

House of Commons,
Ottawa, 18th January 1883.

COFFEE HOUSES.

Public Meeting Last Night.

THE SCHEME PLACED ON PROPER FOOTING.

A public meeting was held last evening at the City Hall of the promoters of the Coffee House scheme. The attendance was not very large. Among those present were noticed Sir S. L. Tilley, Dr. Wicksteed, Major Tilton, J. B. Halkett, Geo. May, Mr. Botterel, Wm. Stewart, J. H. Spencer, A. S. Woodburn and Capt. McMillaney.

On motion, Mr. Geo. May took the chair. He explained the object for which the meeting had been called.

Mr. Halkett, the secretary, stated that the W. C. T. U. had asked the co-operation of the various temperance societies in the establishment of Coffee Houses in the city. Representatives were sent to a general meeting and it was then decided to hold this public meeting.

Sir Leonard Tilley followed. He said that one of the objects of the friends of temperance in the old, as well as in the new world, is to endeavour by organized efforts to diminish the evils of intemperance. Various societies and organizations have been formed and worked with great success. It has been exceedingly difficult in some places to reach a certain class of individuals who think they must have society or enjoyment of some nature. Some of the friends in the Old Country thought it advisable to establish coffee houses, where old and young men, rich and poor, might assemble together and if they wanted something to drink could have a cup of coffee and also pass a short time in reading newspapers. As an experiment they proved a grand success. It was not supported by their founders that it would be a paying institution, and parties who invested money risked it largely. The result has in almost all cases been a financial success as well as in every other respect. While in Liverpool in 1878 Sir Leonard visited one of these houses there. The building was one of the finest in that city, and notwithstanding the many expenses incurred the stockholders derived a large dividend. At present fifty-one coffee houses exist. In Toronto the St. Lawrence Coffee House during the past seven months realized at the rate of 10 per cent, a year on the capital invested. It was found so successful that another coffee house has been established in Shaftesbury Hall. The number of persons served in both average eight hundred a day. The Montreal house has only been recently opened. In Ottawa with a smaller population we could not reasonably expect such a paying investment. It will be, however, satisfactory if five or six per cent, on the money could be realized. As to the location of the proposed houses, he would suggest one be in the vicinity of the Parliament Buildings, another near the By Ward Market. He concluded a very interesting address by moving the following resolution:—That finding the establishment of coffee houses in Great Britain and in Canada has proved a great success financially, and in promoting habits of temperance, this meeting deems it most expedient that steps be at once taken to organize such institutions in this city.

Mr. J. K. Stewart took great pleasure in seconding the resolution, and in doing so, he said, for some time past it has been stated that people of Ottawa were anxiously hoping for the formation of some place where they could spend their evenings except in saloons. The W. C. T. U. deserve great credit for the manner in which they have taken up this scheme. He spoke at length of the evils of intemperance. An experiment on a smaller scale, he said, had been attempted at the west end where the young men organized and established a club wherein they could find recreation. He approved of the idea of having one of the proposed houses at the market, where farmers would be able to get meals at very moderate prices and without being asked to drink.

The resolution was submitted and carried unanimously.

Dr. R. J. Wicksteed was the next speaker. He referred at length to the desirability of having coffee houses established. Dr. Wicksteed said that the mischief caused by intemperance needs no proof; the great difficulty lies in persuading people to abandon their evil ways and to avoid temptation. How is this object—the aim of all good Christians, to be obtained? The total abstinence people act upon the most ruthless interpretation of the saying, that he who is not for us is against us, inasmuch that they detect an enemy of mankind in any man or woman who ventures to drink a glass of beer—and as a rule do not hesitate to tell the offender so in very plain language. This naturally provokes opposition. People do not like to be called "enemies of mankind" because they drink beer. The really important question is how to make people temperate; and this the poor are not likely to become so long as their homes are such that they are driven thence to the tavern. As matters stand the tavern is, for most of its frequenters, the only place where they can get light, warmth, elbow-room, and the pleasures of society. If they leave the public-house they have nowhere else to go to except a single room, dark and comfortable, and tenanted, in all probability, by a number of children. Under such circumstances, the thing to wonder at is, not that so many find their way to the tavern, but that any should be found with sufficient heroism and self-restraint to abstain from going there. It was on this account that he was of opinion that if Canada was ever to be reclaimed to sobriety it would be, not by a direct onslaught against drinking, after the fashion of the total abstinence, but by the creation of some counter attraction to the public house—as for example, the coffee palace. The coffee palace will furnish all the comforts which draw men to the public house, without any of its dangers and temptations. He moved that a joint stock company be formed with a capital stock of \$5,000, in shares of \$5 each to be called the "Ottawa Coffee House."

Mr. Woodburn in appropriate terms seconded the motion.

Major Tilton felt like apologizing for the numerous citizens who had signed the requisition calling the meeting, and gave reasons why the attendance was not larger. The desirability of establishing coffee houses has passed beyond question, as they fill a place in social circles that is impossible to estimate. He was sure that the citizens of Ottawa will give the scheme a cordial support. The stock list, he said, should be made sufficiently large to enable the promoters to carry on the enterprise for at least one or two years without finding themselves embarrassed for want of funds.

The chairman said there was a feeling among some of the committee to have a membership instead of a joint stock company. The resolution was unanimously carried.

Some discussion took place as to the manner of soliciting subscriptions, when it was moved by Mr. J. K. Stewart, seconded by Mr. Porter, that Messrs. Hay, Halkett, Dr. Wicksteed, Sheriff Sweetland, ex-Aid. Henry, M. Battle, Major Tilton, A. S. Woodburn, J. K. Stewart, be a committee to solicit stock. Carried.

After a vote of thanks to the chairman and secretary, pleasingly moved by Sir Leonard, the meeting adjourned.

Principals Dawson
with best wishes
of Sir Geo. Leslie
Dr. J. Wicksteed

RICHARD JOHN WHEATLEY
LL.B., B.A., M.A.
Solicitor and Barrister,
Attorney General & Director-General,
NOTARY AND COMMISSIONER FOR
TAKING AFFIDAVITS,
City of Ottawa, Province of Ontario,
DOMINION OF CANADA

Wm McNeill
Feb 1883

John J. Conroy,
Ottawa, 18th February 1883

Received of
John J. Conroy
the sum of
\$100.00
for
rent of
No. 100
St. James
Street
Ottawa
this 18th day of
February 1883