

1924 CAMPAIGN ISSUES

VI — PROHIBITION

THE BENEFITS OF PROHIBITION

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DESPITE all obstacles set up against the enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment, prohibition has already accomplished incalculable reforms, social, economic, and industrial, says this Congressman from Ohio. In the last four years the death rate of this country has fallen, many penal institutions have closed, arrests for drunkenness have dropped by 500,000 a year, and deposits in savings banks have increased. Regulation, in place of prohibition, would, he believes, enormously stimulate the illicit liquor traffic.

THAT prohibition should be strictly enforced as long as it is a part of the Constitution of the United States, and that as part of the Constitution it is deserving of the respect and support of the citizens of the United States, is not a debatable question. Our whole system of government, our greatness as a nation, and the unequalled benefits, opportunities, and privileges which we enjoy as individual Americans are all based on the Constitution. A blow at the Constitution is a blow at all that is near and dear to us. The Eighteenth Amendment prohibiting the traffic in intoxicating liquor as a beverage is an integral part of the Constitution and as such is as much entitled to respect and obedience as any other part of the fundamental law of the land. Disregard of the Eighteenth Amendment is just as serious as disregard of the guarantee that life, liberty, and property may not be taken from a citizen without due process of law. Disobedience of one law inevitably breeds disobedience of other laws and leads to anarchy. We may change the Constitution but we can not nullify it.

Even the most active enemies of prohibition do not openly advocate disobedience to the Constitution. They propose instead that the sale of beer and wine be legalized on the claim that such beverages are not intoxicating. It is not within the scope of this article to go at length into this phase of the subject, but experience has amply proved that the liquor traffic cannot be regulated, that when it is granted an inch it will take a mile, that the only way to meet the evil is to place it outside the law and then enforce the law. To legalize the sale and traffic in wine and beer would enormously increase illicit traffic in "hard" liquor.

The extent to which prohibition is effective today depends on the point of view. To contend that it is entirely effective in parts of some of our great cities where the entire population is of foreign extraction and where the law officers wink at violations is, of course, useless. But it is just as far from the fact to argue, as do some liquor advocates, that prohibition has increased drinking and intemperance throughout the country. Relatively, prohibition is effective and it will advance toward complete effectiveness just as rapidly as citizens come to a full realization that it is a vital part of the fundamental law of the land, and to the degree that enforcement officers are selected because of fitness and determination to do their duty instead of because of political influence and "pull". Of course it will become more effective as a new generation which never knew the open saloon takes the place of those who cannot forget their appetites for strong drink.

The effectiveness of prohibition has been a varying quantity. When war-time prohibition went into effect July 1, 1919, it was obeyed even by the hardened bootleggers and moonshiners to a remarkable degree because the people were still living under the influence of the discipline and unselfish zeal of war days. Our police statistics mirror this condition. Then came the reaction from the strain of the war, such reaction as has always followed war. There was a moral let down. Violations of the prohibition law were the result, not the cause, of this moral reaction and a turn toward the pursuit of selfish pleasures and desires.

The liquor interests soon saw what they believed to be a chance to resurrect their outlawed business. They began their smuggling operations and encouraged moonshining in order to secure supplies of intoxicating beverages for the thoughtless and the indifferent. They revived their slimy tactics of graft and bribery so that they might secure permits to withdraw bonded liquor and secure the protection of officers sworn to enforce the law. They formed alliances with corrupt politicians, and the whole country has been subjected to an unceasing propaganda aimed at law and order and a sober and decent America. Unfortunately this propaganda was aided by the leniency of the courts. Petty fines practically licensed the bootleg trade and the law's delay made conviction impossible in many cases.

But the American people have again demonstrated their

essential soundness and the truth of Lincoln's wise adage that the people cannot be fooled. Each Congress that has been elected has a larger dry majority, and popular elections in many States have resulted in increased votes for law enforcement. The Christian people of America, the legal profession, the newly enfranchised women, and many other elements have joined together to urge more sincerity of purpose in law enforcement.

Handicaps placed upon enforcement agencies have been removed. The rum smuggler has been removed from the protection of the Union Jack by the recent treaty with Great Britain, and similar treaties with other powers will soon outlaw this twentieth century pirate. The Coast Guard has been granted means to protect the shores of the United States. Civil Service regulations will soon replace the spoils system in selecting honest and competent enforcement agents beyond the influence of wet politicians.

Despite all obstacles and handicaps the social, economic, and industrial reforms accomplished by prohibition are so numerous that it is impossible even to catalogue them within the limited scope of this statement. No longer are there 177,790 open, legalized saloons inviting patronage and serving as centers of evil, vice, corruption, and death. The country has never been so rich and the people so sober. But for prohibition, readjustment from the war could not have gone forward so rapidly and successfully.

The death rate in the United States has fallen amazingly. In the first four years under prohibition the decrease was equivalent to saving 873,000 lives. Crime has lessened. More people may be arrested, — but for traffic law violations, breaches of some automobile, food, or sanitary regulation and not for drunkenness. The federal census shows a decrease of 5.8 per 100,000 in our criminal population from 1917 to 1922. Hundreds of penal institutions have been closed since prohibition. Judge William M. Gemmill, of Chicago, a foremost criminal authority, says that the drop in the number of arrests for drunkenness is equivalent to 500,000 a year. The licensed liquor traffic was the most fertile source of crime, and much of the existing criminality is traceable to the now outlawed liquor traffic which is encouraged by the advocates of nullification of the Constitution.

America's prosperity is the wonder of the whole world. We have five-sixths of the world's motor vehicles. Mr. R. T. Hodgkins, Vice-President of the Rollin Motors Company, asserts that at least seven million motor cars have been bought with money that formerly went to the saloon. Roger Babson says that prohibition turned what would normally have been a downward trend into an upward one and thus accounts for much of our recent and present prosperity. Two or three billion dollars yearly were turned from the destructive channels of drink to the constructive channels of legitimate business.

Last year alone the savings deposits of the country increased a billion dollars. Insurance holdings gained eleven billion dollars and vast sums were expended for the radio, moving pictures, and other entertainments. Stock in the nation's great enterprises has been acquired by a much larger number of people. The growth of the Labor Banks is another indication that the workers are saving their money more than ever before.

That drunkenness has dropped to a minimum under prohibition is proved by the fact that in most cities a drunkard is a rare sight on the streets, and the homes for alcoholics have decreased from 238 in the time of the licensed saloon to 38 last year. There are few communities in America where it is not almost as easy to enter the lodge of a secret society without a password as it is for any one to buy a drink of intoxicating liquor without being sponsored by an acquaintance of the dealer.

The average man is the greatest gainer from prohibition. In the past ten years the per capita wealth of America has increased from \$968 to \$2,918, most of the gain coming after the adoption of prohibition. It is not the men and women who work for a living and are busily engaged in producing the wealth and prosperity of the nation who are agitating against prohibition. Such agitation finds far more willing supporters among the wealthy idle who want liquor to stimulate their jaded appetites in their pursuit of pleasure. It is among these people far more than among those who work with their hands that the advocates of beer and wine find aid and comfort and sympathy.

I am proud to be a member of Division No. 565, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, which organization through its officers recently sent a stinging rebuke to the propagandists who have

been seeking the support of labor for legislation attacking prohibition.

“It is somewhat of a mystery to us men engaged in the dangerous business of railroading why any wage-earner would want a return to the misery of the evils of pre-Volstead days,” said this organization in a reply to a request for support from the wets. “To say that the Eighteenth Amendment has been a total failure, that the drink habit is as bad or worse than before, we know is simply propaganda of those interested in the return of a business that has done more to retard civilization and human progress than any one thing in the world’s history.

“We men in the railroad game know that the Eighteenth Amendment has been the greatest blessing we ever received; we know that we are better off morally, financially, intellectually, and in every other way by the outlawing of the booze business.”