a different policy was adopted in 1916? Let us see. In 1916 a petition, purporting to be signed by three-fourths of the people of the Province of Ontario, was submitted to the Government, and the reason why this Conservative Government, that had been elected by the liquor vote in 1914, passed the Temperance Act in 1916, was because Sir William Hearst saw that those who had elected him in 1914 were not in a majority in 1916, and he chose to act with the three-quarters rather than with the one-quarter which had put him into power in 1914."

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, I ask you to consider the position in S. W. Toronto when I allowed my name to be put in nomination in the by-election of August, 1916.

"We fought the issue in S. W. Toronto on the question of the failure of the Government to control that great and vital resource (nickel) in the interests of the Province and the Empire, and upon that issue the people elected me in 1916. I accepted the Ontario Temperance Act as a war-time measure reserving my opinion when any question might arise. (Applause). What was the position of my opponent? In 1916, my opponent, Mr. Norris, went to the people advocating wine and beer licenses, and upon that policy he was accepted by Sir William Hearst as the nominee and candidate of the Conservative Party in S.W. Toronto. Nay, more; three of the Ministers of the Crown, Mr. Lucas, Mr. Ferguson and Mr. McGarry, came into that riding in Norris' support and there was the unworthy appeal which Mr.

Lucas made to the people. I quote from the Toronto *Star's* report of Mr. Lucas' remarks in the issue of August 16th, 1916:

"The election contest in South-West Toronto brings out nothing more clearly than the frantic struggle of the Conservative machine backing Mr. James Norris, to secure the liquor vote.

"Mr. Norris' attitude on the liquor or anti-prohibition vote becomes more distinct each day.

"That Mr. Norris and his supporters are making desperate efforts to secure the 'wet' vote received abundant proof last night, when, following Mr. Norris' personal platform and printed appeals, Hon. I. B. Lucas, Attorney-General, said: 'If you elect Mr. Norris what does it mean? It will mean that you say to the Government of the Province: 'We think you went too far in this legislation. We think that Jim Norris is about right, and we put up a good majority for him.' He said that he was a good Conservative and you pile up a 3,000, 4,000, or 5,000 majority. Do you think that my friend Ferguson and I won't have our ears to the ground and attach the weight we can give it in consideration of the sentiment of the Province elsewhere?"

"I have the satisfaction of knowing that in the circular issued by Mr. Rowell, who was then my leader and to whom I gave my loyal support, that he recognized the fact that the S. W. Toronto election prevented wine and beer licenses at that particular time.

"We have accepted as the Liberal policy the Ontario Temperance Act as a war-time measure. In June of this year, there was a convention in the City of Toronto at which I had the honour to be chosen as Leader of the Liberal Party in this Province. At that convention honest and serious men and women sat down together and considered what should be the policy of the Liberal Party, and resolution after resolution was drawn up and dealt with, regarding the various questions in the Province that relate to all the people. Amongst the questions that were dealt with was the question of Temperance and Prohibition, and I took an equal part with Mr. Proudfoot, Major Tolmie, Mr. Elliott and the ladies in drawing that resolution. In that resolution we declared for the highest degree of temperance legislation that this Province has the jurisdiction and power to enact. **That is the policy of the Liberal Party. It is declared by a resolution to which I gave my adherence. It is declared by a resolution which, as Leader of the party, I have accepted.** The

platform on which I now stand is the policy of the Liberal Party as enunciated in that resolution; and I ask you to-day: Is it more important to know where a party and its leader stand so far as this principle is concerned, or to find out what the personal view of the leader is as regards what he drinks or what breakfast food or cereal he takes, or how he personally proposes to vote?

"The Liberal Party is just as earnest now as in 1914. We said in the resolution, we believe in the highest legislation the Province has power to enact. We believe it is the right of the people to decide in the referendum vote and to deal with it as a separate and distinct issue; and we want the judgment of the people upon the Government of this Province as a separate and distinct issue from the referendum.

"I am sorry to say that an attempt has been made and is still being made to make capital for the Conservative Party by mixing up the question of the referendum with the question of the general election. What other reason could there be for bringing these two votes on together? What other reason could there be for the way in which the Government is endeavouring to mix matters up? The question of temperance is before the people in the referendum, and any temperance questions which may arise in the future must be determined by the people and dealt with by the majority. And we say that in the future the question of temperance must never again become a party football. (Loud applause).

"I feel strongly with reference to these matters, because already we have an indication of the way in which the political game is being played. It was not very long ago that certain newspapers undertook to tell the Liberal Party what its policy should be and undertook to tell the Liberal leader what he should do and where he should go. The Liberal party has been getting along pretty well, and the Liberal leader has been able to tell the people where he stands, and he has not side-stepped any issue that the people of the Province have to deal with and does not propose to do so in the future.

"The United Farmers were told by my friend Mr. Hearst that they must not allow themselves to become camouflaged Grits or to become a donkey-engine for the Liberal Party. The "donkey-engine" idea was in Sir William's mind and we find that he was using that suggestion to blind the eyes of the farmers. But we see now that he is endeavouring to make the "Christian Guardian" a "donkey-engine" of the Methodist Church. Partizan political editorials are appearing in that paper—a paper which my much

respected and revered father never allowed to become a political organ for any party. I make that statement with the full responsibility and knowledge of what I am saying.

"Is it fair that Mr. Rowell to whom I gave my full support when he was leader in the House, should now, without any suggestion of truth or fact, refer to me as 'the rising hope of the liquor party?'" I have no connection, direct or indirect, with any liquor men or liquor interests in this Province, and I do not propose so long as I retain the position I do, or at any time, to allow any such affiliation. **I stand upon the policy of the Liberal Party."**

The Conservative Government has no policy in regard to the liquor question. The force of public opinion, coupled with the energetic and continued championship of the cause by the Liberal Party, gave to the Province such temperance legislation as we now have, and the Liberal Party has re-affirmed its position in favour of progressive temperance legislation to the fullest extent of the provincial jurisdiction; and, as will be seen from the resolution passed at the Provincial Convention, pledges itself to take all necessary steps to vigorously and effectively carry into effect the will of the majority of the people as expressed by the referendum vote.

"May I repeat what I said at Weston on the 11th July upon the first occasion that I had the opportunity of addressing the people after my appointment as leader:

'As leader of the Liberal Party in this Province, I do not intend to be dragooned by either political, journalistic or clerical dictation, or drawn aside from the clear-cut Liberal principle that issues which are submitted to the people must be decided by the people, and that on the question of general policy the people must independently judge and decide between us and our opponents. To the people of this Province we confidently appeal.'