

# Cost of Alcoholic Beverages to Nation

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To start out in a fight for life with a keg of beer strapped on your back is madness, no matter how much you enjoy a glass on occasion.

## FAILURE TO STOP GREAT WASTE NOW IS TREASON

The United States is face to face with a crisis in her own history and in the history of the human race. Whether government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall perish from the earth rests largely in our hands. Opposed to us is the greatest military and industrial machine the world has ever seen. For three years it has withstood the attacks of twenty million brave men armed with all the weapons of science, adding each year new areas to its conquests and today having in the field more men and equipment than ever before.

Seven million able-bodied men have already been killed and over fifty million more are either in the trenches and training camps or are busy making munitions and army supplies. It is imperative that those left for the factories and field be brought to the highest possible efficiency, and that every useless expenditure of material and men be stopped at once. Failure to strip our nation of its greatest needless handicap to efficiency as we enter this war would be a colossal mistake, to dodge the issue from cowardice or from selfish considerations is treason.

## THE LIQUOR BUSINESS: THE LARGEST SINGLE WASTE

The nation's largest single waste is undoubtedly in the liquor traffic. The loss from the use of alcoholic beverages falls mainly under five heads: (1) The amount of foodstuffs used in their manufacture, and the human energy, the houses, and transportation facilities employed in the business; (2) the sickness and death resulting from the use of alcoholic beverages; (3) the lowered efficiency in work resulting from drinking by millions; (4) the crime due to drink; (5) the waste of public funds due to debauchery in public office because of the liquor fight.

### THE FOOD WASTE

The internal revenue reports for 1916 show that 3,603,911,916 lbs. of grain and molasses went that year into distilled spirits, and the census of 1909 (Vol. V, p. 602) shows that 2,260,266,146 pounds of corn, malt and barley went that year into fermented liquors. The fifty percent increase from 1900 to 1916 in the amount brewed would make 3,390,399,219 lbs. as the amount used for fermented liquors in 1916.

A group of the most distinguished and reliable physiologists and economists in Harvard and Yale have shown that after taking out one-sixth of this 6,994,311,135 lbs. of foodstuffs to produce denatured alcohol, there is left enough wasted food material each year to supply the energy requirements of seven million men for a year.

Why should we waste this enormous food supply and then ask the women to peel the potatoes a little thinner and force millions of poor women and children to go on half rations?

Is such saving drops at the spigot while wasting a stream at the bung-hole a reasonable act?

### THE MEN AND MATERIAL WASTED

But the waste of foodstuff is only the beginning. "The Other Side" (April 2, 1917), published by the National Wholesale Liquor Dealers Association, gives 1,600,000 as the number of wage earners employed in the liquor business in the United States. The recent advertisement by the brewers states that hundreds of thousands of men are employed by them alone. I can not vouch for the reliability of these figures, but even half that many, or 800,000 men, are working in the alcoholic beverage business, they are badly needed now in the new places created by the war and those that will be left vacant by the two million men who are going to the trenches. We are short of clerks, accountants, carpenters, brickmasons, building material, freight cars, teams and wagons, autos, industrial alcohol, and glass jars. Our nation needs now for more useful service to humanity not merely the seven billion pounds of foodstuff worse than wasted, but the hundreds of thousands of men, distilleries, breweries, warehouses, stores, freight cars,

autos, teams, wagons, and tons of glass now used up in the manufacture, distribution and sale of alcoholic drinks.

No one knows exactly how much society pays directly for the support of all this army of men and billions of pounds of material and equipment employed in the liquor business. The lowest estimate made by a responsible party and based on accurate revenue reports, of the amount paid by our nation over the bars for alcoholic drinks is \$1,750,000,000.00, or almost exactly the value of the average corn crop of the nation and nearly three times the value of an average cotton crop at ten cents a pound. It is more than the amount of the special war taxes for the year. As it has been shown clearly by disinterested scientific men that even the little food value of the two ounces of alcohol that the body can use in a day is in nearly every case more than made up for by bodily wastes produced by the presence in the body of alcohol, this vast sum is just as completely wasted by the nation as if we used all those hundreds of thousands of men and myriads of tons of food and equipment in shovelling sand on the beach to the right all the morning and then back to the left again all afternoon for the period of the war. Is that the act of intelligent beings?

### COST OF SICKNESS AND DEATH RESULTING FROM ALCOHOL

But what we are doing is worse than paying two billion a year for shovelling sand on the beach. We are allowing the sand to be shovelled into the organs of our bodies and the wheels of industry. Sixty-eight thousand men and women (valued at \$1,700.00 each, or a total of \$116,000,000.00 worth) die in the United States each year from diseases produced by alcohol. The records of 43 American insurance companies from 1895 to 1908 covering two million policy holders, show a death rate in excess of the average for very moderate drinkers of 18 percent, for those occasionally drinking to excess of 50 percent, and for heavy drinkers of 86 percent. A number of large separate companies here and abroad have recently published results of their experience that are more striking even than the above. (See Atlantic Monthly, Nov., 1916.)

Similarly, the reports of the South Australian sick benefit societies show that societies admitting both drinkers and non-drinkers have 92 percent more cases of sickness per member than do societies admitting only abstainers, and that the members remain sick, on the average, 70 percent longer. The records of the Leipsic sick benefit societies show that between 25 and 45 years of age habitual "drinkers" were sick 2-7/10 times as often as the average insured person. American, English and other records show similar facts. One-fourth of our insanity (costing \$40,000,000.00 per year) and probably one fifth of feeble-mindedness, are due to alcohol. Also, every commission that has investigated vice has reported alcohol as responsible for a large part of moral debauchery, and probably over 50 percent of venereal disease. Half of the houses of shame in Cincinnati actually had to close for want of support when the selling of alcoholic drinks was forbidden in all such places. Laboratory experiments have clearly shown that minute quantities of alcohol in the blood lower the powers of the blood serum and blood corpuscles to resist the germs of many diseases. These and numerous other similar facts make it very conservative to say that 10 percent of the preventable disease of the nation is due to the use of alcoholic beverages. As our annual loss from preventable disease is admitted to be \$1,500,000,000.00 this means that at least \$150,000,000.00 is wasted by us each year through diseases caused by alcohol.

### \$600,000,000.00 WASTED THROUGH LOWERED WORKING CAPACITY

No one knows exactly how much the productive capacity of the nation is lowered by reduction of working power in moderate drinkers when not sick. Tests made by unbiased scientists in Germany and Switzerland showed that even as little as two to four mugs of beer a day even as little as two to four mugs of beer a day cut down the work done by moderate drinkers 8 percent in setting type, reduced the number of hits made in army rifle practice seven-eighths, and increased the time required for heavy mountain marches 22 percent. Memory power and higher mental activities were reduced 40

percent or more, although in this and in the simple activities the subjects thought they were doing better when under the influence of the alcohol. Numerous studies made in school and factory work have shown that alcohol usually reduces working power considerably and increases accident and the destruction of material. While there may be some exceptions to the rule, it is certainly a safe estimate to assume that moderate drinkers are on the average 10 percent less efficient because of alcohol. If one person in five is a moderate drinker, then 2 percent of our national efficiency is destroyed by alcoholic beverages. The products of human efficiency on farms, and in mines, factories, etc., in the United States, are worth about thirty billion per year. Two percent of this, or \$600,000,000.00, is therefore the price we pay in lowered efficiency for using alcoholic beverages very temperately.

### \$300,000,000.00 WASTED IN CRIME

Conservative estimates by well informed men place the cost of crime in the United States at \$600,000,000.00 per year. The lowest estimate made of the part of this crime due to alcohol is 30 percent and the highest is 70 percent. Probably about 50 percent, or \$300,000,000.00 worth, is the amount of crime due directly or indirectly to our toleration of alcoholic drinks.

### UNKNOWN MILLIONS WASTED THROUGH DEBAUCHERY OF PUBLIC OFFICE

While we have many worthy officials, both pro's and anti's, who are well prepared for the duties of their offices, it is painfully obvious that hundreds of millions of money and invaluable opportunities for development of our resources are wasted by officials elected not for their fitness for the office, but because either of their friendliness for or hostility to the liquor interests. This will continue as long as any considerable body of voters is left who attack the saloons, and it looks as if such a body will continue at least for the period of this war.

### TOTAL PRICE PAID FOR HAVING ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

For the privilege of using alcoholic beverages indiscriminately, then, we are paying each year this price:

The labor of about a million men; 7 billion pounds of foodstuff; houses, land, transportation, etc., all to the value of	\$1,750,000,000.00
68,000 men and women killed by alcohol	116,000,000.00
Sickness produced by alcohol	150,000,000.00
Lowered efficiency in work due to alcohol	600,000,000.00
Crime due to alcohol	300,000,000.00
Debauchery in public office	?

Total yearly cost of alcoholic beverages \$2,916,000,000.00

This is nearly double the amount of the special taxes asked for the support of the war for the first year. Can any rational man justify the waste during this emergency of three billion a year, including the use of seven billion pounds of foodstuff, and the labor of a million men, merely in order that drunkards may have better opportunities to get drunk and moderate drinkers may lower their working efficiency with greater convenience?

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Plainly the manufacture, distribution and sale of alcoholic beverages ought to be stopped at once. The property employed in the business and the stock of liquors on hand should be taken over by the government immediately and paid for at a price that is fair to the owners as well as the public. Every reasonable help should also be extended to those now employed in the business in finding promptly another employment. Such a plan would really benefit all concerned, as it would give the liquor men the only chance they are likely ever to have to dispose of their property before it is confiscated. On the other hand, the government can now with comparative ease find a use for most of the distilleries, breweries, and other equipment in making munitions, industrial alcohol, and other supplies urgently needed. The supply of liquors on hand could be converted into munitions or sold for medical purposes as seemed best. In this way neither the liquor men nor the public will suffer seriously, while the nation will step up on a plane of vastly higher efficiency in this war and in the peace that will follow.