

One View of the Prohibition Question

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BEFORE entering into a discussion of this matter, let me clear the ground for those to whom I am unknown by stating that I am a Prohibitionist. I have an abiding faith in the ability of Prohibition to commend itself to the good sense of the large majority of our people—once it has been given a fair trial. True even under unsettled conditions, this will be truer in a normal state of affairs.

The general situation would seem to be this:—First, there is a somewhat large group—yet in a decided minority—of those who on principle are Prohibitionists; next, a somewhat larger group who supported Prohibition as a business policy and for purely business reasons; then, an even larger group of men who recognized certain evils in the existing system and voted for Prohibition as against these with but a hazy idea of what Prohibition meant in actual practical effect; still another group is quite indifferent to liquor legislation; and the remainder constitute the liquor interests properly so called, consisting of the trade and those extreme admirers of its supposed benefactions such as Rev. Mr. Maccaud and Rev. Owen Bulkeley.

Speaking generally, the situation thus created would appear to suggest that a present appeal on behalf of Prohibition would be defeated by a heavy majority in Vancouver taken alone, but would carry by a small but sufficient majority in the Province as a whole.

How has this situation arisen? What is the remedy? Three causes present themselves:—(a) The now

famous Order-in-Council; (b) The Findlay matter; (c) Certain injustices under the Act.

Even before the effect of the Order-in-Council re the importation of liquor into Prohibition territory was felt, there was a feeling in certain quarters—mostly but by no means altogether labour ones—that the Act was an act framed, in part, at least, for the benefit of the wealthier classes—a rich man's Act.

With this fomenting slowly in the minds of various people, creating suspicion and distrust of the Act, came the passing of this Order-in-Council. Legally defective; wholly unjust in its operations and penalties, it not only strengthened existing opposition but swept hundreds of hitherto supporters of the Act into its ranks.

Personally I look upon it as the clever offspring of the brain of the Hon. C. J. Doherty—an avowed liquor supporter—handed to an unsuspecting public under the false pretence of aiding Prohibition in Canada as a whole.

Many sincere Prohibitionists—myself among them—ignorant of its sinister effects, welcomed it gladly. Our joy was short lived. Apart from its legal defects and the questions of jurisdiction raised by it, men were shocked by the injustices it created. The spectacle of a man going to jail for six months for selling a single bottle of whiskey, while a car-load importer escaped with a \$1000 fine outraged every sense of justice.

To this scandal was added unexpected hardships on a section of the