

Local Option Results

What is Being Done by Local Bar-room Closing in Canada and the United States—The Problem of Effective Law Enforcement A Careful Summary of Important Facts

At the request of the committee in charge of the recent World's Temperance Congress, which met in London, Eng., Mr. F. S. Spence prepared for that body a comprehensive statement of the history, principles and results of the Local Option or No-license movement, which has made such rapid and widespread progress during recent years.

The paper, and the discussion which followed its presentation, evoked very great interest. It was reported in full by the Alliance News, but it is too extensive to permit of our reporting it. It embodied much historical information, and investigation of legal and political facts and principles. The latter part of it, however, contained some illustrative details concerning the working out of the Local Option idea, and that part we have pleasure in submitting to our readers, even though it deals with some facts with which they are already familiar. It says:—

Difficulties in the U.S.

Differences of conditions and methods make the effectiveness of Local Option a varying quantity. As a rule it is felt to say that local prohibition is more uniformly enforced in Canada than in the United States. One reason of this is the difference between the political systems of the two countries. In the United States not merely the members of legislative bodies, but frequently the judiciary and executive officials, are elected by popular vote. The legislative body acts for a whole State. Executive and judicial officers

generally act in their own constituencies, hence the State law will represent the collective sentiment of the whole community, while its administration may represent only the sentiment of a particular locality. A State may pass a law prohibiting the liquor traffic, and a city may elect a judge, a sheriff, a chief of police, and a prosecuting attorney, nominally for the enforcement of all law, but actually with the understanding that these officers will disregard the prohibitory law.

The Canadian Method

On the other hand, Canadians, following more closely the English system of an independent judiciary and a responsible executive, look upon law-enforcing and law-interpreting officers as representatives, not of a local electorate, but of the whole community, acting under the direction of a responsible government controlled by a legislature representing the country at large. The Canadian system may not be technically so democratic in its details, but it is ultimately more successful in every part of the country. It is easy to see how, under such circumstances, the enforcement of law in Canada will be more uniform, more independent, and more efficient than in those parts of the United States in which magistrates and executive officers are chosen by popular vote.

Officials Sometimes Incompetent

These conditions effect the enforcement of all liquor laws and of many other laws. Local public opinion always has some effect upon administrative action. The elective method sometimes secures very thorough enforcement, and always a desire on the part of officials to meet the views of the majority, and so it is not so ineffective