

The Commoner

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

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Put none but ratificationists on guard. Democrats and Republicans everywhere should see to it that every candidate for the state legislature is openly pledged to vote for the ratification of the National Prohibition Amendment. Take no chances---This is the supreme domestic issue until Constitutional Prohibition is secured.

Why Not a Referendum?

A New York paper expresses wonder that prohibitionists should oppose the referendum on ratification which the liquor interests of that state are asking. The explanation is easy. The brewers, distillers, saloon keepers and their newspaper champions have violently opposed a referendum when the temperance forces have asked for a vote. They have fought the submission of every state amendment submitted, they have fought county option; they have fought every to 'n option.

Because of the domination of Pennsylvania by the liquor interests there is not now in that state a unit large or small that is allowed to express itself on the liquor question. In New Jersey local option has been secured only this year, and in New York only last year (in the cities of the third class). In every license state the liquor interests have opposed the initiative and referendum for fear the people would use the initiative to submit the liquor question to popular vote, and yet in spite of this record the allied liquor forces impudently demand a popular vote in New York before ratification. Why? First, because a referendum would DELAY for at least a YEAR

the ratification of the amendment by the empire state, and MIGHT delay for a year the banishing of saloons from the country—and a year's delay would be worth from one to two billion dollars to the liquor interests of the nation. This is an important reason and yet no champion of the saloon ever refers to this reason.

The second reason is that a referendum, if binding on the conscience of the legislators, would enable the wet cities to rob the country districts of their constitutional rights in the legislature. Legislators are elected by districts and are RESPONSIBLE TO THEIR CONSTITUENTS. No legislative action can relieve them of that responsibility or make the saloon-ridden cities custodians of their consciences.

The federal constitution puts the ratification of amendments in the hands of legislatures. If the system is to be changed it must be changed EVERYWHERE, not merely in states where the liquor interests see an advantage in the change.

Here are two reasons easily understood by all who want to know the truth—reasons that are invisible to those only who see through a (beer) glass darkly. W. J. BRYAN.

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY LEADS

Two more states have been added to the roll of honor since the last issue of The Commoner—Montana and Texas. Eight states have thus far ratified: Mississippi, Virginia, Kentucky, South Carolina, North Dakota, Maryland, Montana and Texas—and EVERY ONE OF THEM WENT DEMOCRATIC IN 1916. At least one republican state must ratify before that party can enter the democratic class.

The kaiser has greedily devoured some of Russia's territory. This will raise other Alsace-Lorraine problems that will disturb future generations unless he is compelled to accept the doctrine that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.

War requires money as well as men, and a failure to furnish the money would be disastrous to our cause. Subscribe for the Liberty Bond. It is the safest investment in the world.

The Majority Have Spoken

The wet papers are greatly concerned lest the thirty-six states necessary to ratification may not contain a majority of the population. What bosh! They might wait and see before giving utterance to lamentations. The chances are that the ratifying states will contain a large majority of the voters of the country. Ohio, Illinois and even New York and Pennsylvania are likely to ratify. But even if they do not it must be remembered that the majority HAVE ALREADY SPOKEN.

The house of representatives is selected ACCORDING TO POPULATION. When a majority of the DISTRICTS favor a proposition it means that a majority of the people favor it. As a matter of fact, more than TWO-THIRDS OF THE DISTRICTS VOTED FOR SUBMISSION. The country is ready for national prohibition. W. J. BRYAN.

The war continues, but the government is doing all that can be done to mobilize the resources of the nation, and the people stand unitedly behind the government.

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List of States That Have Ratified the National Prohibition Constitutional Amendment

- 1—MISSISSIPPI, January 8, 1918.
- 2—VIRGINIA, January 11, 1918.
- 3—KENTUCKY, January 14, 1918.
- 4—SOUTH CAROLINA, January 23, 1918.
- 5—NORTH DAKOTA, January 25, 1918.
- 6—MARYLAND, February 14, 1918.
- 7—MONTANA, February 20, 1918.
- 8—TEXAS, March 6, 1918.