

THE CAMP FIRE.

A Monthly Record and Advocate of the Temperance Reform.

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THE COMING CONVENTION.

In another column will be found the "Call" that has been issued by the Ontario Branch of the Dominion Alliance for the Annual Meeting to be held in Toronto on July 9th.

ITS IMPORTANCE.

There is no doubt that this meeting will be one of the most important meetings of prohibition workers that has yet been held in Ontario. It comes together to plan for definite, aggressive action; not to arrange some campaign in which energy is to be dissipated in carrying out some politician's plan for side tracking the temperance question.

THREE QUESTIONS.

Along with the Convention "Call" there has been issued a circular containing valuable suggestions regarding lines of possible action. Three matters will demand attention at the meeting: (1) Dominion Legislation, (2) Provincial Legislation, (3) Electoral Action.

DOMINION LEGISLATION.

The plan of Dominion action issued by the Alliance Council aims at national prohibition. It also advises earnest effort to make the Government's proposed revision of the Scott Act as comprehensive and useful as it can be made. The Scott Act will always be a partial measure, but perfecting it will make it more effective in those places where it is in force. Its improvement is a manifest duty.

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION.

There must be no hesitation about this important matter. The Ontario Government has declared itself in favor of prohibition. Action is, however, delayed pending the settlement of the question of jurisdiction. It is only reasonable to ask the Government and Legislature to at once do what they have unquestioned power to do, make our License Law more rigid, putting into it more prohibition and making it a more useful means of restricting the liquor traffic and lessening intemperance. Suggestions regarding this important matter will be found in an article in this paper headed "Immediate Legislation."

POLITICAL ACTION.

Before the time for another Annual Meeting a Provincial election will be held. In that election the liquor traffic will be a potent force. The traffic is well organized, and is planning to capture all the constituencies possible. Only by outspoken, aggressive, determined action can this danger be met. The coming Convention must plan for such action as will prevent the liquor traffic carrying out this scheme to control the Ontario Legislature.

LET THERE BE A RALLY.

The situation is grave. The outlook is bright, but ahead of us there are elements of danger that call for wise and fearless action. Our cause has made progress and will make progress. Much of the success of our work in the near future depends upon our attitude and action at the present crisis. We appeal to all temperance workers in Ontario to do their best to make this meeting in every sense a success. Let there be a great rally of the earnest friends of the cause.

Every one who receives this paper is respectfully requested to read every part of it carefully. It is a journal that no Canadian temperance worker can afford to be without. The subscription price is almost insignificant. In the impending campaign for better legislation in Ontario it will be of intense interest and great value.

Some of the articles in the June Camp-Fire are reprinted in this number. They relate to the approaching Convention and the questions likely to be discussed at those meetings. Being of much importance, we deem it wise to reprint them, and to ask our readers to study them carefully.

GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP.

A good deal has lately been said and written about the wisdom of endeavoring to lessen the evils of the liquor traffic by having the traffic carried on by officers of the government instead of by private parties, the government receiving all the profit of the business. This method is sometimes wrongly spoken of as Government Control.

Real Government control of the liquor traffic is most complete under systems like the Ontario License Law; under which the government, through special officials and special legislation, directly controls the issue of licenses and the conduct of the liquor business.

Government Ownership is an altogether different system. Under it the state owns and operates the liquor traffic as government monopoly. It is in operation in varying forms in Russia, Switzerland and South Carolina.

So far, however, there is very little evidence as to the results of this system. We are therefore compelled to consider it mainly in view of our knowledge of the nature and history of the liquor traffic, and in view of what has been already done, and what is being done, upon different lines.

The Case for Government Monopoly.

The one strong argument in favor of Government Ownership of the liquor traffic in Canada, is the theory that the elimination of the element of private profit would put an end to active effort to push the liquor business, and would remove the vigorous opposition that liquor sellers now offer to the temperance cause.

Advocates of this method also claim that much benefit would accrue from a better supervision of the quality of liquor, and from a cessation of the activity of liquor sellers in political affairs.

Under government operation either the great profits now enjoyed by the liquor traffickers would become a part of the government revenue, or the selling price of intoxicating liquors would be reduced.

The Other Side

An increase in the amount of revenue derived from the liquor traffic would be an impediment to the attainment of prohibition. In the plebiscite campaign the stock argument of the liquor party, embodied in literature, pasted over walls, and everywhere presented, was the loss of revenue that prohibition would entail. Increasing the revenue from the liquor traffic by two hundred or three hundred per cent. would strengthen the argument of those opponents.

If the price of intoxicating liquor were to be cut down there would certainly be a great increase in criminal drunkenness. The drunk appetite of the usual police court drunk is mainly kept in check by inability to secure the means of intoxication. A lessening of the price would no doubt be followed by results that every good citizen would shrink from inviting.

It is also argued that the party patronage involved in a government monopoly of the liquor business would be a source of political evil. The traffic readily lends itself to corrupt use. Even the system that in Ontario appoints ninety-four license inspectors is charged with being liable to such abuse. What would be the possible evil in a method that would give a political party the appointment and payment, and therefore ensure it the support, of nearly 3,000 liquor sellers.

A Constitutional Question.

For twenty years the work of temperance reformers and the progress of temperance litigation have been retarded by litigation over the vexed question of the extent to which the licensing and prohibition of the liquor traffic are functions of the Dominion or Provincial government. It is almost certain that there would be similar controversy over the right of either body to establish and operate a government monopoly of liquor selling, if the question were raised. Legislation constituting such a monopoly, enacted by the Dominion Parliament or a Provincial Legislature, would no doubt be followed by litigation that would similarly delay and defeat the efforts of friends of the temperance cause.

A Dividing Proposition.

The temperance people of Canada are to-day united in their advocacy of the two-fold method of moral suasion and legal prohibition. Some of them are strongly opposed to the licensing system, because it makes the state, and therefore the people, partners in what they believe to be an immoral business. Their opposition to a liquor traffic carried on directly by the community would be still greater. It is certain that friends of the temperance cause could not be united in support of such a proposal. An agitation for a government liquor-traffic monopoly, by any section of the temperance army, would bring about dissension that would make success on any line impossible, and would seriously block the progress that is now going on.

Unwise Agitation.

Government Ownership would then involve a disastrous division in the temperance ranks, a long term of agitation before public opinion could be educated to accept it, and a political campaign in which the opposition of the liquor party would be as great as that party's opposition to total prohibition. If success could be attained, that success would be the beginning of a constitutional struggle that would be disastrous

in the uncertainty and demoralization which it would involve. It is doubtful that Government Ownership, if ultimately secured, would be of much value as a temperance measure. It is certain that it would be productive of political evil. Agitation for it at the present time would be a blunder, that in its effects would be more mischievous than direct opposition to the temperance cause.

A Strong Position.

It will be wisdom to press our winning fight on the wise lines that have already been found so successful. The liquor traffic is being weakened and curtailed. The facts set out in another article put this statement beyond doubt. Never yielding in the determination that total prohibition must be won, loyal temperance workers will accomplish most by persistent effort to gain and use all the partial prohibition that can be secured. Some provinces practically have prohibition now. The Ontario Government is pledged to give this province all the prohibition that the constitution will allow as soon as the question of jurisdiction is settled. It is no time to broach new schemes of temporizing or going back.

A Bright Outlook.

There is reason and need for more, not less, of enthusiasm for a cause that never had a brighter outlook. No other reform movement ever won in the same time the triumphs that the temperance movement has achieved. If such results have been secured during a short half century, in the face of tremendous opposition, by agencies that at first were few and feeble, what may we hope to accomplish in the near future with the many and mighty agencies now on our side, and with the strong and growing moral conviction of a nation steadily arraying itself against a traffic that will yet be made as unlawful as it is unrighteous.

A GREAT MASS MEETING.

The cause of temperance will have a prominent place in the twentieth International Christian Endeavor Convention to be held at Cincinnati, July 6-10. The Convention opens on Saturday evening and closes Wednesday night. On Sabbath afternoon the largest auditorium (of the six to be used during the convention) will be given over to a mass meeting in favor of temperance. General Secretary Buer will preside, and the speakers will be Col. Geo. W. Bain, of Kentucky; Oliver W. Stewart, of Chicago, and Rev. Anna Howard Shaw.

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