

Governor and a Wet Senate Block Prohibition Ratification in Nebraska

Ratification of the national prohibition constitutional amendment was blocked at the recent special session of the Nebraska legislature through the position taken by Governor Neville and the refusal of the "wet" majority of the state senate to allow the question to come directly before that body. The house of representatives had previously voted to ratify the amendment by the overwhelming vote of 66 to 7.

Governor Neville, in his call for a special session to meet on March 26, refused to include the question of ratification among the subjects to be considered by the legislature.

Governor Neville also refused to deliver to the legislature the national prohibition amendment placed in his hands by the federal congress, and later refused to place the same before the legislature when requested to do so by the lower house by an almost unanimous vote.

The "wet" senate effectually completed the program by the adoption of a "gag" resolution, known as the Henry resolution, by a vote of 18 to 13, which committed the senate to the consideration only of those subjects mentioned in the governor's call.

The wet line-up stood intact on two other amendments intended to get the prohibition amendment before the senate. Later the fact was brought out by the Nebraska State Journal, which published a translation of the official instructions to the German voters by the German-American Alliance, showing that the governor and eighteen state senators who defied public opinion were endorsed for election at the time of their election in the fall of 1916. The German-American Alliance also indorsed Senator Hitchcock at the same election. Of the eighteen "wet" senators, ten came from dry districts.

Below will be found the news account of the proceedings of the Nebraska legislature, and the official indorsement of Governor Neville and the eighteen anti-ratification senators by the German-American Alliance, together with resolutions, telegrams and letters as published by the Nebraska State Journal, showing the effort made by the more patriotic citizens of Nebraska to ratify the national prohibition constitutional amendment.

MR. BRYAN'S BIRTHDAY ADDRESS

[From the Nebraska State Journal, March 20.]

W. J. Bryan told the Nebraska legislature in a speech before 2,000 persons at the city auditorium Tuesday night that the failure of the governor to include as one of its special tasks the ratification of the national prohibitory amendment did not deprive it of the power or the duty of proceeding to do so for the state.

A vote upon ratification or rejection was a duty imposed upon the state legislature by the federal constitution, and it was none of the governor's business nor has he any power or authority to prevent action by omitting it from the call. Mr. Bryan took judicial notice of the fact that the state senate was wet last session, and his speech was largely a marshaling of arguments why it should vote to ratify the amendment.

If the legislature should fail or refuse to ratify the amendment at this special session, Mr. Bryan said that the only domestic issue before the people would be the election of men to the next legislature who stand for ratification. He said he hoped that democrat and republicans would put up only men who were pledged openly for ratification, and if it happened that both candidates were opposed, then there should be an independent named to represent ratification.

"Do that," he said, "and I'll promise you I'll come back and use whatever influence I have with any voter to defeat any man who does not stand for ratification."

Elmer E. Thomas of Omaha presided at the meeting. He had started in to tell the people present that Mr. Bryan was upon a speaking tour of the nation urging the ratification of the national prohibitory amendment as the accredited representative of all of the temperance organizations of the nation, when Mr. Bryan appeared on the stage and he immediately gave way, declaring that nobody in the world could introduce Mr. Bryan to a Lincoln audience, and he wouldn't try.

Every seat on the main floor was taken, there were a hundred or more standing, and every seat in the gallery within reasonable hearing distance was occupied when Mr. Bryan began shortly after 8 o'clock. He spoke for an hour and a quarter, and at the conclusion hundreds pushed their way to the stage to shake him by the hand. The impromptu reception lasted fifteen minutes. Just before the convention adjourned it adopted unanimously resolutions calling upon the legislature at the special session to ratify the amendment, and pledged itself, if the legislature did not, to at once launch a campaign to secure a legislature "American in both houses."

Mr. Bryan began his speech by noting the fact that this was his birthday. He said that for thirty years his Lincoln friends had been calling him back to celebrate his birthday, but that none of these had taken a more delightful form than this meeting.

The fight to secure the ratification of the prohibitory amendment to the federal constitution was the greatest moral fight in which he had ever taken part, and he was happy that it was rapidly approaching a triumphant conclusion.

"When I celebrate my fifty-ninth birthday a year hence," he said, "thirty-six states will have ratified this amendment and two years from now when I am sixty, there will not be a single saloon in the United States. You may think I am sanguine, but I really find it difficult to keep up with the procession. Confident and hopeful as I am by nature, the course of events, in this instance, outruns my expectations."

MR. BRYAN'S APPEAL TO LEGISLATURE TO RATIFY

[From the Nebraska State Journal, March 26.]

William Jennings Bryan, in a personal and open letter to the members of the Nebraska state legislature, urges speedy action by both houses in ratifying the national prohibition amendment. Mr. Bryan says that consideration of the amendment is a duty imposed upon the legislature by the constitution of the United States, and that if it does not ratify a legislature will, no doubt, be elected that will do so.

Mr. Bryan, however, argues that delay ought not to be the policy. Why compel another conflict to elect a legislature that will ratify when the verdict of the state is known in advance, he asks. Delay means a hundred millions a month to the liquor trade that would otherwise be available for food and clothing and shelter, and it also means inviting the national liquor dealers' association and its ally, the German-American alliance, to insolently thrust themselves again into state politics.

Six reasons are given why action should be taken, the overwhelming vote for prohibition in Nebraska, the economic argument against the saloon, the moral argument, the success of prohibition that has removed one source of opposition, the fact that the continued use of grains for liquor-making robs the table and the soldier of needed food, and that liquor should not be allowed to be made to sap the strength of the men behind the army any more than the soldiers in the trenches.

Mr. Bryan also makes a special appeal to the democrats in the legislature. He tells them that the democratic party is committed to prohibition, and that those who oppose it register their dissent from a judgment already rendered. The letter of Mr. Bryan reads as follows:

GENTLEMEN:

As you will doubtless deal with the question of ratifying the national prohibition amendment—a duty imposed upon you by the constitution of the United States and, therefore, a subject to be dealt with whether specially mentioned by the governor or not—I venture to call your attention to the march of events since you were chosen to the positions which you now occupy.

First—The state of Nebraska has by twenty-nine thousand majority adopted constitutional prohibition. The amendment was adopted on the day when you were elected. In your campaigns you announced for or against the amendment, but the adoption of the amendment

THESE TEN "WET" SENATORS REPRESENTED DRY DISTRICTS

[From the Nebraska State Journal, April 12.]

If the will of the voters of Nebraska, as expressed in the last election, had been followed, the national prohibition amendment would have been ratified by a large majority. Ten of the senators who assisted in blocking ratification represented dry senatorial districts, as will be seen by the following table of majorities:

	Dry Majority in Each District
Senator Mattes	645
Senator Gates	129
Senator W. N. Wilson	457
Senator Soost	900
Senator Albert	584
Senator Lahners	675
Senator Buhrman	376
Senator Samuelson	1,874
Senator Adams	3,026
Senator Willis Wilson	2,882

changes the situation and presents to you an entirely different issue. Before the election you gave expression to your individual opinions; since the adoption of state prohibition you deal with a question which has been settled in this state—settled beyond any probability of change. The legislature recognized this in making statutory provision for the enforcement of the amendment.

You know, as you did not know before the election, the sentiment of the state on this subject, and you also know the sentiment in favor of national prohibition is much stronger than the sentiment in favor of state prohibition because the larger the unit, the more certain the enforcement of the law. Opposition to this settled and finally expressed sentiment of the state would be a repudiation of the fundamental principle of democracy—the right of the people to rule—for the establishment of which throughout the world we are now waging an unprecedented war. The people of the United States have not only furnished more than a million men to defend the principle of democracy with their lives, but they have loaned the government more than six billions of dollars with which to pay the expenses of the war. Can you, as legislators, refuse to give expression to this known and emphatically declared sentiment of the state?

Second—Every economic argument used before the adoption of prohibition has grown stronger during the past year. It is now known to all that the use of intoxicating liquor impairs the productive power of men as well as their fighting power. Can you, as legislators, refuse to protect the economic strength of our producers or lessen the man power of our population?

Third—All the moral arguments that have heretofore had weight have increased in strength. The man who votes on the side of the liquor dealer can not escape the responsibilities of a partner, and this responsibility is enormously increased when the individual acts in a representative capacity where his vote may have a far-reaching influence. Thirty-six states are required for ratification, and, while it looks now as if we might have more than the necessary number, it MAY require the vote of Nebraska to secure national prohibition. One vote in either house may decide the question of ratification. Can anyone of you afford to take upon himself the grave responsibility of continuing saloons in this country, knowing, as you must know, the evils inseparably connected with the liquor traffic?

Fourth—The laws which have gone into effect since you were elected have removed excuses that some honest men have given in the past for the belief that prohibition could not be made effective. The supreme court has sustained the Webb-Kenyon law, and the states, now in position to enforce their statutes, have banished the saloons, and real prohibition has converted many who heretofore thought the saloons better than prohibition laws not enforced. The amendment to the postoffice appropriation bill has also aided by withdrawing the instrumentalities of