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CE REFORM in Canada

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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 on the premises where sold, and the entire public 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 certain 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 that 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 or 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.—Theirs 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 on the amount of their sales, and hence