

# FROM KANSAS BUSINESS MEN

## They Explain Why Prohibition in that State Is a Dismal Failure

### IT IS DAMAGING TO BUSINESS

Owing to the Blight of Prohibition, Immigration into Kansas in 24 Years Has Been Less Numerically than the Birth Rate.

The Anti-Saloon League in state convention at Hastings laid plans for conducting a campaign in Nebraska. Resolutions were adopted declaring the league to be in favor of every measure looking to state-wide prohibition. The agents of the league were instructed to work for what they call "county option" (county prohibition) as the most practical means of attaining state prohibition.

A publication said to be the official organ of the Anti-Saloon League, in its issue of January, 1908, said: "We must have the county law to demonstrate the value of prohibition in its larger division before we can hope to win the state." Superintendent Palmer of the Anti-Saloon League in Minnesota, recently said: "We favor ultimate prohibition by the state, but county option is the natural step thereto." Dr. P. A. Baker, national superintendent of the Anti-Saloon League, said: "State and national prohibition is the ultimate object of the league."

The only active work being done in Nebraska today to attain state prohibition is that performed by the active, paid agents of the Anti-Saloon League. They are traveling the state getting signers to petitions to the next legislature praying for a law providing for what they term "county option," but which, in fact, is county prohibition—there being no element of option in it.

These facts are not disputed. The action of the league is forcing the supporters of the Slocumb local license law to take steps in its defense. This law has been on the books since 1887, and is regarded as the best law for the control of the liquor traffic ever written. Many states have copied it.

Since the sole aim of the Anti-Saloon League is to attain state-wide prohibition, it is necessary for the supporters of the Nebraska license law to ascertain the facts attending the operation of prohibition laws in other states. This is why the Merchants' and Manufacturers' association of Omaha has collected much information on this point from so-called prohibition states.

Incident to this showing, the association has collected evidence from members of commercial clubs of Kansas, to which the following letter was sent, with request for opinions on the subject:

"Today we received the following letter from an editor of the Kimball, Nebraska Observer:

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 which 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."

The following replies were received:

**L. H. PHILLIPS, ATTORNEY.**

Girard, Kan., July 13, 1908. Merchants' and Manufacturers' association. Gentlemen—Replying to your favor of June 3d relative to the workings of the Prohibitory Liquor Law, I will say that the way the matter is now handled, it amounts to almost a farce. This is largely due to the way the county and city officials handle the matter.

In this county, I presume there are at least one hundred saloons. They run night and day, Sundays included. There has never been a time since the liquor law was enacted that it hasn't been sold in this county. It is worse now than it was some years ago.—Very truly yours, L. H. Phillips.

**SOUTHERN KANSAS MILLERS' COMMERCIAL CLUB.**

Wichita, Kan., July 6, 1908. Merchants' and Manufacturers' association. Gentlemen—Replying to your favor of the 29th as to the effect of the prohibition law in the state of Kansas and the city of Wichita, will say that there is no question but the law as it has been enforced in this city and other towns in Kansas has hurt the material and business interests of the state; however, if prohibition prohibited as it is intended by the law, results might be different, yet we have never had an opportunity to judge, as there seems to be just as much whiskey and beer sold at this time as ever there was, yet it is supposed the "lid

is on" in Wichita. While we have no open saloons in this city at this time, a large number of parties who formerly operated saloons opened up drug stores, and the only difference that I can see is that they are not paying any revenue into the city, whereas when they were running open saloons they were paying the city quite a revenue.

From a business standpoint, I have no doubt but what the city is more prosperous with open saloons; yet if the law should be enforced and prohibition actually prohibited, we no doubt would be able to go ahead and build up the business interests of our city to some extent.

The trouble with prohibition in this state is that it does not prohibit. The town is full of drug stores, joints and dives, and the quality of the liquor is very inferior. Some day they may be able to make the law effective, yet after over twenty years' trial, I must say that it is a failure as far as the cities and towns where the sentiment is largely in favor of open saloons. Of course in towns where the majority are in favor of prohibition, the traffic has been restricted to a large extent, but I do not know of any town of any size in the state where whiskey and beer cannot be bought in violation of the law, either through drug stores, joints, or bootleggers.

I have always been in favor of local option and high license.—Yours truly, F. D. Stevens, Secretary.

**KANSAS STATE RETAIL MERCHANTS' ASSOCIATION.**

Leavenworth, Kan., June 1, 1908. Merchants' and Manufacturers' association. Gentlemen—Answering your circular letter of May 29th with reference to the Slocumb law and the experience of Kansas with prohibition, will say that the quotation from the letter of your Nebraska editor is concise, explanatory and eloquent as voicing the opinion of every impartial citizen of Kansas that I have ever met. I think that it is safe to say that none but fanatics of the worst sort can find any virtue in the Kansas prohibition law. Personally I desire to give your association and its purpose the stamp of my commendation, believing that there is no other interest quite so sensible that could be conserved. The enforcement of the prohibition laws in Kansas is like the pretended purification of politics according to Ingalls—"an indecent dream." If intoxicants are to be manufactured and sold, for heaven's sake make the traffic pay its share of the public expense in actual cash rather than by penalizing the violation of the law and adding perpetually to the cost of government. I think that were it not for the distasteful notoriety which would attach, there are several clergymen in this city who would conscientiously sign this letter.—Very truly yours, H. A. Rose, Secretary.

**FORT SCOTT COMMERCIAL CLUB.**

Fort Scott, Kan., May 30, 1908. Gentlemen—In answer to your letter of May 20th regarding the effect of prohibition, will say that your editorial informant at Kimball, Nebraska, is entirely correct. The writer has studied and seen the effects of the prohibitory law in Kansas since its inauguration over twenty-five years ago. At no time—the present included—has it been impossible to procure liquor, and that, generally speaking, of the very worst quality. The drunkards of ten years ago, if still alive, are the drunkards of today. If not alive, their places have been taken by an army of new recruits. Kansas, with its natural resources, is the most productive state in the Union, and yet we have gained less in population than almost any other state—the increase of immigrant population in this state being less than the birth rate. The writer has seen more blackmailers, more perjurers, and more dissension caused among good people by this same prohibitory law than from any other cause that may be named. The majority of our people in this locality feel that it is an unjust law and that it has greatly hampered our progress and well-being. I sincerely hope that the merchants and solid business men of Nebraska will not burden themselves with such a law. You may rest assured that if they do you may say good-bye to progress; at least, our experience is that way. About the only benefit the law has proven to us is to give a good advertising medium for sensational preachers, evangelists, and grafting politicians. Furthermore, any representative business man of any town in Kansas, if he speaks the truth, is bound to tell you the same thing. Should you find that I am able to assist you in any way to further information, please command me, and I will be only too willing to do all I can.—Yours truly, W. B. Sellgrave, Secretary.

**WINFIELD COMMERCIAL CLUB.**

Winfield, Kan., June 8, 1908. Gentlemen—We acknowledge receipt of yours of the 29th. The ex-Kansas gives you about the correct information as to the working of the prohibitory law, yet we believe the drug stores and the joint proposition are better than the open saloons in Kansas. The objection we had with open saloons in our town was that they occupied the most prominent locations we had. While we believe that the rent values were higher here when they were running than they are at the present time, as a whole we do not believe the change affects the value of real estate.—Yours truly, Business Men's association, O. H. Bevis, President.

**COFFEYVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.**

Coffeyville, Kan., June 1, 1908. Gentlemen—This will acknowledge receipt

of your favor of the 29th, addressed to the secretary of the Citizens' Commercial club, containing quotation received from the editor of a paper at Kimball, Nebraska, relative to the effectiveness of the Kansas prohibitory law. The letter as quoted, as a general proposition, about covers the ground, and any opinion on this subject will naturally be of a personal character. So far as the strict enforcement in the state of Kansas in the larger towns is concerned, I believe it is conceded to be an absolute failure; while in the rural towns it is said to be effective. As a matter of fact, in this city some six years ago there were a number of first-class saloons running wide open, paying a revenue to the city of from \$50 to \$100 per month. This had the effect of raising the rentals of business property to an abnormally high point, but had very little, if any, effect upon residence property. During the past two years there have been no saloons in this city, but they were replaced to a considerable extent by drug stores starting up and securing liquor permits under which liquors were dispensed under the provision of the Druggists' Permit Law,—the violations of which law became so numerous that it resulted in all druggists' permits being revoked. The result of this condition is, that the police court records show a very large per cent of drunkenness, and this is only attributable to one source—that of bootlegging. These conditions cause the writer to express an opinion that the prohibitory law is not effective in the cities; however, there has been no appreciable decrease in the rentals of business buildings. Not being familiar with the Slocumb law, I would be at a loss to venture an opinion regarding it. However, I believe the consensus of opinion among the business fraternity here would favor the adoption of a local option law.—Very respectfully, J. P. Casey.

**HUTCHINSON COMMERCIAL CLUB.**

Hutchinson, Kan., June 2, 1908. Gentlemen—I will reply to your circular letter of the 29th ultimo by giving you my personal views only. The writer was traveling over northern Kansas and southern Nebraska at the time those states adopted the present law applying to the liquor traffic, and he had a good chance to observe the workings of the two plans. In Lincoln, Nebraska, high license closed all but three places, and by requiring advance payment of the high license and the prohibition of screens at doors and windows, it did away with subterfuges and sneaking. In Kansas, on the other hand, the effects of the law encouraged perjury and sneaking, and a general disregard of law. In my opinion, which has been confirmed by the test of time, the Nebraska plan is the best, both as a true temperance measure and for its effects upon the morals of the people.—Yours truly, L. A. Beebe.

**A NEBRASKA OBSERVER.**

Kimball, Neb., May 29, 1908. Gentlemen—The little town in which I lived in Kansas was what was termed a "wet" town. For many years we had two joints, operated under the fine levy system. Every month the marshal arrested the joint keepers for selling liquor illegally, and they paid a fine of \$50 and costs per month. A preacher came along and put them out of business. After that there was more drunkenness, and the formerly good town became dead. The large number of farmers who formerly came to town went to other places. With the open saloon the "city dads," of whom I was one, could control the sale of liquor, close the places on Sunday and at 11 o'clock p. m., and at any time regulate them and say who should not get liquor. After they were closed, the bootleggers got busy, and we never could in any case lay our finger on the culprit. More than that, our streets soon showed the effects of cutting off the license revenue—\$1,200 a year. The city went in debt, and is in debt today, although the same amount of liquor is consumed. I live in a "dry" town now and am not a user of liquor, but I would much rather see a saloon run under proper control than a drug store or bootlegger under no control at all. In Topeka, the capital city of Kansas, there is more liquor sold by drug stores than one would imagine. I was a delegate in the Republican state convention which nominated Governor Hoch (I'm ashamed of it) and in nearly every block on Kansas avenue there were from one to six drug stores, all of which sold liquor and paid no license, and many of them had bars in the back room. The worst hell-hole in Topeka was in the (—) Hotel, the headquarters of both parties and I actually saw men fighting to get standing room at a dirty bar where stale beer was dished up in shiny glasses as fast as four men could draw it. These things make one sick of prohibition which does not now, nor never did, prohibit. I worked on the State Register in Des Moines, Iowa, when that state had prohibition, and saw the same conditions. I know these things from personal observation, as I used to drink some myself.—Very respectfully, R. D. Wilson, Editor.

P. S.—The fact simmered down is this: Whether we shall have the Slocumb law as it now stands and the license money in our treasuries, or whether the same amount of liquor is used and the money all go to the seller. The drinking man will drink, no matter what the law. Isn't it better that a part of his spendings do some good to the public, and isn't it better that the fellow who sells it to him be refused the right to give him more than he should have?

IN NORTH DAKOTA.

**Veteran Editor Says Prohibition Puts Premium on Hypocrisy.**

Hon. D. R. Streeter, editor of the Emmons County Record, published at Linton, North Dakota, was requested to describe the effect of the policy of prohibition upon the people of that state, wherein he has published a paper for twenty-four years. Under date of April 20, 1908, Mr. Streeter writes as follows:

"Replying to your circular, permit me to say that we have had constitutional prohibition in the state for eighteen years. In some parts of the state the law is reasonably well enforced as to saloons.

"South Dakota, settled by the same class of people as North Dakota—that is, the same class of native-born and foreign-born, German-Russians and Scandinavians being the bulk of these from across the sea—had statutory prohibition several years, and then, after giving it a fair trial, threw it aside some years ago through the medium of the referendum, returning to license by a majority of several thousand. I had occasion in the winter of 1905 and again in the winter of 1907 to obtain the figures as to retail liquor dealers' licenses issued in the two states.

"Strange as it may seem, prohibition in North Dakota, with less population than her southern sister, had—and has every year for that matter—more retail liquor dealers' licenses from the federal government than the southern twin, working under high-license laws. This is caused by the fact that in some towns and villages where there would be a saloon under license, the business being outlawed, the licensed saloon has been succeeded by a bunch of worthless blindleggers or bootleggers, who are satisfied to sell vile stuff for a profit of a couple of dollars a day, with an occasional rest in the county jail if necessary to their business.

**Drug-Store Saloons.**

"Another cause of the preponderance of federal liquor licenses in this state over South Dakota is the multiplicity of one-horse drug stores, there being at least three times as many drug stores in this state as there is a legitimate business for. Still, I think it will be a long time before prohibition will be taken from our organic law, for the reason that the drinkers, being able to get their booze shipped in from across the state line in either of four directions, do not bother themselves as to whether or not so-called prohibition prevails in this state.

"Going about the state and talking with the people, you would think that a majority of them were for it; but it is a sort of standing joke among the drinkers here to land prohibition. I have published a paper in this (Emmons) county since 1884, part of the time under license and part under prohibition, and I find little difference as to the amount of liquor drunk. Those who were drunkards under license are drunkards under prohibition. I can see no change. But if Nebraska wants to put a premium on hypocrisy and violation of law, she should at once follow in the footsteps of North Dakota. In this state, were there a federal law preventing the interstate carriage of whiskey, wine and beer to all but druggists, and the druggists' permit to sell were taken away by the legislature, we would be tumbling over one another to get under the license banner.

"You are at liberty to use my letter. I have never been disposed to hide my light under a bushel in the matter of opposition to the prohibition law. I have published a paper in this county twenty-four years, and I am firmer in the belief each succeeding year that prohibition by statute or in the organic law is one of the most costly and useless makeshifts that could be put into the code or constitution. I opposed it when in this state it was adopted by a minority vote—that is, by 1100 odd votes, with 2,800 failing to find the paragraph on the big Australian ballot, most of such voters being Germans and Russians who would have voted against prohibition.

"In the last two sessions of the lower house of the North Dakota General Assembly I introduced re-submission bills only to have them beaten by a two-thirds vote—the prohibition vote coming chiefly from the eastern part of the state in the Red River Valley, where alcohol is the chief beverage."

**Figures From Official Record.**

Up to February 1, 1907, 1,648 federal liquor licenses had been issued in North Dakota, compared with 1,329 in South Dakota. There were 319 more federal liquor licenses issued in this state than in South Dakota.

When it is remembered that North Dakota is a prohibition state, while South Dakota is a high license state, the showing is apparently a very bad one for North Dakota.

North Dakota, with a population of 427,070 souls, consumes annually about \$3,000,000 worth of intoxicating liquors in utter defiance of law.

**SITUATION IN RUSHVILLE.**

Editor C. L. Mayes of the Rushville Standard writes of the local situation as follows:

Rushville has voted out the saloons for the past two years and it has in no way lessened the liquor traffic here. There is not a train reaches this place but what jugs and barrels of whiskey or beer is brought in on it and a class of people who did not drink very much when we had the open saloon now keep it by them for fear they might want a drink and not be able to get it, and as a consequence, are drinking much more than they did when we had

the open saloon. Hardly a train goes through to Chadron but what people go there from here and Gordon, also Hay Springs, and spend the time until the midnight train comes, having a jolly time, all because they are deprived of the privilege at home. There is a vast sum of money spent in this way which had just as well be kept at home if the business men and other citizens of our town would take a broad view of the situation. It is also hurting the trade of the merchants as many farmers now send to the catalogue houses for goods, because they have it in for the business men here who have deprived them of a chance to drink a social glass of beer when they come to town. We are certain that Rushville has not been benefited by the change. At our school meeting in July it was shown that we are \$538.35 in the hole, with many needed repairs to the school building, whereas three years ago we had \$3,948.46 on hand at the beginning of the school year. Our valuation has been raised, taxes increased and the mill levy for school purposes raised in two years from a 10 mill levy to a 25 mill levy. In spite of the raise we are \$500 short and there is talk of attempting to bond the school district to meet the necessary expenses of running the school. The dry policy has proved a failure here for sure.

**BLAIR MERCHANTS AROUSED.**

The merchants of Blair (Neb.) have organized an association which may be regarded as a local branch of the Merchants' and Manufacturers' association of Omaha. The objects of the Blair organization are identical with those of the state association. The immediate cause of the action of the Blair merchants is explained by the following extract from a letter written by one of the leading men of that city:

"Blair, June 26, 1908. Gentlemen—From personal inquiry with the leading merchants of this city I learn they have had a very marked decrease of business since the beginning of the dry year. They notice they are not getting the trade of their old rural friends. A great many of our people are incensed, and are showing resentment. There is the usual underground way to drink which is the result of a dry town, and the express company is doing a thriving business in packages which bear the outward appearance of the desired liquid."

A further incentive for such organization was the development of the fact that the mail-order traffic for wet goods and merchandise shipped into Blair has increased enormously since that town adopted the dry policy last spring. On reliable authority it is stated that the number of post-office money orders going to points outside of Nebraska has increased since April first at a ratio of twenty-five to one, and the express money orders issued in Blair have increased in about the same proportion. All this, of course, is apart from the large number of orders sent by the farmers of Washington county to catalogue houses—the greater number of these farmers declining to go to Blair to trade except when it is absolutely necessary. The net result is the output of a large amount of money every month which hitherto was spent among the merchants of Blair, who of course must pay the same amount of taxes and rental rates as formerly. In addition to this state of things is the forfeiture of \$6,000 per annum in license money which must be made up by additional taxation—the burden falling upon the responsible property owners and business men of Blair. This comes at an inopportune time to Blair, which is now in debt several thousands of dollars for current expenses, there being registered municipal warrants in the sum of \$3,000, which, by the way, is the first batch of registered warrants known to the municipal history of that town, since all claims against the city were previously paid promptly without the necessity of issuing the city's I. O. U's in the shape of warrants.

In view of these untoward facts, the merchants of Blair found it necessary to organize for concerted action in support of a movement the object of which is to secure relief from hurtful conditions which have never before obtained in that city.

**A RAID ON THE SCHOOL MONEY.**

Leading men of the Anti-Saloon League in Massachusetts confidently predict that the legislature will enact a law taking all revenues from license out of the local school districts and transferring such funds to the state treasury.

A circular, issued by the league in support of its contention, quotes the decision of the Massachusetts supreme court, to wit:

"That while the question of granting licenses in any state or town is determined by the vote of the inhabitants thereof, still, the license is granted by the state. Under this decision, the license tax is a state tax, and the license money is the state's money," etc.

By the terms of this bill, license money now derived from the liquor traffic in wet towns would go into the common fund, and be apportioned on the basis of population, alike to dry and wet towns. This would mean that the license money from wet towns would go to help maintain the schools of dry towns in Nebraska.

The injustice of this scheme is so apparent that it need not be dwelt upon. The only basis for the contention of the league in Massachusetts is the fact that such license fees are authorized by act of the legislature, as they are in Nebraska, and in that

sense, the license fee may be regarded as a state tax.

No doubt this movement of the Anti-Saloon League is popular in the rural districts where there are no saloons, and where schools must be maintained. If such a law could be enacted in Nebraska, it would, of course, compel the school districts in cities and towns where liquor is sold under license to divide the money among school districts in the country, where saloons do not exist. This scheme would have a peculiar charm to the rural voter, but it does not take much discernment to see that it would hit the taxpayer of cities and towns squarely between the eyes.

**EBB TIDE OF SOUTHERN PROHIBITION.**

It would seem that the strength of the prohibition movement in southern states had begun to wane. The revolt of the business men of Georgia against the provisions of the prohibitory law which went into effect in that state last January, owing to the consequent loss of business, had its logical effect in the nomination of Joe Brown for governor. It had its effect upon the voters of Florida, also. In the latter state, in June, the voters were forced by the Anti-Saloon League to choose between the policy of local option and that of prohibition. Returns show the local-option party won by decisive majority.

So it is in Louisiana, where the issues were identical with those in Florida, the legislature having voted down the bill for state-wide prohibition and reaffirmed the faith of the people of Louisiana in the policy of the license, local option system. No doubt the decisive action of the Louisiana legislature was in a measure due to the flaccid in Oklahoma, where, as everybody knows, the people last year at the ballot box adopted the policy of state-wide prohibition; but, like Georgia, Oklahoma discovered that the policy was injurious to business and failed to keep liquor from the black man as it was intended to do. This is why Oklahoma discarded it and adopted the dispensary system, something like that of South Carolina, which has been partially successful in keeping whiskey out of the hands of the blacks, while at the same time permitting the white men to get all the liquor they want. The auditor of the South Carolina dispensary says in a recent letter that the dispensary system abolished the saloon at county cross roads, thereby depriving the black man of easy access to forty-rod whiskey. The auditor says further that the dispensary does not and never has lessened the total amount of liquor consumed in South Carolina. The latest and most important failure of the prohibition policy in the South was that of Tennessee. The result was most decisive. The issue was joined by the leading men of the state and made paramount in the recent campaign.

The upshot of the whole movement throughout the South is that the enlightenment which comes from actual experience is educating the voters to a knowledge of the fact that the only practical means for controlling the liquor traffic is through the enactment of laws similar to the Slocumb license, local option law of Nebraska, said to be the best law for the control of the liquor traffic ever written.

**HOW IT HIT MOBILE TAXPAYERS.**

The last session of the Alabama legislature enacted a law providing for state-wide prohibition, to take effect in January, 1909. It is too soon, of course, to get facts showing whether or not the new law has injured business or impaired property values; but it is not too soon to gather facts from Alabama showing that the taxpayer already feels the effect of the new policy. This is shown by the following extract from a letter written by the secretary of the Mobile Chamber of Commerce, under date of June 11th, to the Merchants' and Manufacturers' association at Omaha. It reads as follows:

"By act of legislature long years ago, Mobile county was allowed to use the liquor licenses in support of her schools in exchange for government building sites. The first act of our legislature last year gave the right of local option, but at the extra call of the legislature, state prohibition was forced through. This will leave the school system of the county after the first of January, 1909, with a large deficit, and to make up this, a special vote was taken two weeks ago to pay an additional tax of one mill, but the voting returns show that the extra tax was lost; so that our school term must either be much shortened, or the salaries of all teachers reduced below a living wage. This effect on our schools has caused more heartaches than anything else so far."

Note—If Nebraska ever adopts prohibition, the salaries of school teachers will be reduced all over the state and the term of school will be shortened for lack of funds, thus depriving children of needed instruction.

**FOR BETTER ENFORCEMENT.**

Hundreds of Business Men Have Joined the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association Under the Following Conditions:

"As business men and tax-payers we favor the movement to form an Association of Merchants and Manufacturers for the purpose of adopting measures to bring about a better enforcement of the Slocumb liquor license law throughout the state—a law making it optional with the people of a town or city to say whether or not liquor shall be sold. We believe the said law has been of great benefit to the state and that there can be no better means for regulating the sale of intoxicants. We stand for its strict enforcement. We join this association with the understanding that no distiller, brewer, liquor dealer or saloon keeper is eligible to membership or object is to protect property interests from the ill effects of unwise legislation."