

Democratic Forward League of Kentucky Starts Fight for State-wide Prohibition

The good people of Kentucky, a splendid southern state, whose reputation away from home has been partly builded in years past upon its unlimited production of so-called "fine" whiskies, and whose politics has largely been handled by those engaged in its manufacture, putting self-preservation before all else in its manipulation, are about to throw off the yoke after a number of years of fighting during which they have slowly but steadily gained ground each year under the leadership of former Governor, now United States Senator, J. C. W. Beckham.

The final campaign is on under an organization known as The Democratic Forward League of Kentucky, which body proposes the election of a democratic general assembly in November of this year that will draft a proper constitutional amendment to submit the question of state-wide prohibition to a vote of the people. General belief in the state is that, if submitted as proposed, the amendment will carry by not less than one hundred thousand majority in a general election. Under a county-unit system a great section of Kentucky is now dry, and the sentiment is fast growing that Kentucky's future reputation shall rest, not upon the fact that whiskey is one of its chief products, but that its citizenship had the courage to put aside the question of revenue from such a source for the social and moral betterment of all.

The formation of this organization, within the democratic party, was originally set on foot at Louisville, November 16, 1916, at a small gathering embracing some of the best known men of the state. They formed the nucleus of a body that will be made up of men of their standing and character in every county, scores of whom are already in touch with the organizers. The plans of the campaign then laid were probably the most thorough yet mapped out in such a fight in Kentucky. Permanent headquarters were opened. The campaign is being conducted vigorously in every county in the state in which there is the slightest prospect of naming a democratic member of the house of representatives, and in every district where a state senator is to be chosen. An executive committee will be named in each county and district, made up of men of the standing and type of the state committee, and through these county committees the campaign will be carried into each precinct and to every democratic voter.

The plans of the organization contemplate a vigorous fight all over the state to follow the meeting at Louisville in January. A campaign of meetings in the various districts and counties will be carried on, and special attention will be paid to the counties composing state senatorial districts in which a senator is to be chosen, as a failure in the upper branch of the legislature could nullify any action taken by a majority of the lower house. The time remaining between now and the August primary will be devoted to pushing the work of organization.

The men who have set on foot this movement to settle the question of prohibition in Kentucky believe that their plan will be effective, more than if fostered only by a faction of the democratic party, as they plan to bring together with them representatives of the great business interests and people of all classes who are working for improvements in the moral and social condition of the state.

That the Democratic Forward League of Kentucky numbers in its membership the best element of manhood within the party in that state was clearly evidenced at the monster opening of its campaign, recently held in the city of Louisville. Upon the occasion four hundred men, an average of three from each county in Kentucky, came at their own expense to sit around the banquet table in the metropolis of the state and listen to the outlining of the plan of campaign that is to be followed from now until the state primary election in August next. Mr. Bryan, the honor guest of the occasion, said that he was present only to secure

inspiration for the national fight he is leading, as, at this time, he felt that in coming to Kentucky he came as the lieutenant of Senator Beckham, the real veteran in the fight in this state. He brought inspiration to the men lining up for the Kentucky fight by telling of the successful campaigns elsewhere in the country. He was followed by Senator Beckham, by Dr. A. J. A. Alexander, president of the league, by Col. P. H. Callahan, its vice-president, by H. V. McChesney, the first man to make a race in the state upon a platform of state-wide prohibition, and by Harry Sommers, leading country newspaper publisher in Kentucky. Altogether, it was one of the biggest affairs of its kind ever staged in any state, and one could hardly believe that an absolutely "dry" audience in old Kentucky could show such enthusiasm.

The Democratic Forward League of Kentucky was brought into being by a number of prominent men throughout the state who are life-long members of the party but who have never held office nor expect to become candidates, but who view with alarm the rapidly increasing domination of the party's machinery by the liquor interests and the further fact that these interests are seeking to control all legislation to their selfish ends and thereby prevent the material progress of the state and the carrying out of the platform pledges of the party. The men responsible for the organization saw a democratic majority of 35,000 in 1911 for a governor on a dry platform reduced to a miserable 400 majority in 1915 for a wet governor on a liberal platform.

The organization has spread to all of the 120 counties in the state, and prominent democrats—business men, professional men and church men—who heretofore have not taken a public interest in the councils of the party have joined forces to bring about the ends desired.

The affairs of the organization are managed by an executive committee of ten members. The chairman is Dr. A. J. A. Alexander, of Spring Station, Woodford county, a widely known philanthropist and agriculturist. Col. P. H. Callahan, a prominent manufacturer and business man of Louisville, is the vice-chairman. Associated with them on the committee are former Chief Justice J. P. Hobson, of Frankfort; Dr. A. Gatliff, a large coal operator and one of the leading Baptists of the state, of Williamsburg; Dr. M. B. Adams, of Georgetown, the president of Georgetown college and for several years the head of the state Anti-Saloon league; Judge James M. Benton, of Winchester; Hon. Henry M. Johnson, a leading attorney of Louisville and president of the Louisville Men's Federation; Hon. J. Guthrie Coke, of Logan county, is the treasurer, and B. B. Cozine, editor, of Shelbyville, is secretary.

The immediate task before the organization is the election of a legislature this year favorable to the submission of a state-wide prohibition amendment. The legislature will meet in January, 1918, and in the event the league is successful in having the amendment submitted a vote of the people will be taken in November, 1919.

THE BANQUET AT LOUISVILLE

A Louisville, Ky., special dispatch, dated Jan. 3, says: Given an impetus such as no movement ever before inaugurated in Kentucky has probably known, the fight for a democratic legislature that will properly submit at the 1918 session the question of amending the constitution of the state to prohibit the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors, and to that end electing senators and representatives who beyond doubt favor such an amendment, is on and will be waged without cessation until the people have spoken in the August primary election.

The inauguration of this campaign was marked by a monster banquet held in the city of Louisville, the stronghold of the allied whiskey and brewing interests of the state, on last Thursday evening. At this banquet, which was given by the Democratic Forward League of Kentucky, of which Dr. A. J. Alexander, of

Woodford county, is the head, about four hundred men were seated and heard words of advice and counsel from the lips of William J. Bryan, United States Senator J. C. W. Beckham, the Hon. H. V. McChesney, the first man to make a race in Kentucky on a platform for state-wide prohibition; Editor Harry Sommers, of Elizabethtown, and Dr. Alexander. Col. P. H. Callahan, of Louisville, vice-president of the Democratic Forward League, was toastmaster of the banquet.

The gathering was probably the most representative held in Kentucky in years. Judges, court and county officials, lawyers, ministers of all denominations, physicians, editors of Kentucky newspapers and business men from all over the state made up the throng. No meeting ever held in the state exceeded it in enthusiasm, hundreds who were unable to get a seat at the banquet waiting outside until the speaking was begun. All were democrats, the standing-up men of their communities, and the word in every mouth was that control of the democratic party must be wrested from the domination of the allied liquor interests and the prohibition amendment submitted by a legislature made up of men who favor it honestly and who can not be swerved from their determination in the matter.

Mr. Bryan, who made the principal speech of the occasion, declared the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors to be the greatest menace to the American home. He told of the fight being made throughout the nation to stamp it out, and of the great success of the movement. He did not come to Kentucky, he said, thinking he could be of great help in the fight, but rather to gather inspiration and strength from the determination and enthusiasm here shown. He declared that Kentucky has a veteran in the fight, Senator Beckham, and said: "I am simply Beckham's lieutenant when I come to your state." Both Bryan and Beckham told of the national fight against liquor and expressed the belief that congress was not far from submitting the question to the people of nation-wide prohibition. Mr. McChesney, Mr. Sommers and Dr. Alexander, as well as Toastmaster Callahan, devoted their remarks to the issue as it is presented here in Kentucky. Every speaker was frequently interrupted by applause, the big audience being on its feet many times during the evening.

In the course of his speech Mr. Bryan said:

"The question is here and we have got to decide which side of the issue we will take. When a child is born you have to take care of it, for it is a member of the family from the time of its birth, and the child is born, the issue is here. Twenty-three states are dry and several more have so clearly indicated their intention that we shall have not far from thirty dry states within two years from this time. We now have a majority in both the senate and the house in favor of a national amendment to the constitution, and more than half the people of this nation now live in dry territory."

The prohibition bill introduced in the two houses of the Nebraska legislature by the joint committee selected for that purpose provides that a convicted bootlegger will receive, for the first offense, a fine of \$100 or thirty to sixty days in jail; for the second offense, no fine but sixty to ninety days in jail; for the third and all subsequent offenses, from six months to two years in the state prison. Apparently the day of slapping a bootlegger over the wrist and kissing him as he leaves the court is ended in prohibition states. The bill also places directly in the hands of the governor the enforcement of the law. It does not furnish the chief executive with the oftentimes convenient goat by putting the matter of enforcement into the hands of a bureau chief. The governor repeatedly declared during the campaign that he would enforce the law if elected. There is nothing like giving a man a chance to make good on his pre-election promises.

Critics are insisting that the republican party must undergo a constructive reorganization before it can hope to figure again in a great national contest. While the builders are about it they might as well get a few million recruits. Neither is likely to happen, but when they are wishing they might as well wish good.