

Liquor Arguments Refuted

[From Nebraska State Journal, June 24.]

The opening gun in the summer and fall campaign for a dry Nebraska was fired yesterday afternoon by Chairman W. T. Thompson of the state dry federation. In an open letter to J. B. Haynes of the Nebraska Prosperity league Mr. Thompson took up Mr. Haynes' arguments one by one and sought to show wherein prohibition would prove a benefit. Mr. Thompson quoted a number of public officials of dry states and cities to prove that prohibition could be and would be enforced. He said:

Lincoln, Neb., June 20, 1916.—James B. Haynes, Omaha, Neb. Dear Sir: I am in receipt of your document entitled "Twenty-eight Years of High License, Local Option in Nebraska vs. Thirty-five Years of Prohibition in Kansas," purporting to be published by the Nebraska Prosperity league and bearing your name as one of its campaign functionaries.

The title to the document challenges attention. Why it is styled "Twenty-eight years of high license, local option in Nebraska" against "Thirty-five years of prohibition in Kansas" is not clear, since Nebraska, as you must know, has been under high license and local option since 1881, a period of thirty-five years instead of twenty-eight, I shall assume that the error in the title is the result of accident or misinformation and not of design. I understand this document has been mailed generally to the bankers, lawyers and business men of the state. In it you submit the question: "Does law-made prohibition produce better social and economic conditions than local option license law?"

Social and economic conditions are involved in this question and they will be considered in the order stated.

Some Expert Testimony

As evidence that prohibition does better social conditions you are referred to the statement of the commissioner of safety of Denver, Colo., who was sheriff of Denver for twelve years, but did not vote for prohibition, and who, speaking after two and one-half months' experience under prohibition, said:

"Since this town has been dry, to begin with, we haven't had a man 'rolled' in the city. By that I mean there hasn't been a man gotten drunk and had his money fleeced from him by those who got him drunk. We have about three-fifths as many arrests, as we formerly had. Our police court records for drunks and disturbance have fallen off 40 per cent. We have had seventy-five cases of bootlegging to date, nineteen of whom pleaded guilty and are doing time. I must say that the general moral effect has been pretty good. The habitual loafer has disappeared. The crowds that used to hang around the lower end of the city in free lunch counters have gone. Where, I haven't the slightest idea. Like last summer's flies, they have disappeared. Again, the wine rooms are no more and the "after the theater" dinners are over. The amount of liquor shipped into Colorado does not surprise me. So far there has been no crime from that. We haven't had a case of murder since the first of the year. Our suicides are falling off to a great extent. Let me tell you another thing, the can rusher, the old soak who came home with a quarter in his pocket and sent his eight-year-old, ragged, barefooted girl to the saloon for a can of beer and then tossed her a crust of bread while he swigged the beer and snarled at her through his drunkenness, is no longer a resident of Denver. You can't get a photograph of one of these fellows in the city. One year ago our

jail was filled with what we call 'vags'—its population was from 200 to 250. This year we have had from 100 to 185 jail population and 80 per cent of our vags are no more."

I also refer to the statement of Major C. B. Blethen, editor of the Seattle Times, who said: "My paper fought its damndest against prohibition."

After one month's experience under "law-made prohibition" in an interview at Kansas City in February of this year, this same editor said: "Seattle had 260 saloons and we had an average of 2,600 arrests a month for crime and misdemeanors growing out of liquor drinking. In January we had only 400 arrests and sixty of these were made January 1, and were the result of hangovers from the old year."

From the Mayor of Portland
If you desire further evidence that "law made prohibition" is productive of better social conditions, permit me to refer you to the published letter of H. R. Albee, mayor of the city of Portland, who said:

"The former inebriates have ceased to drink, are saving their earnings and are now able to wear new clothes and to appear in public like men. As to moral conditions, they are much improved also. Underworld characters, both men and women, have been leaving Portland for other fields more to their liking; thus ridding the city of their presence and the results of their illegal workings. There is no denying or gainsaying the good that is to result to this community from prohibition."

As further evidence of the improved social conditions under what you see fit to term "law-made prohibition," I refer you to the published letter of James R. Hanna, mayor of the city of Des Moines, Ia., dated February 19, 1916. In stating its effects for eleven months in that city he said:

"The number of arrests for the following five misdemeanors, namely: Intoxication, assault and battery, disturbing the public quiet, vagrancy and petit larceny, have been cut almost exactly in two, ranging from 40 to 50 per cent. Our insane commitments are less; our expense at the inebriate hospital has been reduced about 40 per cent, and the instances of intoxication, cited as cause for divorce have greatly decreased."

For further evidence of the social effect of "law-made prohibition" I refer you to a statement by Governor Capper of Kansas, made at Topeka, March 21, 1916, wherein he said:

"I believe it will not be amiss to designate here some of the concrete results which have been obtained under prohibition in Kansas, some of the things which have had to do with winning over the opposition:

"Kansas is the state which sends more boys and girls to university, college and public school, in proportion to population (census, 1910) than any other state in the union.

"The state in which banks and not saloons cash the working man's pay check.

"The state in which thirty-two counties have abandoned their county farms, and eighty-eight counties did not have an insane patient on their county farms last year.

"The state in which forty counties, out of a total of 105, did not send a prisoner to the state penitentiary last year."

From Governor Carlson

I also refer you to a statement of Governor Carlson of Colorado made and published February 7, 1916, wherein he said:

"The moral tone of the state has improved. In Denver, January, 1915, there were 212 arrests for drunken-

ness, 99 for disturbance and 421 for vagrancy. January, 1916, 53 arrests for drunkenness, 40 for disturbance and 115 for vagrancy. Number of arrests for all causes in Denver, January, 1915, 1,212; for all causes January, 1916, 525. Number of inmates city jail, Pueblo, February 1, 1915, 37; February 1, 1916, 6."

I refer you also to the well authenticated fact that arrests for all offenses, including drunkenness, fell off in ten cities in Arizona, for the year 1915 as the following table shows:

Bisbee	581	164
Douglas	458	229
Prescott	90	44
Florence	33	5
Flagstaff	90	21
Williams	83	50
Tombstone	85	7
Tucson	702	661
Phoenix	2,590	995
Globe	612	214
Total	4,793	2,390
Decrease	2,403	

For further evidence of the beneficial effects of "law-made prohibition" please ponder over the following excerpt from a letter written by H. C. Gill, mayor of Seattle, and published June 16, of this year, who said he was ashamed to admit that he had voted wet:

"Formerly, so long as the city licensed saloons and put a premium on drunkenness itself, drunks were not prosecuted unless coupled with some offense such as fighting. At present we prosecute all cases of intoxication, and all are booked. Formerly, those who were picked up on the street too intoxicated to be sent home were simply held in the jail until they sobered up, but never appeared on the police records at all.

"In my opinion, there has not been 1 per cent of drunkenness on the streets which existed prior to January 1st. It should not be forgotten that formerly the more than 300 saloons in this city in a measure looked after their own drunks, and in the lower classes of saloons, particularly, let them sleep it off in the saloon. As it is now, every drunk must appear on the streets, and is immediately picked up, and notwithstanding that fact the number is vastly less than it ever was before in the state's history."

If competent testimony, touching actual experience under "law-made prohibition" counts for anything, I submit that here is evidence sufficient to persuade any reasonable mind that "law-made prohibition" does produce better social conditions than local option license laws.

Better Economic Conditions

As to the second part of your question, "Does law-made prohibition produce better economic conditions than local option, license laws?" I maintain that the testimony of witnesses qualified to speak from the actual test of experience shows that "law-made prohibition does produce better economic conditions than local option, license laws. In proof of this position you are referred to the statement by the editor of the Seattle Times in which he said:

"In the first three weeks of January the savings deposits in the bank of Seattle increased 15 per cent. There was not a grocery store in Seattle that did not show an increase of business in January greater than ever known in any month before in all the history of the city, except in holiday time. In all the large grocery stores the increase was immense. In addition to this every dry goods store in Seattle, except one, and that one I have no figures from, had a wonderful increase in business. Each store reported the largest business ever done in one month, except in holiday times."

You are also referred to a statement published by the Portland Daily

Oregonian early in February wherein the paper stated as follows:

"More money is in circulation for groceries, dry goods and staple articles, says C. C. Colt, president of the chamber of commerce, indicating that the working man's money spent for liquor is going into other channels of trade, replacing the industrial forces apparently left idle by the advent of prohibition."

"C. C. Colt, president of the Portland chamber of commerce, declared business conditions have improved, if anything, since the advent of prohibition, and he is positive that the passing of saloons has thrown more money into legitimate business, as he classes clothing, dry goods and groceries, with better collections and better trading conditions, despite the bad weather and snow."

Increase in Bank Deposits

Relative to economic conditions under prohibition, you are again referred to the published statement of Governor Carlson made February 7, wherein he said:

"Two thousand and fifty new savings accounts were opened with Denver savings banks during January, 1916. For January, 1916, reports of eight Denver banks show \$575,000 increase over January, 1915. Denver bank clearings for January, 1916, \$8,000,000 more than January, 1915. Pueblo bank deposits for January, 1916, \$270,000 more than January, 1915. Pueblo postal savings deposits January, 1915, \$7,000; January, 1916, \$23,000. Collections of Denver's largest department store were 25 per cent more for January, 1916, than January, 1915. Similar reports are coming in from many other lines of business. Merchants report that hundreds of accounts considered 'no good' are being paid up."

You are again referred to the published letter of the mayor of Des Moines, written April 8, 1916, as to improved economic conditions under "law-made prohibition," wherein he says:

"I have partially completed a survey of the city, covering grocers and druggists, and with but few exceptions the proprietors say that their business is improved and that collections are much better than formerly. Old accounts, they declare, are also being liquidated and the general tone of conditions is along the line of betterment with them since the liquor business was put under the ban January 1. This seems to be equally true with other lines of business. New buildings are replacing the old shacks in which saloons were formerly conducted, and in fact all of the old stock arguments which were so persistently put forward by the liquor interests for years have been proved mere theories that fall to pieces when put under the searchlight of fact."

Such testimony would appear to the ordinary person reasonably sufficient to show that statewide prohibition does improve economic conditions.

Blind Pigs and Bootleggers

In this document you also submit the further question: "Shall the sale of liquor be licensed and regulated by law, or shall the state be surrendered to the bootlegger, the blind pig, the alleged social club and other methods of clandestine sale?" This is a double question and assumes that under the license system only legal sales of liquor are made and that there are few or no bootleggers, blind pigs, alleged social clubs or other methods of clandestine sale but that under prohibition clandestine sales are, or would be, universal. Known facts and circumstances refute any such assumption. As to the number of persons selling liquor, government licenses are a safe and fair index. For instance, Douglas county during the last municipal year