

# EDITORS ARE FOR LICENSE

Nebraska Scribes Defend and Support the Slocumb Local Option Law.

## DENOUNCE "COUNTY OPTION"

How the Mail Order Traffic in Wet Goods Is Fostered by Dry Towns Which Are Drained of Money.

In 1899 Nebraska editors participated in a memorable campaign against the proposed amendment to the state constitution to prohibit the manufacture and sale of intoxicating beverages. At that time a majority of the editors favored the retention of the high license, local option law enacted in 1887, believing it to be the best method of controlling the liquor traffic. In this contention they were supported by many of the leading men of the state, including Hon. W. J. Bryan.

The presumption is that the majority of Nebraska editors are of the same opinion still, and that they are again ready to defend the Slocumb law against attack. A number of the best-known editors of the state have expressed their views on the subject in letters written to the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association of Omaha. Some of these letters are as follows:

### FREMONT DAILY HERALD.

Fremont, Neb., June 2, 1908.—Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association: Gentlemen: I helped into effect the prohibition law in Iowa by voting for it. My observations after the election and for several months convinced me that I made a mistake, and I have not voted for prohibition since. A well-regulated license law, and enforcement thereof, will be of far greater benefit to any community than a so-called prohibition law. Prohibition does not prohibit. The national government has been at work for a century trying to stop distillation in the mountains of Tennessee, and it has failed to accomplish "prohibition." I am satisfied that prohibition in Nebraska would result in more drunkenness, more bad whiskey, more bootleggers, more whiskey drug stores, and a greater general menace to society than ever before. The continued improvement in methods of saloon men, brewers, and dealers generally is going steadily on, making a license law such as we now have more desirable than ever heretofore.—Yours truly, Marc G. Perkins.

### THE GREELEY CITIZEN.

Greeley, Neb., May 27, 1908.—Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association: Gentlemen: Replying to your query as to why I favor the present Slocumb license law in preference to a state prohibitory law or county option law, would say that I have lived in Nebraska since the adoption of the present liquor law; have seen its workings; know it to be prohibitory if the community desires to enforce its provisions, and no other state has a law that is equally as prohibitive.

I have been in Kansas and Iowa since those states adopted state prohibition, and at the times of my visits to them was a drinking man, and soon found out that I could get all the "booze" I wanted to drink.

Several years ago I lived in Utica, Seward county, and in my newspaper business had dealings in both York and Seward. York was supposed to have the lid on tight, and Seward had four or five open saloons, yet one would see more drunken men in York than in Seward, and it was a subject of general comment at the time that the city and county officials of York were very lax in their enforcement of the law.

I have for years argued with the temperance people—those who favor a prohibitory law—that they should use their endeavors to amending the revenue laws of the government—in effect, to have the government refuse a license when a municipality voted for no saloons. In that way, with the strong arm of the government to enforce its laws, bootleggers would go out of business.

No town in a county has a right to say to another town that it shall not do as it likes. No state has a right to say to another state, "You must obey our laws." That is the reason I oppose the county option bill.—Yours very truly, F. P. Compton.

### LOUP CITY STANDARD GAUGE.

Loup City, Neb., June 20, 1908.—Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association: Gentlemen: I have been a temperance man all my life, but am strictly opposed to prohibition, because:

First, it was never known to prohibit.

Second, it makes criminals out of good citizens, both for and against.

A system that sets neighbor against neighbor is degenerating, and a law that puts a premium on outlawry should be repealed. A law or a system that encourages men to watch the back door of their neighbor with the

hope of making a criminal of him scarcely ever fails to make a criminal out of the watcher. Freedom of speech and action is the one God-given heritage that the common people seem to have a perpetual fight to maintain. From all ages the fanatic, whether religious or political, has been the supreme foe of the masses. Laws have been made and gerrymandering accomplished that the majority of the people never realized until they awoke to find their liberties either curtailed or annihilated. The masses should wake up to the fact that the softening sentences of religion do not better their condition once they allow their liberties to be snatched from them. A better understanding of mediaeval history would be beneficial to the world.—George H. Gibson.

### SCHUYLER FREE LANCE.

Schuyler, Neb., May 29, 1908.—Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association: Gentlemen: In response to your letter of recent date, will say that I am opposed to statutory prohibition in Nebraska and am a great believer in the efficiency of the present Slocumb law, which is a measure designed to fit the prevailing sentiment of any community. It is a model local option law and, regardless of what any person's individual opinion may be, he can endorse the provisions of the Slocumb law. Public sentiment is always stronger than statutory provision and the latter becomes obsolete when that sentiment is not in harmony with it.

Under the provisions of the Slocumb law, in communities where the prevailing sentiment is against saloons, the people can have prohibition as effective as they could under the most rigid prohibitory laws, and in communities where prohibition would not prohibit and would be a farce, the traffic can be held in check under a wise license system and bootlegging and the attendant lawlessness will not be the common method. If the Slocumb law cannot be enforced in a community, most surely any prohibitory law cannot be. Enforced legislative provisions of a personal nature must follow in the wake of public sentiment, and the wise Slocumb law seems to have been framed to fit the conditions of each and every community. Public sentiment as expressed by the majority makes each community one of prohibition or one of various degrees of high license under not alone the general restrictions of the state law, but under additional provisions of ordinance at the will of the local majority as well. The Slocumb law is the best possible, and should be let alone. If there is a genuine criticism of that law, it is that it gives the saloon man little right and subjects him too much to the malice of a citizen.

I am also opposed to the proposed county option, for it destroys, in a measure, local option and the principle of home rule. It is unjust in that it gives men a vote as to municipal affairs when they pay no municipal taxes and have no real interest in the municipal government. Taxation without representation all Americans agree is wrong, and the reverse is equally so.—Very truly yours, John C. Sprecher.

### SALINE COUNTY DEMOCRAT.

Wilber, Neb., June 8, 1908.—Gentlemen: The coming struggle over the liquor question should be approached with the greatest moderation and forbearance on both sides.

The manufacture and sale of a beverage that has been in use as far back as authentic history goes, and ages before the dawn of Christianity, can no more be prohibited by statute law because the depraved appetites of a few bring discredit upon those who supply the public demand for it than can the preaching of the gospel be prohibited because the vicious propensities of a small percentage of ministers and the excesses of their patrons bring contumely upon the whole church, by transgressing upon divine as well as civil law. To my iconoclastic mind both are in the same class—there for the money that is in it.

In my opinion, the Slocumb law of Nebraska is the best form of regulating the liquor business that has yet been devised. It has stood the tests of the courts for years and where any reasonable effort towards its enforcement by the local authorities has been made, it has given almost general satisfaction. Witness the jubilation of the "dry" forces at the result of the recent spring elections. It gives each community local option. To tamper with it would be tempting Providence, because the introduction of just one innocent-looking little "joker" by some adroit schemer might lead from orderly regulation to absolute chaos.

Prohibition has been adopted in a number of the southern states just "to keep the niggers from getting it." If adopted here, it will be the white man of limited means that will be the greatest victim. In many localities it would be those colonies of hard-working, law-abiding and thrifty citizens who have been accustomed to the moderate use of malt beverages from childhood. The fellow who has got the price will get all he wants anyway, wholesale by case or cask, and make no bones about it. And won't it be a pretty spectacle to see the tramping hoboes with a capital of ten cents go to the place across the street and rub shoulders with the sanctimonious Pecksniffs who yowl prohibition and affect to scorn the open saloon, but all the time take their tips on the sly in the back room of the "dispensary?"

My memory of history may have become a little defective through advancing years, but to the best of my

recollection, whenever it has come to a downright contest between the "puritans" and their more broad-minded fellow men, it has generally been the self-righteous that have done the emigrating.

Better "let well enough alone." It is my firm belief that the present agitation has been started by self-seeking politicians only to distract the attention of the people from far more serious evils.

It is universally conceded that commercial exigencies and educational influences are steadily advancing the temperance cause. Let these good influences continue, but from an acrid "We won't!" with its personal recriminatory campaign of "You will!" and intonations and long-enduring animosities, Good Lord deliver us.

One who has been through the "crusade" of the early seventies and the hard-fought campaign of 1890 ought to have formed decided opinions about the utility of well-meant but impractical legislation.—Respectfully, John Knight, Editor and Publisher.

### GREELEY CITIZEN.

One of the best weekly newspapers in Nebraska is the Greeley Citizen, published by Messrs. E. P. and E. E. Compton. Its editorials are uniformly well written and forceful. Its issue of June 5 contained the following:

"It is but just to state that the Merchants' and Manufacturers' association is not a saloon organization, nor is there a saloon man (either wholesale or retail) nor a brewer among its members. It is an organization of manufacturers and wholesale and retail merchants of that city banded together for the distinct purpose of working for what they deem for the best interest of Omaha and the state. Some of the best and most influential papers in the state have published the article and we call our readers' attention to it on the last page.

"The Merchants' and Manufacturers' association or the Anti-Saloon League should enjoy equal facilities at the hands of the Nebraska press and, with few exceptions—notably our contemporary—they will, and a full and frank discussion of any public question will never injure the morals of any one, and no one but a hypocrite would object."

### THE WYMOREAN.

E. M. Burnham, editor of the Wymorean, expresses this view of the subject:

"If prohibition prohibits, I am for it. If voting the saloons out of Wymore means that the liquor traffic will still be continued underground, by bootleggers and in holes in the walls, I say license the saloons, and have the liquor business carried on in a way that gives the city a sum of money, which is badly needed, and conducted by men whom we know and who are good citizens. In towns and states where saloons have been shut out, the liquor traffic has been transferred from responsible hands to outlaws and scoundrels, and from an open business to an underground one. I do not believe that shutting out the saloons in Wymore will stop the sale of liquor and for that reason I am for local license."

### COLUMBUS TELEGRAM.

Hon. Edgar Howard, one of the ablest democratic editors in the state, makes the following editorial reply to an anonymous correspondent:

"This liquor problem is a large problem, and it cannot be settled and settled right by men who are so lacking in courage as to write an anonymous postal card. It is a question which needs the best of thought of all good citizens. Men may honestly differ as to the mode of dealing with this great question. Some men are honest in the opinion that the traffic in intoxicating liquors should be wholly prohibited. Other men honestly believe the traffic should be regulated by law. Why should it seem necessary on the part of those who believe in prohibition always to question the honesty and integrity of those who do not believe in prohibition?"

### SCRIBNER NEWS.

In its issue of June 5, the Scribner News says:

"A great deal of misrepresentation has been put in circulation in regard to the Merchants and Manufacturers association of Omaha which is making a strong and dignified fight against prohibition, and what is still worse, county option. The association is composed of leading business men of Omaha whose names are familiar throughout the state. No distiller, brewer or liquor dealer is eligible to membership.

"Now if those advocates of prohibition will read and consider the weekly columns furnished by the above named association, they will notice that some of the best business men of the state are strictly against county option."

### WESTERN NEBRASKA OBSERVER.

Kimball, Neb., May 26, 1908.—Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association: Gentlemen: I came here over a year ago from Kansas where I lived fifteen years. I had ample opportunity to observe the workings, or rather, the non-working qualities of the prohibitory law. I am sick and tired of drug-store saloons and joints which pay no license and cause more drunkenness than open saloons. The Slocumb law in Nebraska is all right as it now stands and needs no changing. A saloon run strictly in accordance with this law is a great deal more to be desired than a "dry" town with its drug stores, its bootleggers, and its numerous shipments of mail-order booze and consequent drunkenness.—Very respectfully, R. D. Wilson.

### MORE MAIL-ORDER BUSINESS.

Every local merchant in Nebraska has felt the unfair competition of the eastern mail-order house. There is a state association of merchants, the object of which is to make sentiment antagonizing the mail-order business. The local merchant contends that it is unjust to him, a local taxpayer, to permit a company paying no taxes in the state to ship into a Nebraska community merchandise at prices less than the local merchant can afford to sell for, because of the insurance, tax and rental rates he is compelled to pay for the privilege of doing business. He is casting about for some means by which the mail-order business may be stamped out.

In this connection, it is interesting to cite one phase of the situation in Butler county, brought about by some of the towns whose people voted not to issue liquor licenses. A David City banker writes that immediately upon the adoption of the dry policy, there sprang up an active mail-order business in wet goods. The same is true of Beatrice. All such money, of course, leaves the county, and while as much liquor as formerly may be consumed, the volume of local money is depleted.

It is said on good authority that every Saturday night trains from Kansas City to Topeka carry mail-order original packages of wet goods for the individual consumer at Topeka.

A well known citizen of Cook, Neb., writes of the mail-order business in wet goods as applied to that town, as follows: "In one month there has been shipped into Cook seven and one-half barrels of wine and whisky and twenty barrels and five cases of beer."

The Chamber of Commerce of Savannah, Ga., has issued a circular stating that the new prohibition law of that state has created an immense mail-order traffic in liquor amounting to something like \$200,000 a month, which is leaving the state, and in return for which liquor is received for local consumption.

During the days when the policy of prohibition was sought to be enforced in Iowa, the mail-order business from Omaha houses into the various towns of western Iowa was enormous; the money, of course, leaving the local communities of Iowa to enhance the profits of Omaha dealers. The enactment of the Milet Tax law in 1894 put a stop to most of the traffic.

These instances are few compared with the large number within the knowledge of the people of Nebraska towns which have gone dry. The federal supreme court has, in three notable cases, decided that no valid law could be passed to prevent a citizen of one state ordering liquor shipped from another state for his own use; therefore the original package mail-order traffic in wet goods is strictly legitimate from a legal point of view, or, at any rate, the right can not be abridged by law.

It is a question for local merchants and taxpayers to decide for themselves whether or not they shall favor a local policy which would be certain to build up an immense mail-order business, thus creating a constant drain upon the money of any town adopting that policy.

### THE SNYDER BANNER.

Manager Gus H. Weber of the Snyder Banner, discussing the mail-order liquor trade, says:

"With prohibition every taxpayer will have to cough up more money proportionally—but the 'jug houses' do business just the same—depriving the towns of their annual income of license, and at the same time increase the mail-order trade which has become a heavy drain on local merchants all over the country.

We do not believe that people could not exist without liquor, but while we are positive that some so-called prohibitionists insist on its use we are going to stand for license, to which the community is more entitled than those jug houses ever dared to be.

To give a plain illustration of how liquor trade is going abroad we wish to relate the following story which recently came to light: A well known citizen in a country town called at the depot asking the agent if "his books had come." The agent replied that no books were received at the time. Later the same party inquired by telephone about the expected merchandise, when the agent replied, "Yes, your package is here, but there are no books; it is billed as liquor." Seeing that he was caught in a trap our citizen refused to accept the package. It is not necessary to state that that man will vote for county option, but he must have the booze."

### CLAY CENTER SUN.

The editor of the Clay Center Sun makes the following significant comment:

"It has been said in our hearing many times that the business of Hastings has fallen off greatly since the saloons were closed. The extent of that decline, as reported in some instances—once-half—did not to us seem possible, but that there has been a heavy decline we are forced to believe. What follows such a decline in business? Discharge of help. We cannot guess how many worthy ladies and gentlemen are thrown out of employment.—Does one hundred overstate it? We guess not. Half of these will miss their salaries, though perhaps small, exceedingly, and as much as the ladies might abhor saloons wouldn't they feel that the presence of the saloon, so far as they are concerned, where the evil effects are not seen in their families, can more easily be endured than the want of the weekly stipend that they receive when business is better and their services are needed in the stores? We learn

through the Hastings Tribune that one hundred and fifty-five of Hastings' most progressive business men respectfully call the attention of the city council to the fact that at the last municipal election a majority of 206 votes were cast for the policy of local license and that the general business of the city is suffering from the effects of the present policy."

### STERLING SUN.

As Sterling has saloons and none of the neighboring towns have any, it will be a good opportunity to make comparisons during the year as to relative business conditions, amount of drunkenness and other disputed questions as to prohibition and saloons. There are a great many temperance people who do not believe in, but discourage the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage; who are not prohibitionists, so-called, because they do not believe that prohibition of the liquor traffic prohibits, nor is it the best way to control the use of intoxicating liquors.

### KEARNEY DEMOCRAT.

Editor F. L. Whedon writes:

A corporation lawyer ought to know better than we do, because we are not a corporation lawyer, why the people living in any of the outlying townships in Buffalo county should not be permitted to vote to control the actions of a municipality or municipal corporation. Cities and towns are separated and segregated from the control of the county government by statute and it is in violation of law and the constitution of the state for a citizen of Logan township to come to Kearney or go to Elm Creek and cast his vote upon any question or upon any proposition which is being voted upon by the voters of those corporations. He becomes a criminal the moment he does so. He is not, should not, and the courts will not give him legal right to have a voice in such local government, because to give him such a voice in the municipal government would be to give him representation without taxation, which would be destructive to the principle of home rule, would be illegal and un-American in every sentiment. The constitution and the statutes do not abide in the principles of county option, because they protect towns and villages against the domination and encroachment of a larger number of voters throughout the county in which they are situated, who are not taxed to maintain municipal or corporate government and have no more right under the statute and the constitution of controlling or shaping the affairs of those towns and villages than has the city of Kearney to dominate and vote upon the affairs of Ravenna or Shelton. The plan of county option is to have the county dominate the city of Kearney, providing county option should receive a majority of the votes within the county, but permit Kearney to work out its own salvation if a majority of the votes within the county should be cast against county option. Kearney always has, and we believe always will be perfectly able to understand its own affairs—what it wants and what it does not want—what it can afford and what it cannot afford—better than the voters of Logan township do or can."

### LOUP CITY STANDARD-GAUGE.

The saloons closed their doors at noon Tuesday, their license having expired. It has been a dry town since, but every one seems to satisfy their thirst as they did when the saloons were open. Just the other evening a case of the best that money can buy came in from Kansas City. Does that look like you can shut it out of the city? It will be had when it is desired no matter how the "Water Apostles" arrange matters, so let 'em go.

### SCHUYLER FREE LANCE.

Hon. John C. Sprecher, editor of the Schuyler Free Lance, in a recent issue of his interesting and ably-edited paper, says:

"The leading business firms and individuals of Omaha have organized what is known as the Merchants' and Manufacturers' association for the express purpose of fighting not alone prohibition in this state, but county option as well. And those business men are not brewers nor distillers nor saloon keepers nor 'boozers,' but are the leading business men of Omaha who know the serious effect upon business prohibition has and also realize that county option is unfair. They favor the present Slocumb law, which is fair to all elements and permits the majority of any community to rule. That association has a press bureau and that bureau is sending out literature as well as furnishing the local press with articles and plate matter. So far as the association and its mission are concerned, the Free Lance editor is in harmony with them and their opposition to prohibition and county option is in accord with us. We agree in general with the matter, which is simply presenting their side of the question.

### LOUP CITY STANDARD GAUGE.

Every voter should clearly understand the situation and if he wants a law passed that allows his neighbor miles away to tell him what to do then he should vote for the representative or senator that will pass it. If he desires to govern himself and grant the other man the same right then elect a man who is against county option. Don't be fooled on the word local option, we have that—county option destroys that privilege. Suppose the fight that the fanatics are making for county option is defeated at the polls, what have they lost? Not one privilege, or power; but if they

win, they have succeeded in winding the people in one more mesh called law, that robs you of your liberty. Don't forget that your liberties are easily given away, but once gone are mighty hard to recover.

### HASTINGS TRIBUNE.

That you may better understand just what these 150 business men are praying for we print a copy of their petition, which follows:

"We, the undersigned citizens and business men of Hastings, Neb., recognizing the imperative necessity of continuing the established policy of government, wherein the majority shall rule, believing the business interests of this city are best protected by following the expressed will of the majority, respectfully call your attention to the fact that at the last municipal election a majority of 206 votes were cast for the policy of local license and that the general business of this city is suffering from the effects of the present policy.

"We, therefore, pray your honorable body to at once take up and act upon the several petitions for liquor licenses, now on file with the city clerk."

### GRAND ISLAND INDEPENDENT.

At its state meeting held in Hastings recently the anti-saloon league declared its opposition to the Slocumb law and expressed itself in favor of the repeal of the same. It also declared itself in favor of the county option law, evidently as a temporary measure. The Slocumb law permits prohibition for every community which wants it. The county option law permits of people outside of a community governing such community—provided they will govern it one certain way.

### SCHUYLER FREE LANCE.

The prohibition element in Nebraska promises to be very active and they also give evidence of being as unprincipled as they are aggressive. Abuse and misrepresentation never win anything and that is their principal means of attack. This editor prefers law and order rather than the opposite and prefers licensed saloons in lieu of bootlegging and so stands by the Slocumb law.

### PENDER TIMES.

There are lots of good intelligent people who do not believe in the liquor traffic who do, however, believe that while it is with us it can best be regulated by local license, which is far more preferable than bootlegging and other attendant evils even prohibition towns must put up with, to say nothing in reference to the question of revenue and the wishes of the majority of the community.

### GENEVA GAZETTE.

Syracuse, Nebraska, went dry and the town board had to cut expenses to meet the pocketbook they were to carry for the year so they cut out the street lighting service, reduced the salary of the treasurer, did away with the office of attorney and made the water and light commissioner act as town clerk.

The prohibitory law in Georgia, which went into effect the first of January, stopped the manufacture and open sale of liquor. The secretary of the Commercial club at Savannah says that the club has sent agents over the state to ascertain the effect of the law upon the business of Georgia. He writes that insofar as an estimate can be made at this time, he finds that merchants are losing hundreds of thousands of dollars of trade a month, which is going to outside dealers of liquor who are shipping liquor into Georgia in original packages. The commercial clubs of Georgia have combined to see what can be done to keep such money in the state. They hold that there is just as much liquor being consumed as ever.

Be it remembered that local option as defined by the Slocumb liquor law affords the fullest measure of home rule. It is a vital quality of the law. Destroy it, and the whole structure must fall. So-called county option, as defined by the Anti-Saloon league, is intended to destroy this element of home rule by putting the power in the hands of rural voters to dictate to the taxpayers of villages and towns as to what they shall or shall not do.

Pretended county option means that the limits of villages and towns shall be ignored, when the people of a whole county may be permitted to vote to prevent the issuing of liquor licenses. With such a law as that in effect, the home rule of villages and towns would be destroyed, and their policy with respect to the control of the liquor traffic would be dictated by the farmers of the county, who pay no taxes in the towns.

The secretary of the Fort Scott Commercial club says that owing to the blight of prohibition in Kansas, immigration into that state during the last twenty-four years has been less numerically than the birth rate. He says the policy has put a check upon the material progress of the state as compared with other states, whereas Kansas is naturally one of the most productive states in the union.

County option was enacted in Texas and forced upon the people of many towns against their will. The secretary of the Denison Commercial club estimates that the operation of county option in that city cost the merchants and property owners nearly a million dollars.