

LICENSE BOARD REJECTS DEMANDS OF TEMPERANCE ORGANIZATIONS

Declines to Cut Off Six Licenses as Asked for in Petition Signed by 7,000 Persons---Up to Ratepayers to Decide by Vote on What They Want

Though confronted with a large delegation comprising the representatives of many leading churches, societies and organizations, bearing with them petitions signed by upwards of 7,000 adult citizens, asking, primarily, for the reduction of six hotel licenses, the board of license commissioners, at an opening meeting on Wednesday afternoon in the Masonic Hall, intimated very clearly through Chairman A. B. Greer, that no reduction would be made and that it was up to the ratepayers to decide by vote what they were after by vote of the ratepayers.

The meeting of the commissioners was somewhat unique. The "drys" and the "wets," through their representatives, were given every opportunity of clearly setting forth their reasons for and against the requested reduction. The audience listened attentively while Rev. T. H. Mitchell, pastor of New St. James' Church; Rev. J. H. Boyd, pastor of the Adelaide Street Baptist Church; Henry B. Ashplant, Mrs. Hubert Ashplant and others presented the arguments of the temperance forces, and just as attentively while Edmund Meredith, K. C., defended the interests of the six hotelmen who would be affected by the proposed reduction.

There were about 75 persons present, and the pros and cons were about equally represented. Although any number of startling statements were made by both sides, perfect order was maintained, and but for occasional flashes of applause, the meeting was a very quiet and dignified affair.

Power of Commission. Commissioner A. B. Greer, chairman of the board, in summing up the discussion, gave it as his opinion that if the commissioners attempted to accede to the demands of the temperance people, the department in Toronto would ask for their resignations. As he viewed the law, he did not believe that it was within the province of the local board to cut off any license unless a specific charge could be proven against the licensee. It was up to the "drys," he said, to secure a vote of the ratepayers on the question. If a majority of the people were found, in this way, to favor the reduction, the commissioners would have to carry it out.

The commissioners will now, whether meeting, probably on Saturday, to finally dispose of the applications for the renewal of the various hotel, shop, club and bartenders' licenses.

The chief of the temperance interests as presented by Rev. T. H. Mitchell on the strength of petitions signed by more than 7,000 members of local churches and other organizations, and of the hotel situation as embodied in the social survey report, put three straight requests to the commission-

1. "That it be made illegal to permit the supply or the drinking of intoxicating liquors in dance halls or public ball rooms or in rooms connected therewith, not licensed by the commissioners."

2. "That it be made illegal to serve women with liquor in hotels unless they are registered guests of the hotel; and that it be made illegal at any time to serve women with liquor in side rooms which are open to the public."

3. "That the number of licenses in London be reduced by cutting off the licenses of those so-called hotels, which practically are nothing more than a place of refuge for the traveling public; that is to say, the Clyde, Windsor, Columbia and Bank, together with the King Edward and Queen's Park Hotels."

Mr. Mitchell, after presenting the three clauses of the request, read forth into an address in support of the cause of the temperance interests. They did not consider it necessary to argue, he said, the desirability of the regulations embodied in the first two requests. The commissioners, they believed, would agree that the drinking of intoxicating liquors at public places was not in the interests of good morals. Members of the board, undoubtedly influenced by the fact that at least 27 women were on the prohibited list in London, had expressed themselves in favor of the restriction if not the abolition of women drinking.

Based on Survey Report. "Our argument for the refusal of licenses to the Clyde, Columbia, Windsor, Bank, Queen's Park and King Edward hotels," said Mr. Mitchell, "rests upon the evidence secured in the social survey report recently made of the city under the auspices of the Men's Federation. It will be contended before you by those desirous of having these licenses that the facts as presented in the survey are without foundation; that the investigations were made by inexperienced amateurs; that due care was not exercised either in the visits to the hotels or the preparation of the report; that the time spent in the places was insufficient to form a proper estimate of the conditions."

"The truth is that the inspections of the six hotels were made principally by Dr. Riddell, whose evidence has been corroborated by other trustworthy investigators into social conditions, thoroughly familiar with the conditions in England and on the continent, and with an intimate knowledge of the Bowers of New York. The conclusions arrived at are not merely the result of hearsay evidence nor of only one investigation, but they are based on the written reports of men who were actually in all the places and who personally interviewed all the persons who attend the local market. The preliminary reports, when submitted to a committee of the Men's Federation, revealed such a startling condition that they insisted upon further evidence before crediting it. Four written reports in all were made upon the conditions of Whisky Row. Three written reports were made within the same time upon the King Edward and Queen's Park hotels. Only then, when the evidence was overwhelming, did the committee of the Men's Federation form its conclusions and decide to make the requests which we now present."

The president of the federation then went on to explain the various reasons for the deductions contained in the report, and to argue why the six hotels mentioned

were not entitled to a continuance of license privileges. He pointed out that in the opinion of the committee the granting of these licenses was not necessary to the proper accommodation of farmers' horses and cited that it had been proven that stables were better managed when they were not directly under the control of license holders, but were run as independent businesses.

Pointing out the fact that the accommodation of the travelling public was of the utmost importance, Mr. Mitchell declared that the six hotels were not essential to the comfort of the farmers. From the investigations made it had been found that less than 6 per cent of the farmers selling goods upon the market used the dining room accommodation provided by these hotels. On similar grounds the speaker contended that the six hoteliers were not essential to the entertainment of the travelling public.

"The first recorded inspection of all the hotels in the city was made on November 8," continued Mr. Mitchell, "when the registers of 22 hotels showed that 1,455 guests had been accommodated there within the previous seven days; at the Queen's Park and the Clyde no registers were open for inspection. At the Queen's Park the investigator was informed that there was no register at all. An inspection of the individual returns showed that at least six hotels were absolutely unnecessary for the travelling public. No guests, apparently, went at the hotels where registers were not opened. The King Edward had entertained three within the previous seven days; the Windsor, four; the Bank, eight. The Columbia had to guests from October 22 to November 5, and from November 10 to November 19, two entries had been made of men and their wives. That is to say, six hotels, or 23.08 per cent of the tavern licenses of London gave accommodation to 1.05 per cent of the visitors to the city within the previous week. During one comparatively brief period of that week the returns of the investigators show that the same hotels harbored 53.8 per cent of the women and 51.3 per cent of the men drinking at all the hotels in the city, and that in there were 38.6 per cent of all the apparent intoxication. Six hotels gave 1 per cent of accommodation, 38 per cent of drunkenness."

Says Hotels Are Dangerous. "We strongly believe," said Mr. Mitchell, "in drawing his remarks to a close, that the hotels are dangerous to the young, the unwary and the weak. The chief of police considers that the greatest evil arising out of the liquor traffic in the city is the presence of women drinking in hotels. Of the 24 women found upon one investigation, seven, or 53 per cent, were in the six hotels complained of. Whisky Row is notorious for its drunkenness, and it is a fact that one noted Canadian author, when he wished to secure a proper setting for a drunken fight with which he opened his book, chose London's Bowery."

"The Bank House has gained an unenviable reputation for the foreigners, to wit, the chief caterers, and upon the evening investigators discovered in the side room, which only last Saturday evening was the scene of a serious drunken brawl, two women and two men drinking together accompanied by two small children not over six years of age. In all six places young men who apparently were not over 21 years of age have been found by our enumerators, contrary to the provisions of the liquor license act. It is idle to contend that because the men most interested in the bartenders themselves, have admitted it by their recent actions in attempting to prevent it."

"We need not tell you that in closing our appeal that we come in no spirit of ill-will to the proprietors of these hotels. They are our brothers. We extend our good wishes to them. But we hate their business. We need not tell you that in case you refuse our plea we shall still wage the fight. We are in a war in which there is no release. We shall not, we cannot, rest so long as there are in the shape of such hotels as we are considering today so many obstacles to our highest prosperity; so many pitfalls for our boys and girls; so many blots on the fair name of our city."

Not Real Hotels. Rev. J. H. Boyd, pastor of Adelaide Street Baptist Church, voiced the sympathy of the Ministerial Alliance with the requests presented by the Men's Federation. The alliance, he said, believed that six hotels complained of were not hotels in the accepted sense of the term, did not provide accommodation for the travelling public and had practically no interests outside of their bars.

"The holders of some of these licenses consequently abuse their privileges," said Mr. Boyd. "Only two weeks ago, one of my young men, a lad of 19, confessed that he took his first glass in the Queen's Park Hotel, known as the Barrel House. He's on his way to ruin now and he has his first glass there. A while ago I was walking one afternoon about 4 o'clock on a leading east end street, when I met a young man who was in a very intoxicated condition. I said to him, 'You've not been kind to yourself today, young man.'"

"I guess I have not," was his reply. "I'm surprised," said I. "I can't help it," he replied. "How old are you, may I ask, about 23?" "No, only 19," he replied, and then told me that he had spent \$7.50 over the bar in the two or three hours of the afternoon."

"I need not trouble you with any recital of the economic waste of drink," said Mr. Boyd. "But I know, from my East London whose faces are never dry, whose hearts are never without an ache on account of liquor. It is your duty, nay, your privilege, gentlemen, to accede to our request to make it impossible for the proprietors of these hotels to continue the work of wrecking our young men and our young women."

Mrs. Hubert Ashplant, president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, who headed a deputation of the members of that body, expressed, in a few words, the support of the members toward the proposed reduction of liquor licenses.

"It is a privilege of yours to give our sisters and our children a chance," Mrs. Ashplant told the commissioners.

VOTE ON BYLAW TO CUT LICENSES

The city council will be asked within a few months to send a by-law to the ratepayers next January for the reduction of six hotel licenses, unless the board of license commissioners accedes to the request of the Men's Federation, Ministerial Association and W. C. T. U., presented yesterday afternoon. As there seems little likelihood of the commissioners affecting the reduction of their own accord, it is practically certain that the people will vote on the project.

Prof. James H. Bowman, of the Men's Federation, told The Advertiser last night that this course would be adopted by the temperance interests, if the plea given by the commissioners was unsuccessful.

"Whisky Row must go," said Prof. Bowman. "If the licenses are not cut off now they will be cut later."

"I was greatly pleased with the conference," said Rev. T. H. Mitchell, "for it set the ball rolling and accomplished our purpose."

Mr. Meredith's Defence. Edmund Meredith, K. C., counsel for the hotelmen, set forth the other side of the argument. The hotelkeepers, he said, had no quarrel with the W. C. T. U. or the temperance workers. All they wanted was fair play and British justice.

He took decided objection to the name "Whisky Row," claiming that it was an insult to his clients and that the Men's Federation had no right to use the term. Continuing, Mr. Meredith scored the Men's Federation for presenting a mass of statements to which the hotelmen, he said, had not been given a chance to reply. He challenged them to prove their statements and declared that his clients were prepared to prove that the statements were untrue.

"Everyone was satisfied as to the character of these six men before they got their licenses," continued Mr. Meredith, "and we have an inspector who is probably the best in the Province. He is active and fearless in the discharge of his duties. He passes these hotels every day and he is prepared to refute these charges to a very large extent. We have an efficient police force and a detective force within a block and a half of these hotels. Entering these hotels every day and I am prepared to put them in the box to show that the statements that have been made are not true."

The last remark was directed to Rev. Mr. Mitchell, and drew forth the reply from that gentleman that the federation was prepared to give the hotelmen "all they want" in the way of proof.

"That's not a very proper spirit for a clergyman," was Mr. Meredith's admonition.

"At all," pleasantly replied the clergyman. "I deny that these statements do not give accommodation," said Mr. Meredith, "summing the threat of his defence. He all knew that there isn't sufficient hotel accommodation in the city when the Western Fair or any other big event is on. Then these houses are filled to overflowing. I challenge anyone to say that these hotelmen's stables are not filled to overflowing on market days. Where would you have this accommodation if you put these men out?"

Mr. Meredith then presented a number of petitions, signed by farmers and others, asking that the licenses of the six hotels be re-granted, and read statements to show the number of guests accommodated, the number of meals supplied and the number of horses stabled by the six during a period of three weeks.

In conclusion, counsel for the hotelmen reaffirmed his charge that it was an outrage on British justice to condemn men who had not been given an opportunity to present their side of the argument. They were prepared, he said, to meet the Men's Federation in the courts or anywhere else. They defied the accusations and said that they were untrue. The hotelmen, he said, had been struck in a brutal way without being given the opportunity of striking back.

Repudiates to the Action. As a representative of organized labor, Henry B. Ashplant repudiated the action of the Trades and Labor Council in sending a resolution to the commissioners asking for the renewal of the six licenses.

"I am a member of the working class," said Mr. Ashplant, "and that resolution does not represent the sentiment of the organized working class. Rather, it positively misrepresents it. One of the bartenders of one of these six hotels was president of the Trades and Labor Council, I believe, for two years and it is only natural that the council out of sympathy for a comrade should pass such a resolution. How can my learned friend, Mr. Edmund Meredith, reconcile himself to defending these hotels?"

only last week, in the most forcible terms, he placed himself on record in the city press after defending successfully, man accused of murder, as condemning the liquor traffic. In view of this, how can he defend it?"

"I am absolutely consistent," interjected Mr. Meredith. Later he said that he was not contending for the liquor traffic, but simply for the six hotelmen whose business was attacked.

"I stand prepared to defend this report," continued Mr. Ashplant. "The working class would tomorrow vote to eliminate these six licenses, and I repudiate the action of the trades and labor council in this matter. Why, gentlemen, Ralph O'Connor placed the scene of a book last year on Whisky Row, London's Bowery."

"Was he here?" questioned Mr. Meredith.

"I saw him here," said David Ross, who was in the audience.

Mr. Mitchell said that the men's federation was prepared to go into the courts in support of the statements contained in the survey report.

A petition from residents of the east end was presented asking that the license of the Queen's Park Hotel be cut off, but some objection was made to it on the ground that it referred to William Collins, the proprietor, rather than to the hotel. However, the petitioners were advised, the document would be given consideration along with the others.

It remained for Chairman Greer to pronounce the figurative benediction, which he did in a few well-chosen words. He referred to the condition of the local department at the time the present board had taken office and declared that many improvements had been made. The law had been administered without fear nor favor and a deplorable condition of affairs had been

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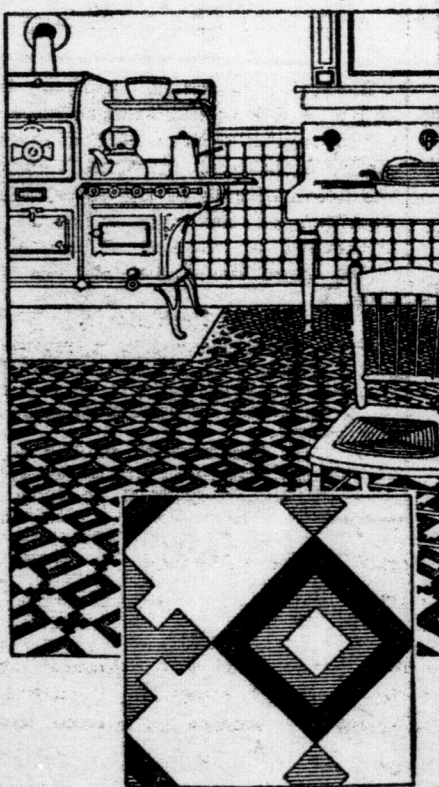
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