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PROHIBITION IN ICELAND MOST DISMAL FAILURE

Conditions Were Ideal For Test Owing to the Island Being a Self-Contained Community.

Fellowship, London, Eng. Iceland provided ideal conditions for a real test of prohibition. The island is a self-contained community of a unique kind. It is isolated in a singularly complete manner. It stands alone in the North Atlantic, separated from Greenland by some two hundred and fifty miles of sea, and from Norway or Great Britain by some six hundred miles of ocean highway. Communications with the other world are infrequent and limited.

To these favorable conditions must be added the fact that in 1908 the people of the island took a referendum on prohibition and decided to make the experiment for a three-fifths majority. As a result, a prohibition law was enacted in 1912. That law, however, has been such a disastrous failure that the leader of the party which secured its passage in the Althing, the Rev. Sigurd Stefansson, has now become the leader of those who demand its repeal.

"Why? The answer is supplied at length in a remarkable speech by Mr. Stefansson, which has been recently translated for Fellowship. Here is his description of the ideal which prompted him to support prohibition. An alcohol-free country, within reach in the near future was an idea that filled the people with enthusiasm and hope. They hoped that morals would improve. They hoped that the well-being of the people would increase, for unhappily there were too many doubting Thomases who indulged in alcohol, were unable to save money or look after their means of subsistence. Prohibition was expected to bring spiritual, as well as material, blessings.

Dark clouds soon gathered over that dream. It was quickly discovered that the new law had not taken root in the hearts and minds of the people to the extent necessary for a law which infringed so nearly on the liberty of the individual. The promising hope which had led the natives of Iceland to vote for prohibition was "shamed," and on the other hand, "the fatal prophecies of the enemies of prohibition have been fulfilled." Each year that passed "the history of the prohibition law became more and more sad." Mr. Stefansson continued: "I do not speak as a fanatic, nor do I go to extremes. I am a sober, purely and simply, and I am sorry to have to speak them. Experience shows that the people have not gained by the prohibition law, but, on the contrary, they have suffered losses. There are others who have gained, and that to an extent which I can only describe as unfortunate and foreboding. These are the breakers of the law. After showing how the health of the young people of Iceland was being ruined by the "undrinkable poison brew" which had taken the place of alcohol, "which no man would have dreamed of drinking before the time of Prohibition," Mr.

Production is Increased by N. S. Miners

HALIFAX. — The report of Hon. E. H. Armstrong, commissioner of works and mines of Nova Scotia, which has been tabled in the House, shows an increase of \$42,213 tons in the production of coal in Nova Scotia for the year ending September 30, 1920, over the previous year. There was also an increase in the sales of \$23,898, the total output for the year was 5,677,976 tons. The royalties derived from the mineral resources of the province for the year totalled \$39,851.

Stefansson made this report refer to the fanatics of the wait-and-see school. "What I imagined in 1909, when I voted in favor of the Prohibition law, was that, even if the older generation were weak, and would endeavor to circumvent the law in order to satisfy a desire for alcohol, yet the generation now growing up would be better placed than before and it was this hope which decided me to cast my vote in favor of Prohibition, but this hope has not been fulfilled. It is clear that it is not the older generation that is more clever in dodging Prohibition, it is the younger generation. This is the saddest point of all, and it gives extremely small ground for hope in the future of the law. The fact that fruit is more tempting to youth than to the older people."

To those fanatics who, like their kin in the United States and Canada, urge that the remedy is to increase the severity of punishments for violating Prohibition, Mr. Stefansson replied that such severity only augmented the difficulty of control. "People are not so quick to denounce their neighbor when they know that the illegal possession of a bottle of brandy may cost him a fine of several hundred kroner, or a visit to prison." He added: "It is impossible to see such a law carried through to any extent. That is beyond all human power. If the police could, like the old womenfolk in our fairy tales, look through hills and mountain sides, they would see stocks of spirit dug down here and there in the hills, also in the neighborhood of the capital, and even at the bottom of the sea right out here. I would not guarantee that they would do any good to catch the smugglers who stock their goods in this fashion, for if they did from time to time seize some of these goods, new stocks would soon be sent in place of the old."

But what had been the practical result of the "Prohibition Law? Every day you can see signs. Some of the other disastrous effects of prohibition are set forth in the following notable passages from Mr. Stefansson's impeachment. "It is not the case that all spirit consumed in this country is legal spirit. This year the Althing has been obliged to put a duty on cooking spirit, hair spirit, and perfume. Why is that? Because people have started to drink these fluids. It may not be enjoyable, but one sometimes does things even if they are not—easy—enjoyable. Cooking spirit, owing to this duty, has become so dear that people can hardly afford to buy spirit to make a cup of coffee. "As the Althing was not sufficiently foreseeing and sensible to find a practical and just duty in place of the spirit duty, it has been obliged to put a high rate of duty on all

imported articles of necessity, and this duty has been increased from time to time. It is now such that the poor cannot get a crust of bread without paying duty on it, nor can he buy a piece of timber for his hut, or a piece of material for his clothes, a handful of salt or cement, a bag of coal or a piece of wire. Possibly this duty will remain in force, but it originates from the time this country lost its revenue from spirit on the introduction of the Prohibition Law.

After narrating how the home manufacture of poisonous spirit had become a thriving industry, Mr. Stefansson indicated another pernicious effect of the Prohibition Law. "Other evil things are taking place. Illegal import of spirit grows rapidly, and is probably now larger than the legal importation. There are rumors of large stocks of wines which have reached us from Spain and other countries. They are fetched in boats out here in the bay, or stored at the bottom of the water, to be fished up and landed later on when opportunity offers. "If, during the war, spirit reached the coast, to the extent mentioned, a harbor which was the only and exclusive one for ships from foreign ports a harbor where the control by the police is impossible, than anywhere else, then we can imagine what quantities will reach us of illegal spirit when ships can sail once more freely into any bay or fjord where there is no control or supervision by the police."

THREE RIVERS N. C. U. MEN DESERT SINKING SHIP.

THREE RIVERS.—Inroads were made into the National Catholic Laborers' Union at Three Rivers last week at an open mass meeting addressed by Vice-president Arthur Martell, of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, and General Organizer Martin Ryan, of the International Laborers' Union. Many of the members of the National Catholic Union deserted their N.C.U. cards at the conclusion of the meeting and identified themselves with the great International Labor Movement. "The movement is spreading with giant strides, and it may safely be predicted that in a year's time all Europe will be Communist,"—Zinoviev in 1913. Workers' Journal.

WON'T REDUCE WAGES OF CIVIC EMPLOYEES

Winnipeg Schedule to Remain in Effect Another Year.

WINNIPEG. — Civic employees' wages will not be reduced this year owing to the unrest and uncertainty of industrial and labor conditions. C. W. Gordon, chairman of the Joint Council of Industry, was informed following negotiations between the firemen of the City Light and Power department for a re-adjustment of wage scales in different departments, he stated last week. "Station maintenance workmen claimed that the spread between their rate of pay, which is 1-2 cents an hour, and that of the firemen, which is 2-2 cents an hour, is greater than is warranted by the character and conditions of work. Following a conference between representatives of the workmen and city officials, the Joint Council found that a certain preference should be paid the firemen or outside workers. Adjustment of the scales could be effected only by a reduction of wages paid to firemen or an increase in wages paid to inside workers. The Joint Council was then informed that the city council had decided to maintain the present scale of wages for civic employees throughout the current year owing to unrest. In view of this decision against any reduction and because the downward tendency of prices did not warrant an increase in wages paid to inside men, the Joint Council recommended to the city that differentiation in the wages of outside and inside men should be attempted to maintain general wage scales as considered. We have advocated an increase in the demand for union labeled goods in season and out of season because we know it would strengthen all labor. Not that we are weak but we want to be stronger. Not that the whole movement is weak but we want it to be much more powerful for good. Even the present depression has shown us the strength of the union label. Slight gains or losses in sales are now more than ever vital to retail merchants. This is our opportunity to get behind the union label and boost—Shoe Workers' Journal.

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