

Nation-wide Prohibition

[Speech of Hon. John F. Shafroth, of Colorado, in the senate of the United States, Wednesday, August 1 (legislative day of Tuesday, July 31), 1917. The senate had under consideration the joint resolution (S. J. Res. 17) proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States for prohibition.]

Mr. President, the temperance movement in the United States may be divided into three epochs. The movement was first started by the appeal to the individual. Temperance societies were formed. The people were asked to sign pledges to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquor, and a considerable advance was made thereby. However, we know that such promises are often broken under exposure to the allurements of the saloon, and many signers of the pledge fell victims to temptation. It is still true as it was in Shakespeare's time that "If to do were as easy as to tell what were good to do, chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces."

Because of failure to produce the expected results the temperance people saw it was necessary to take a further step in the direction of obtaining abstinence.

State Prohibition.

The second movement was an appeal for restrictive legislation by the states, namely high license; an appeal to cities to pass ordinances prohibiting the use of intoxicating liquors in wards and cities; and appeals for local-option laws in coun-

ties; and at last state-wide prohibition.

It is needless to say, Mr. President, that the use of intoxicating liquor has been demonstrated by the medical fraternity to be most deleterious to health. A little book came to me on yesterday entitled "Alcohol," by Eugene Lyman Fisk, in which I have found some valuable information. I found that in England of the people who abstained from the use of intoxicating liquor 37 per cent less died than those of the ordinary risks in the life insurance companies of Great Britain. In other words, the man who abstained lived longer, he was a better risk. Speaking of the British Life Assurance Co., it is interesting to note this paragraph:

"This institution was founded at a time when the total abstainer was looked upon as a 'queer duck,' probably mentally unbalanced and certainly physically weak. In fact, this particular company was founded by a man who had been asked to pay an extra premium because he insisted on being a total abstainer. * * *

"It is of interest to know that, while in the course of the company's whole experience the excess mortality among users was 37 per cent, the mortality among users between the ages of 35 and 40 was 83 per cent in excess, showing the influence of some extremely unfavorable factor at that critical period."

The American insurance statistics show practically the same facts.

Mr. President, a powerful reason why the states should have enacted legislation establishing prohibition is found in statistics which show that the paupers in prohibition states are only 46 to every 100,000 of population, that in the near prohibition

states they are 54, that in the 13 partially licensed states they are 123, and in the 9 license states the ratio is 127 paupers to every 100,000 of population.

Statistics taken from the United States census reports show that in prohibition states only 118 are insane to every 100,000 of population; in near prohibition states the number is 150, in partially license states it is 242, and in license states it is 276 insane out of every 100,000 inhabitants.

The increase of the products of manufacture in states during the 10 years preceding 1909 has likewise shown the advantages of prohibition. In dry states the increase of products manufactured has been 116.3 per cent, in near prohibition states 85.6 per cent, in partially license states 82.2 per cent, and in license states 73.7 per cent.

The United States census reports also show that the number of crimes committed in prohibition states is far less than in the states where liquor is sold. It is the saloon that attracts the criminal, and it is the saloon that lures so many of the young men of our country to their destruction.

In Fisk on Alcohol, at page 183, I find the following:

"At the meeting of the American Medical Association held on June 6, 1917, Dr. Charles H. Mayo, the noted surgeon, in his presidential address stated that the only legitimate use for alcohol was in the arts and sciences, and that its use in medicine had become greatly restricted because other less menacing drugs and remedial measures could be used instead."

The association then passed the following resolution:

"Whereas we believe that the use of alcohol is detrimental to the human economy; and

"Whereas its use in therapeutics as a tonic or stimulant or for food has no scientific value: Therefore be it

Resolved, That the American Medical Association is opposed to the use of alcohol as a beverage."

The Pirogov Society, the leading medical association of Russia, on May 29, 1915, approved and published a document containing the following:

"Scientific facts (drawn from physiology, pathology, and clinical experience) compel us to place alcohol and substances containing alcohol in the class of poisonous and injurious things. Alcohol is a typical narcotic poison, which taken in small doses from the beginning disturbs the highest functions of the brain cells and consequently causes a series of pleasant but illusory feelings of warmth, energy, bravery, etc. * * *

"The use of small doses of alcohol—always a narcotic poison—develops in some men whose constitutions are weak, severer forms of alcoholism, that are obviously the cause of much personal and social unhappiness. It has been proved that a regular consumption of small doses increases morbidity, mortality, the number of accidents, mental sicknesses, suicides, crime of every type, a both qualitative and quantitative minus of capacity in both mental and physical work. The concept "moderation" can not be used for habitual use of alcoholic drinks since the customary use of a poison is non-moderation and misuse."

These are some of the reasons why the states took hold of the question and passed high license and prohibition statutes for cities and towns and finally for the states themselves.

Yet, Mr. President, notwithstanding

ing these laws, we have not been able to enforce absolute prohibition. And why? It is because surrounding the states that have established prohibition are states that declare it lawful to sell intoxicating liquors, and it is impossible to prevent the importation of liquor into prohibition states so situated. Consequently, notwithstanding prohibition has been extending until now it is the law in about 26 states, yet it is impossible to enforce absolute prohibition under that system.

From the Statistical Abstract for 1916 I take the following, showing the consumption in gallons per capita of intoxicating liquors:

Average of 1881 to 1890: Distilled, 1.34; wines, 0.48; malt, 11.38; total, 13.20.

Average 1916: Distilled, 1.35; Wines, 0.46; Malt, 17.59; total 19.40.

Mr. President, what necessity, then, arises from that condition? The necessity of having a nation-wide prohibition constitutional amendment. That is the necessity. That seems the only remedy to prevent the shipment of liquor from one state to another.

I heard the colloquy between the senator from Missouri (Mr. Reed) and the senator from Kansas (Mr. Thompson) as to whether the prohibition law in Kansas had been a success. One declared that it had been and the other insisted that it had not, but every contention of the senator who declared the law a failure demonstrated the necessity for a national constitutional amendment. The very thing that prevented the state of Kansas from enforcing absolute prohibition was the fact that liquors from other states adjoining had been surreptitiously taken into that state.

Mr. President, it does seem to me that when the temperance people have tried in two different ways to get absolute prohibition and have not been completely successful, the last resort and the third appeal should be made to the nation. The nation is deeply interested in this question. It has been said that the War College division of the United States army made an estimate of the number of killed and wounded in the wars of all history from 500 years before Christ to the Russian-Japanese war of a few years ago, and it was found that in all those wars the total killed and wounded was 2,800,000 men, and of that number it was estimated that 700,000 were killed and 2,100,000 wounded.

Mr. President, it is also stated by Mr. Hobson in a lecture that the number of deaths from alcohol among the people of the white race in the world is 3,500,000 every year. If that is true you can readily see that war losses are but an inconsiderable fraction compared to the losses chargeable to the account of intoxicating liquors. It is said, therefore, that every year there die from the use of intoxicating liquors five times as many persons as the total of all the victims in the wars of the world for 2,300 years.

The national government can more certainly enforce its liquor legislation. The federal courts are feared, and hence laws will be observed. As a state can not under our dual form of government establish complete prohibition, any state is justified in urging a national constitutional amendment for prohibition for its own protection. Otherwise 36 states could not protect themselves against 12 commonwealths. What a great interest, then, has the nation to see that her citizens are preserved, ready to defend her in all times of stress and need.

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