

In Favor of Bone Dry Prohibition

[Speech of Hon. Charles R. Crisp, of Georgia, in the house of representatives, Wednesday, February 21, 1917.]

Mr. Speaker and gentlemen of the house, I have not consumed much of the time of the house since I have been a member. I have a few things that I desire to say to the house on this occasion, and therefore I ask my colleagues not to interrupt me until I shall have stated what I desire to say, and if I have any time left I will be glad to answer questions to the best of my ability. I have always been a prohibitionist. I have voted for prohibition for 25 years—city, county, state and national—and it is inconceivable to me that any prohibitionist can be opposed to the amendment before this house. (Applause.) I can readily see how gentlemen who do not favor prohibition can oppose it, and I have no fault to find with my colleagues who differ with me; but I desire to address my remarks principally to the prohibitionists of this house, and if they will stand together before this congress adjourns we will have the best prohibition law on the statute books that has been enacted since this government was founded. (Applause.) Now, what is the amendment before the house? It is an amendment to prohibit whisky advertisements being transmitted through the mails in any of those states where by law the advertisement of liquors is prohibited; and it also prohibits the interstate shipment of liquors in any quantity into any state where by the law of that state it is prohibited, except for medicinal, scientific, and sacramental purposes.

Strange as it may seem, Mr. Speaker, a number of prohibitionists are opposed to the amendment, and they place their opposition, so far as I have been able to gather from personal conversation with the members of this house, on three grounds. In one of them they say that the amendment was proposed by a very distinguished gentleman, a member of another august body, who is not in sympathy with prohibition. I know the maxim, "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts"; but, Mr. Speaker, when this amendment was offered by the distinguished gentleman it was a very different proposition from the amendment now before the house. The amendment as offered, among other things, made it a crime to take a drink of whisky in a dry state. Possibly it was offered for the purpose of making the legislation obnoxious; but it has been perfected in another body at the other end of this capitol, and it comes before us now a splendid prohibition measure (applause), the best one and the most practical one for prohibition that has ever been before this body since I have been a member of it. (Applause.)

Mr. Speaker, to oppose this amendment on that ground does not attribute much intelligence to this body, for the members of this body can read the English language, and we know what the amendment says. It is a good prohibition amendment, and will make states bone-dry. Other gentlemen may do as they please, but I shall not desert my flag or vote against a good, practical workable prohibition measure because it was suggested by an enemy of prohibition.

Now, the second opposition to it is that it interferes with state rights. How often, Mr. Speaker, have gentlemen used the state rights proposition to get behind a thing they do not favor! (Applause.) I do not believe this interferes with state rights. We have a dual form of government, state and national, each being supreme within their respective jurisdiction. When this government was organized, and the respective states confederated themselves into one government, certain powers were reserved by the states, and certain other powers were by them delegated to the federal government, and among the powers delegated to the federal government was the right to regulate interstate commerce between the several states.

I know some of the states have a law to the effect that you can import certain quantities of whisky, and those who are arguing now that the Reed amendment is an infringement of state rights say it takes away the right of a citizen, in a particular state where the law au-

thorizes him to have a quart, to get it. Good Lord, I can not understand a "quart prohibitionist." (Laughter.)

Mr. Speaker, it does take away that right. Until the Webb-Kenyon law the states could not prohibit the importation of whisky into it through interstate commerce in any quantity; but the Webb-Kenyon act outlawed whisky so far as interstate commerce was concerned. I grant you if this amendment passes it will be unlawful to ship whisky in quarts or half gallons or gallons into any state where it is prohibited except for sacramental, medicinal, or scientific purposes; but that is not interfering with state rights. The states had no rights in the premises save what the federal congress gives them, and the federal congress had the right to amend the Webb-Kenyon act, and that is all the Reed amendment does. It says to the states, "You may be wet or dry; choose for yourselves." If whisky is injurious, and I believe it is, I think whisky shipped into my state from some other state will affect the health, morals, and welfare of the people of my state as much as if it was manufactured in Georgia.

Another thing, Mr. Speaker, some of the friends of prohibition say they favor national prohibition. So do I. But it is a "long, long way to Tipperary" before you get national prohibition. It must pass, or be submitted, by a two-thirds vote of both branches of congress, and then be ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the states in the union. I voted for national prohibition in the last congress. I will vote for it again. But I am not fooling myself that it is going to become a law in the near future. But I want some of those friends who favor nation-wide prohibition and oppose this law to differentiate how this law is interfering with state rights and the national constitutional prohibition would not. Say three-fourths of the states want constitutional prohibition and one-fourth of the states do not, do not the three-fourths force prohibition on the one-fourth of the states that do not want it, thus clearly interfering with the rights of those states?

Then, Mr. Speaker, some friends say they are opposed to it because it is too drastic. Now, I want to say in my experience the greatest argument prohibitionists have always had to combat is composed of two propositions: One of them is that prohibitionists are not sincere. Mr. Speaker, if prohibitionists oppose this Reed amendment it seems to me there is some foundation for that criticism. (Applause.) The other is they say it interferes with quart laws of the respective states. My state has a 2-quart law. But I want to say that when my state enacted that law the proponents of prohibition desired to make it as dry as possible. Our law was enacted before the decision in the West Virginia case, and there was a common idea prevalent that if you prevented the transportation of whisky entirely in interstate commerce from one state to another the courts would hold the whole law unconstitutional; and that alone is the reason that they put the 2-quart proposition in it. I have received this morning a telegram from Georgia which I desire to read:

"Atlanta, Ga., February 21, 1917. — Hon. Charles R. Crisp, The Driscoll, Washington, D. C.: At a meeting of 150 citizens of Atlanta at the Ansley auditorium, including Anti-Saloon league and Georgia Dry Federation forces, it was unanimously voted that we stand for drastic legislation and everything else that will make the nation dry. We are with you and urge all Georgia representatives to fight to a finish for bone-dry legislation.—Chas. F. Jones, Chairman Headquarters Committee, Georgia Anti-Saloon League."

Mr. Speaker, remarkable as it is, some prohibitionists say they are opposed to this Reed amendment because it will make the states too dry, and a number of states now dry in name, if they are made dry in fact, will again vote in favor of liquor. I do not subscribe to this proposition. On the contrary, I believe a number of citizens in the respective states in past prohibition elections have voted against prohibition because they sincerely believed it would not prohibit. If this amendment is passed, it

will prohibit, and it will have back of it, to insure its enforcement, both the laws of the states and United States. This amendment will make dry states "dry," and, in my judgment, the beneficial effects of a "bone-dry" state will be so great that the people will not for one moment consider voting again in favor of barrooms, but the neighboring states, seeing the splendid effects of the bone-dry law, will themselves go dry. Mr. Speaker, I am frank to say this is my honest belief; but I am candid enough to say if a majority of the people of a state desire to be "wet," under our form of government they have a right to control. As I have before stated, we have a 2-quart law in Georgia, and I earnestly wish the advocates of "quart prohibition" could visit the different express offices in the various cities and towns of Georgia on any Saturday and see the hundreds of persons, mostly negroes—men and women—lined up to get their monthly installment of liquor. I desire to save them from themselves, and if this law is passed it will do it, and this unseemly sight will be a thing of the past, humanity will be benefited, and an ugly cancer removed from the body politic.

Mr. Speaker, this is a practical age, and a man, to succeed in business, must be practical. In my opinion we must be practical to secure desirable legislation. Now, what is the practical thing for the prohibitionists to do regarding the Reed amendment? A reference to the proceedings had in another distinguished body will show that four of the five honorable gentlemen who might be the conferees on this bill if the Reed amendment is amended in any way and it is sent to conference are antagonistic to the Reed prohibition amendment. I fear if we amend the provision and it goes to conference that the senate conferees will recede from that part of the amendment prohibiting the shipment of liquor into dry states and we would lose a golden opportunity to make dry states "bone-dry." I earnestly appeal to all prohibitionists to stand together, for "united we stand, divided we fall." I beg that the true friends of prohibition will vote down any amendment and let us bide our time, and, under the rules of the house, I assure you that in due course we will have an opportunity to vote on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. Randall) to concur, without amendment, in the senate Reed amendment; and if this prevails, the conferees will have no power to alter or change the amendment in any way and we will then have a prohibition law that prohibits in fact as well as in name, a consummation devoutly to be wished for. (Applause.)

The use of bay rum, cologne, jamaica ginger and like concoctions where alcohol forms the base, is said to be largest in the states that have most recently gone dry. There is this to be said, however, that nobody is known to have beaten his wife after a spree on cologne and that anyway men who drink these concoctions in lieu of booze either get enough in a short time or else don't remain long enough on earth to do much damage.

Winter is that part of the year which is devoted to demonstrating the universally held fallacy that any legislature can finish all the work it has to do in sixty days.

FORGIVENESS

By John C. Whittier

My heart was heavy, for its trust had been
Abused, its kindness answered with foul
wrong;
So, turning gloomily from my fellowmen,
One summer Sabbath day I strolled among
The green mounds of the village burial place;
Where, pondering how all human love and
hate
Find one sad level; and how, soon or late,
Wronged and wrongdoer, each with neckened
face,
And cold hands folded over a still heart,
Pass the green threshold of our common grave,
Whither all footsteps tend, whence none de-
part.
Awed for myself, and pitying my race,
Our common sorrow, like a mighty wave,
Swept all my pride away, and trembling,
forgave!