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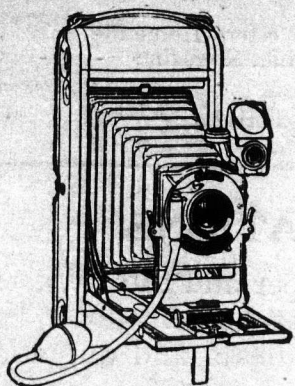
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TEMPERANCE TALK.

We reproduce below the policy on temperance reform as recommended by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

No doubt this will be of interest not only to our Presbyterian readers, but to those of other churches, and indeed to many of no church who are interested in the Temperance Question. This Policy has been very widely and carefully considered, and seven Presbyterian Synods out of the eight, and the General Assembly, have endorsed it with almost absolute unanimity.

The General Assembly's Resolution.

"The Assembly would reaffirm the deliverance of former assemblies that nothing short of the prohibition of the traffic in intoxicants for beverage purposes can satisfy as a goal in temperance reform, and would recommend our people in those provinces where there is no immediate prospect of carrying and enforcing prohibition, to unite with others in working towards this end, by: (a) The curtailment of the traffic by local veto; (b) The abolition of the bar-room and the public treating system associated therewith, and (c) the prohibition of the residue of the traffic, with this proviso, that where in cities or towns the said sale is demanded by a majority of the qualified municipal electors, such sale shall be conducted under such conditions as will eliminate the element of private gain." [Winnipeg Assembly, 1908.]

Observe—(1) That in this resolution and throughout this leaflet by "bar-room" is meant all sale of liquor for consumption on the premises.

(2) That by "sale in shops" is meant all sale, so far as the province can control it, for consumption off the premises.

(3) That by "prohibition" is meant prohibition of the traffic in intoxicating liquors for beverage purposes, so far as this can be done by the various Provincial Legislative Assemblies.

(4) That by "local veto" is meant prohibition within municipalities or districts by by-laws which they have been given the power by Legislative Assemblies to pass on the Local Option plan, or by the Scott Act, or other no-license law.

The Import of the Resolution. — It sets Prohibition clearly before the public as the goal in temperance reform, so far as the control of the traffic is concerned. Nothing short of this can satisfy.

It advises Provincial Prohibition as soon as public opinion in any province is strong enough to compel the Legislature to enact such a law and provide for its effective enforcement.

Until public opinion is strong enough to make the enactment and enforcement of Prohibition possible, the Assembly advises patient, persistent effort by local veto campaigns as the most effective method of creating opinion favorable to Prohibition and of limiting the traffic to ever narrower bounds. In this way, in a comparatively short time, it will be confined to the large cities and a few other centres where special conditions exist.

The Assembly advises, the traffic having been sufficiently limited to make this possible and yet not sufficiently to secure and enforce complete Provincial Prohibition, that by Legislative enactment:

(a) All bar-rooms be abolished where still remaining, putting an end to all drinking in the premises where sold, and the entire treating system which is admittedly responsible for a large proportion of the drinking now practised, and

(b) At the same time the licensed shops, wholesale and retail, be suppressed also, but that,

(c) Cities and towns be allowed, by the Local Option method the right, should a sufficient majority of the qualified resident municipal electors so declare, to have a limited number of shops authorized to sell liquor for consumption off the premises, provided the said sale is conducted "under such conditions as will eliminate the element of private gain."

Such by-laws would of course be in force only for a brief period—a year or two or three as might be determined—unless re-submitted and carried again by the required majority.

To What Does This Commit the Church?—Not to any form of public ownership or operation or control of intoxicating beverages as against Prohibition. It is a temporary expedient to meet a practical difficulty, namely, the making of prohibition effective in a large centre if the law is forced upon it by an outside vote, a majority of its own electors being opposed to such a measure. It commits the Church, therefore, simply to giving such centres, under restrictions and safeguards,

the right of saying whether they will accept Prohibition or insist on having the sale of liquor in their midst. It does not concede to such centres the right of having liquor sold under license for private gain, under any circumstances, but only under such conditions as will eliminate private gain.

When such by-laws are submitted to a vote of the people, the Church is free to work and vote against the by-law, and in favor of the general prohibitory law, and therefore at no stage in the process is the Church put in the position of favoring the traffic in intoxicants in any form.

Not the Gothenburg System.—Some temperance people have feared that this was a proposal to try the Gothenburg or Disinterested Company System of Sweden or Norway. No one who knows what this system is would entertain such a fear. The Swedish and Norwegian systems provide for bar-room sale. Under the Assembly's proposal there will be no bar-rooms. The Swedish and Norwegian system allows absolutely free sale of beer, ale, porter, wine, etc., and controls only distilled and strong liquors, and not all of these latter, as there are a number of privileged licenses beyond the control of the "Companies."

Not the South Carolina Dispensary System.—There was a State-wide system substituted for Prohibition. The Assembly's is a temporary expedient in certain exceptional communities to prepare the way for complete Prohibition. Theirs made the salaries of vendors dependent upon the amount of their sales, and hence did not eliminate private gain at all. Their system was framed by the enemies of Prohibition, and therefore left full of loopholes and weaknesses. The Assembly proposes that the Temperance people themselves, with irresistible temperance sentiment behind them, the result of long years through educational work, should frame and carefully safeguard the proposed legislation against such a possibility.

Can "Private Gain" Be Eliminated?—There are those who think this would be difficult, if not impossible. It would doubtless not be easy. Nothing is easy in controlling the drink traffic. But it is possible. Salaries must be absolutely independent of sales. Vendors must be put under heavy bonds. All sales, wholesale and retail, must be registered and open to inspection. The books must be officially audited. The entire business, as now, must be under espionage. The service of special detectives will then, as now, be necessary. Liquors must be frequently analysed. With these and other precautions there can be no doubt about the possibility of securing the elimination of private gain.

Will There Be Danger of "Public Gain" Being Substituted?—Was not this the case in Sweden? Yes, it was so in Sweden, but not in Norway, and simply because in Sweden and not in Norway the profits went largely into the municipal treasury to reduce taxes. In Norway this has been avoided by making the profits go into the State treasury and prohibiting their application to the reduction of taxes, and using them for benevolent or non-tax-receiving objects. There can be no danger of "public gain" entrenching the traffic if proper safeguards against this are in the legislation, and these will easily be obtained with strong, educated public opinion behind the law as the Assembly's plan ensures.

How Would the Business Be Managed?—It might be managed (1) by the Government itself, (2) by each Municipality, (3) by a Provincial Commission, or (4) by Disinterested Companies. There will be a difference of opinion as to which is to be preferred. The writer favors a Provincial Commission composed of men whose ability and integrity are above question, giving their services gratuitously as License Commissioners now do. On the Assembly's plan, ensuring as it does strong public opinion behind such a law, temperance people would be sure of getting the right sort of men appointed. The Commission would appoint the vendors and control the business in detail. Others would prefer that the Government, which is always directly

responsible to the people, should manage it. Others think the "Company" System the best. One might be best in one Province and another in another Province. That thoroughly satisfactory restrictions and safeguards be provided in the Statute is perhaps more important than the matter of management.

Important Ends Secured by Such a Plan.

(1) It recognizes and provides for the serious, practical difficulty of making prohibition effective when it goes into force in a large city, if a majority of its citizens are against the law and it is forced upon them by the rural vote.

(2) It will secure the largest possible measure of strict observance of the law.

(3) It precludes the possibility or reduces to a minimum the danger of a reaction against a prohibitory law not enforced and made effective. One of the most outstanding and uncompromising prohibition leaders in Canada said recently in the hearing of the writer that "if he could by his vote bring prohibition into force at once in Toronto, he would hesitate and probably would not do it, in the present state of opinion, unless some such plan as that suggested by the Presbyterian General Assembly were adopted, lest the liquor men should succeed in thoroughly discrediting Prohibition, secure its repeal by a reaction of sentiment, and give the cause of prohibition a set-back for a long period of years."

Such a statement from such a source may well impress—profoundly impress—all temperance reformers.

(4) It will eliminate "The Trade" from politics, or reduce its influence to the smallest dimensions. The chief source of the influence of the liquor traffic in politics is not its final resources, but its army of men engaged in the retail trade throughout the country. Every bar-room is a political committee-room, and every bar-owner and bar-tender a political agent, usually unscrupulous and corrupt, exerting a powerful influence because able to control a considerable number of votes, and every one of them inspired by the motive of private gain, his craft and property being at stake. This political octopus ceases to exist with the abolition of bar-rooms and the elimination of private gain from the residual shops.

(5) There are large sections of the public not heretofore actively identified with temperance reform, which will support such a policy and be a source of added strength to the temperance cause. These include a large number of our own Presbyterian men, many Methodists, Baptists and Congregationalists, and a still larger number of Anglicans, a host of Roman Catholics, and the majority of the organized labor men. To unite in the temperance movement these hosts is surely worth while and warrants us in being confident of victory.

Supplementary Dominion Legislation.

In addition to the Provincial Legislation outlined in this leaflet, it will be necessary to obtain Legislation from the Dominion Parliament affecting international and inter-provincial trade in intoxicating liquors and the manufacture of the same, so as to protect territory brought under Local Veto, the Scott Act, or Provincial Prohibition, against being supplied with liquor from outside to such extent as to nullify the intention of the Provincial or local Legislation. Only the Dominion Parliament has jurisdiction over the manufacture or importation of intoxicants, and it would seem not only fair and reasonable, but essential, that the Dominion should co-operate with the Provinces so as to give effect in this matter to the will of the people of the said Provinces or localities, as expressed in legislation up to the limit of their powers.

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