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THE SHORT TONNAGE PROBLEM.

(Christian World.)

All Governments are afraid of the liquor interest, but we really would point out to the Government that if industries are to be made to suffer because of the nation's need of shipping, one industry must not be favoured more than another, and that if any industries are to be hit harder than others they should be those least necessary to the public welfare. The brewing industry always pleads that it employs a great number of men and that to interfere with them would throw great numbers of their employees out of work. The printing industry probably employs quite as many if we take into consideration all its branches, and as for fruit we should be quite prepared to leave even those who use the public-houses to decide, if it comes to the pinch, whether they are to be deprived of some of their beer or their children are to be deprived of their oranges, bananas, apples, and so on.

It seems to us that it would not be difficult, as more tonnage is wanted, to decide on restrictions on a certain set of principles. Room must first of all be provided for food. So long as this can come from Canada or the United States, it would appear to be better policy to fetch it from there than from the Argentine, for a vessel could make two journeys to North America while it was making one to South America. As between Canada and Australia it would be better to fetch it from Canada, for the vessel could make three journeys there while making one to Australia. We do not want Australia to suffer at all, and we think the Government should buy up their wheat and stock it for use after the war. The essential thing at the moment is to economise on tonnage.

Restrictions on the consumption of alcohol have long been resorted to by our two chief Allies. We have restricted hours of opening, and we have imposed some extra taxes, but the consumption has been very little affected. The country will surely not stand tonnage being occupied by brewers while other businesses are smashed up for want of it. The President of the Board of Trade is a sincere temperance reformer, and he understands, as few men do, the shipping industry of the country. If he adopts the principles that commend themselves generally to fair-minded citizens in his anxiety to re-lease shipping for the absolute necessities of the land, and then allows the other to be used equitably as between the remaining industries, he will have deserved well of the nation. We cannot think that he will be satisfied to restrict the importation of fruit and wood pulp, while doing nothing to restrict the materials of which beer is made. Even in our

own land, where it is complained that we do not produce sufficient food, and could produce a good deal more, more than half as much barley is grown as wheat. This is largely because brewers prefer English barley if they can get it; but at this time something could be done both to provide food for the people and to release tonnage if more land were put under wheat and less under barley. The liquor trade, as we have said, is powerful, but it is not so powerful during war time as it is in peace time. Two recent elections at which trade candidates have taken the field as a protest against the limitations that have already been imposed, have shown that the people care very little for the protests while the war is on, and we hope that the Government will take no more notice of the protests of the liquor trade than it takes of the protests of any other trade, but will be guided by principles that will commend themselves to the country at large. To take away 60 per cent. of the raw material of the printing trade and to leave the liquor trade untouched would be acting in anything but a fair way.

We cannot understand, as we have said in our leading article, why the brewing interest should be treated with special partiality by Government. The Secretary of the United Kingdom Alliance quite properly calls attention to a glaring illustration of this. While every household—where sugar is a simple necessity of life for children—is being urged by Government to restrict severely the quantity of sugar consumed, not a word has been said to the brewers. Yet in the nine months ending September 30 last the brewing and distilling trade consumed 310,734,368 pounds of sugar—that is, about 8,000,000 pounds a week, which is equivalent to about 44 pounds a year per family of five persons, without making any allowance for the large number of men who are out of the country. It is perfectly fair to say to the Government: If it is necessary to restrict the use of sugar, you should insist on the brewers and publicans limiting their consumption just as severely as the families of the people.

Sir Ernest Rutherford, speaking at Manchester, said that the problem scientists had to ascertain was how to release the energy of radium, and use it for our own purposes. It would be possible to obtain from one pound of radio-active material as much energy practically as from one hundred million pounds of coal. Fortunately, at the present time we have not found a method of so dealing with these forces, and personally he was very hopeful we should not discover it until man was living at peace with his neighbor.