

The Referendum in Manitoba

By The Editor

THIS is surely Manitoba's year. According to the speech from the throne, there is to be a method of accounting that will prevent juggling with figures; there is to be a move towards the principle of Direct Legislation; the franchise and right to take seats in the legislature will be extended to women; bilingualism will be done away with, education will be made compulsory, and above all there will be prohibition of liquor, provided the people approve the principle of the bill that the government has agreed to introduce.

Already the temperance forces and the liquor interests are lining up for the great struggle. It is well that every good citizen should weigh carefully the arguments for and against the enactment of a prohibitory liquor law. He must take one side or the other. He cannot blow both hot and cold.

What are the arguments for the sale of liquor as a beverage? This, chiefly, that in a free country a man should be at liberty to take a drink when he likes. If there is any other argument of importance, it has not been advanced of late. It is not contended that the use of liquor adds to wealth, happiness, health, harmony, intelligence or morality, but it is claimed that no man should be robbed of his freedom. The wonder is that anyone should continue to uphold such an argument. On the same principle a man should be free to use firearms on the streets, he should be at liberty to throw garbage in his yard, he should, when infected with small-pox, be allowed to go where he likes. No man, unless he lives alone on a desert island, has a right to do as he pleases. He is limited in everything when he becomes a member of society. He gives up what he might call individual freedom for the larger freedom of the group. If he is a good citizen the welfare of the community is of more importance to him than his individual welfare. Each lives for all, and all are helped by each.

What are the arguments against the use of liquor as a beverage? Here are only a few: It impoverishes the people. It begets and fosters moral contagion. It brings ruin and sorrow to countless thousands. It weakens the bodies of men and destroys their power of will. It curses homes. It separates fathers, mothers and children. It brings grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. It leads to vice and crime and all forms of evil. And so the list might be continued.

It is a mocking absurdity that a country should, on the one hand, support schools to educate the youth in morality and intelligence, and on the other hand, should license saloons to counteract the effects produced by good mothers and faithful teachers. It is more than absurd for people to encourage all that makes for virtue and then to set in operation those forces that make for vice and crime. It reminds us of the general's aide-de-camp who carried under one arm orders, and under the other arm counter-orders. We have surely reached that stage in our development when we can afford to do the right without feeling that we have somehow to atone for it by countenancing the wrong.

To appreciate the evil of the traffic in liquor it is necessary to do no more than to read the pages of the press for a single week. Here are three cuttings from the papers of January 8, and they are typical of what may be read any day:

A Costly Business

"Take for instance two veteran bartenders of Winnipeg. Both have worked behind the mahogany for more than 26 years and, at a low estimate, between them they have taken in more than \$1,250,000 for intoxicants.

These figures are arrived at in this way: There are 313 days in the year when the bars are opened, or

were until the recently changed liquor act went into effect. In 26 years this means 8,138 days. The average each is supposed to have taken in is \$75, but on some occasions the amount would run far higher and seldom less, for both have worked in some of the best patronized hotels in Winnipeg.

Many things might have been bought with this money and these are some of them:

Loaves of bread.....	25,000,000
Bags of flour.....	400,000
Pounds of sugar.....	21,000,000
Bushels of potatoes.....	1,500,000

Or a host of other things which would have done people more good than the drink."

The Youngstown Riots

"By this time the mob was in a frenzy. Men danced and sang and women joined them. Liquor was passed around freely and those who had no cups scooped it up in the hollows of their hands, for within half an hour other saloons had been looted and the fire was spreading rapidly. For fully an hour or more the mob was content with the small shops and saloons on the side streets, but then it turned its attention to the more pretentious stores on Wilson Avenue, the main street.

At a dozen or more places on Wilson Avenue barrels of whisky with the heads gone stood in the roadway and surrounding them were many men and women gulping down the raw liquor or passing to friends in the crowd who could not get close enough to help themselves. A number of clothing stores fell a prey to the rioters and almost immediately men began exchanging their old clothes for the loot they had seized. This change of apparel was made in the street lighted almost to noonday brightness by the flames from half a hundred burning buildings.

By two o'clock this morning more than a hundred had been rounded up and brought here, while the little police station in East Youngstown was filled to overflowing. The majority of the men taken were armed and many of them were under the influence of liquor."

Treating the Soldiers

"The custom had become an evil which was creating all sorts of trouble, said the mayor. It was mistaken kindness to treat such men to drinks, as even a little affected them badly, seeing that they were still suffering from the effects of gas fumes or wounds, and some of them had been reduced to a pitiable condition."

Prison and Cour Reports

"Among these is a long report of a man who, when playing poker with others under the influence of liquor, was engaged at the same time in plotting or listening to plotting to corrupt the electorate at the municipal elections."

A Word from Portage la Prairie

"The liquor traffic should be abolished in Manitoba because of the blessings men can enjoy when free from its temptation and its curse. In this city there are two undertakers, both of whom are connected with my congregation. During my residence here they have called upon me to go with them to bury the nameless dead, in every instance brought to their death directly through indulgence in liquor, and in every instance in the prime of life. We became a dry city last June and not once since have I been called upon to take that most melancholy journey. Some of those who were and are interested in the traffic have been very much annoyed at the verdict of the public, but as a community we have reaped benefits of the most valuable character from the step which was taken. We have a foreign population which celebrated the Christmas session in a saturnalia of a most degrading character; this year has witnessed a change which is welcome to every one who has a respect for humanity."

In the same issue there appear the views of leading citizens of Manitoba, who appraise the traffic as follows:

"If prohibition carries in Manitoba, it will mean the dawn of a new era. The liquor traffic is the great enemy of man, it makes the noblest of God's creatures lower than the brute beasts; it corrupts the heart, paralyzes the conscience and makes a cesspool of the body. It is the enemy of the home, it puts out the fire, robs the little children of the common necessities of life. It is the stronghold of rotten politics, here is the place where votes are bought and sold.

Millions of money are invested in the liquor business, and consequently millions must be spent to counteract this gigantic evil; jails have to be built, hospitals, asylums, etc.

Prohibition is the right end of the stick, it is getting after the big thief.

The Lord Chief Justice Coleridge said that more than eighty per cent. of crime is due to the drink habit. This in itself is sufficient reason that the liquor traffic should be abolished in Manitoba."

"The liquor traffic blocks the path to prosperity. It is a menace to the welfare of the church and state. The state should only protect those interests which exist for the good of the people. The liquor traffic is a curse."

"We should abolish it for the sake of our commercial interests. There is no commercial interest benefitted by 'the trade' except itself, and kindred unlawful vicious concerns.

We should abolish it in behalf of pure politics and good government, since it is associated with most of the bribery and corrupt practices which have been a menace to our liberties.

The cries of innocent children and their mothers who have no redress against its relentless ravages, call loudly for its speedy destruction.

It ought to be abolished in the interests of the real welfare of the men in 'the trade.' It will be the dawn of a better day for their families when prohibition comes in."

"If for no better than economic reasons, we should abolish the liquor traffic in Manitoba, and with the six million dollars now yearly wasted in drink, we could, in ten years, supply free houses to 20,000 poor families, or give quarter sections of improved land to 12,000 unemployed men, or clothe, feed and give a liberal education to every street waif in Canada. With six million dollars going for the necessities of life, what a boost it would give the butcher, grocer, dry goods merchant and hardware dealer.

Again, as the saloon is producing about three-fourths of our loafers and tramps, criminals and idiots, when it is abolished, what a load will be lifted off the shoulders of industrious citizens in taxes and givings for the building and up-keep of rescue homes, asylums and jails. It stands condemned before the bar of public opinion and awaits the sentence of the law."

"Lloyd George says: 'We are fighting Germany, Austria and Drink, and so far as I can see, the greatest of these three deadly foes is drink.'

Again at Bangor, he said: 'Drink is doing us more harm than all the submarines of Germany put together.'

We must destroy this foe of the Empire."

"It is the enemy of the home; it puts out the fire and robs the little children of the common necessities of life."

"There is no commercial interest benefitted by the trade except itself."

"The sociability of the bar destroys the sociability of the home."

"The labor and capital devoted to this business simply will be transferred to other industries where there will be a blessing instead of a curse."

It is for the people of Manitoba, when the referendum is taken in March, to cast a vote for their wives and children, for happiness and health, for good morals and clear vision, for virtue and purity, for wealth and prosperity.

On my way to the office I found myself next to a man in khaki. Someone, in mistaken kindness, had been treating him. Everybody felt uncomfortable and ashamed. We have rightly placed these soldier boys on a pedestal. We think of them as heroes and we are impatient when our ideal is shattered. It is no wonder then that there was annoyance and disgust when the soldier in question persisted in making himself foolish. And this is but an illustration. Why should the state do its utmost to call forth the best in its men and at the same time support and encourage the forces which make for their downfall? Let any one reckon up the number of fine fellows who have gone to pieces through drink, let him measure the poverty, crime and unhappiness occasioned by the traffic, let him take stock of the moral, physical and industrial loss to the nation, let him think of the destitute homes, the weeping wives and the suffering children, then let him cast his vote. In this, as in the great war, it may be said:

"Your King and Country Need You."