

6. This trade has not lost a penny through the war, but this very week the House of Commons has made it a present of £1,000,000.

The Board of Education teaches our children that beer cannot nourish us, but the trade which has taken 150 quarter loaves from every British cupboard since the war began is to burgle our cupboard still more, and turn our bread to beer.

Not even war can keep the grip of Nemesis from those who bring famine in their train. It is hunger and not thirst that makes a revolution.

Mr. Mee has also written an open letter to the War Council in which he says:

Gentlemen, you are conducting the greatest war of freedom in the history of mankind, and it is permissible to ask, as the Russian people are asking, if liberty is truly the end of all these things.

Quite clearly our drink question, as the greatest flour-milling paper in America says, is no longer a football for the game of British politics. With the fate of the Allies depending on food supplies, Canada and Russia and America, all prohibiting the destruction of grain for drink, may well be astounded at the spectacle of a War Council in Britain that tolerates the destruction of 450,000 loaves a day for beer.

Even fiddling like that we must stand at home, but what the British Empire will not stand is the smashing of its birthright. There is in circulation in this country a book that tells the truth about drink and the war. It gives the evidence on which the King declared that this trade prolongs the war, on which Lord Kitchener refused to touch drink as long as the war should last; on which the Prime Minister assured the nation that drink is more our enemy than Germany.

It is "Defeat or Victory?" now brought up to date in its companion book, "The Fiddlers," and it is found in the homes of a million of our people. It is found throughout the Empire, too, for the prohibition of the Army Council was too late. But the news now comes from Canada that under the Defence of the Realm Act any person found with this book in the Dominion may be fined £1,000 and imprisoned for five years.

Is the Defence of the Realm Act really to be reduced to the depth of becoming the Defence of the Drink Trade Act? Is this trade really to enjoy the protection we give to the army? Are free Canadians to be imprisoned unless they burn this book which is freely read in England? If this is the price we are to pay for proclaiming the truth about drink there are ten thousand thousand Britons who will know the reason why.

It will be observed, Mr. Speaker, that there can be no argument about the purpose of the book, or the purpose the author has in issuing the book, and it will be evident that he backs up his book by other publications. It is further obvious that, in the realm of England the right of free speech and free argument has not been suppressed, but it is clear that in this hitherto free Canada the right of public argument has been suppressed, so far as this Government can suppress it.

Mr. CURRIE: Who is the author of this book? Is he an Austrian or a German, or where does he come from? Where was he born?

Mr. OLIVER: I do not know.

Mr. CURRIE: The hon. gentleman spends the whole evening reading statements of an obscure writer in England, wasting the time of the House.

Mr. OLIVER: The writer is very far from being obscure. He is one of the greatest writers in England, and an Englishman. As a Canadian, I, for one, protest most strongly, in the words of this English writer, that this Government of Canada has no right to use the authority that Parliament has placed in its hands for the purpose of preventing the circulation in the Dominion of Canada of information that will be to the prejudice of those who conduct the distilleries and breweries, in this country. Has the Government sunk so low that it has used its authority in that way? And, having done so, it comes before Parliament with the report of Surgeon-General Fotheringham presented by the Prime Minister in the attempt to make the people of Canada believe that this book was written as an attack upon the soldiers of Canada. I say no more discreditable exhibition was ever made by any Government in any country. My information is that there are many good men and true throughout this Dominion of Canada who have informed the Government that they hold copies of this book, and they defy Government to put in force the terms of the Order in Council. It is up to the Government, either to withdraw that Order in Council, or to enforce it. I move in amendment:

That all the words after the word "That" be struck out and the following substituted therefor:

"In the opinion of this House, inasmuch as the book called "The Fiddlers" does not contain matter in contravention of the terms of the consolidated Orders in Council respecting censorship, but is a work inspired by high moral purpose and calculated to direct public attention to the evils of the liquor traffic in the United Kingdom, it should not be suppressed."

Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN: I am afraid I cannot congratulate my hon. friend from Edmonton (Mr. Oliver) on the fairness of presenting this amendment at this late hour of the night, without notice to the Government. He gave no notice, so far as I am aware of it, and I think I should have been aware of it if any notice had been given.