

VISIT TO OWEN SOUND, THE BATTLE-GROUND OF LOCAL OPTION

Ontario Representative Gives Reports of Interviews and Impressions Gained From a Journey to Owen Sound--Business Men and Town Officials Talk Freely of the Benefits and Shortcomings of Local Option.

Whenever we speak of local option our minds instinctively turn to Owen Sound, which has been the scene of more fiercely contested battles between the "Drys" and the "Wets" than have taken place in any municipality in Ontario. Other centers have had as many contests on the temperance issue, but there is no other place where the warfare has been so sanguinary a nature.

The "Dry" forces have invariably won, but the opposition has been by no means annihilated. Right now there is before the Owen Sound city council a petition to which over eleven hundred signatures are attached asking that a repeal by-law be submitted at the coming January elections. The council has not yet decided that the petition will be granted out in all probability that will be done.

A Peculiar Situation

The situation in Owen Sound is peculiar. Local Option was first passed in January 1906 before the Three-Fifths "iniquity" was perpetrated and straight majority was the rule. The same rule therefore governs in the repeal. Here are the figures for three of the four elections,—

Jan. 1906, majority for—	420
" 1909 " " "	181
" 1913 " " "	120

The reduction in the majority between 1906 and 1909 does not mean quite so much as is apparent. Before the vote was taken in the latter year the town's area was reduced by the separation of a suburban district of 2000 acres and containing several hundred votes. The majority of those in the separated section favored local option.

Several prominent and influential citizens took sides against local option on the start and they have never been won over. Their opposition gives to the Anti's a standing and force and permanency they would not otherwise possess.

Here, too, one might find some vindication of Sir James Whitney's attitude towards straight majority rule in local option contests.

In Campbellford and several other places where it requires a sixty per cent majority to repeal local option the forces favoring license realize that the fight is hopeless and local option has come to be accepted as a permanent situation. The people have pretty well forgotten that the license system ever was in force and the old division and animosity is obliterated.

In Owen Sound, however, the people are still ranged in two hostile camps, and everybody knows where everybody else stands. With a new contest looming up every three years the divisions are sharply drawn and much bitterness of feeling is generated. The Three-Fifths clause has its good points.

Good Hotel Accommodation

By leaving Belleville by the C.P.R. "Benjamin" flyer at the unearthy hour of four o'clock a.m., we were enabled to land in Owen Sound shortly after noon. We inquired of a trav-

eller what was the best hotel in the city and were informed that it was a toss-up between the Seldon and the Paterson. We had heard of the Seldon as being the result of an interesting experiment in the Temperance hotel business and we wended our way thitherward.

The rates charged are \$2.50 a day, American plan. That is to say 50 cents for meals and \$1 a day for room. We were shown to a room that was hardly as good as one might expect for that price. The furniture was cheap and poor. The linen was, however, clean and the entire house, in fact, was well kept, clean, and business-like in its management. If the rooms were not up to the mark, we could not say the same of the meals provided. The Seldon house is certainly to be complimented upon the excellent work of its chef, and its cuisine. Attentive and exceedingly courteous waiters served meals, that for daintiness and quality it would be hard to excel.

An Experiment in Temperance Hotels

The temperance people of Owen Sound, when they set out in their primary campaign ten years ago to make drought prevail, laid their plans in a very systematic way. They formed a joint stock company and secured options on two hotels, the Seldon and the Queens. The former catered to the commercial trade, the latter to the rural patrons. After the measure had been passed the company hired managers for each and conducted the business with a certain amount of success for two or three years. But this was found to require much personal supervision on the part of the members of the company and another method was devised.

The Seldon was sold to two wealthy ladies by the name of Doyle, who were sound on the temperance issue. The Queens was purchased by Mr. Legate who was also a strong temperance man.

For manager the Misses Doyle secured Mr. George Eberle, who had been one of the most active of the promoters of local option. The choice was a fortunate one, for Mr. Eberle conducts a hotel that for quiet, restfulness and business-like service it would be hard to surpass.

The following morning a prominent business man of Montreal who was a guest at the hotel spoke of the changed conditions. He related how that sixteen years before he had been a guest at the Paterson. He was very tired after a hard day's work and wished to rest. He retired, in the expectation that the noise and disorder that was riotously prevalent in the lower rooms would subside by eleven o'clock. To his surprise and disgust they kept it up all night. At the Seldon house, on the occasion of our visit, he retired and there was not a sound to be heard until morning.

A Well Licensed Town

Owen Sound was nearly as well provided with licenses as is Belleville. In the good old days prior to 1906 there were thirteen licensed bars all doing a land-office business. If present accounts are to be credited, they were about as merry a lot of law-breakers as ever brought discredit on the licensed system. "It was the hotel-keepers' own fault that local option ever passed" was a remark we very frequently heard in our wanderings about the town.

The original thirteen hotels have now dwindled to six, and all are barless. Not even soft drinks are sold in any of the Owen Sound hotels. The Seldon and the Paterson look after the commercial business with rates of \$2.50 a day each. The Conley, Queens, City and Royal cater to the farmers with meals ranging from 25 cents to 35 cents and rates from \$1.00 to \$1.50 per diem.

Mayor McQuaker's Views

The Ontario first interviewed Mr. John McQuaker, for the second time mayor of the city and partner in the large wholesale and retail grocery business known as McQuakers Limited. Mr. McQuaker is well known all over Ontario as a business man. He is a strong believer in local option. Two years ago he was elected by 300 majority over an anti, and the present year he was returned by acclamation.

"There is no comparison," said Mr. McQuaker, "between the number of drunken men that one would see ten

years ago under license and what are to be seen now. On Saturday nights especially, drunken and howling scrappers had to be escorted to the cells. Now I don't see a drunk once a week. It costs \$20 and \$4.50 extras to get drunk now in Owen Sound and the amusement is no longer popular. I know from our own business that farm trade is better here than it ever has been before. I can tell of actual cases where farmers prefer to come here because local option is in effect.

"Do you consider the local option system an improvement then?" inquired The Ontario.

"I wouldn't think I was sane to want to change," was Mr. McQuaker's concluding statement.

A License Inspector Who Inspects

After leaving the mayor's office we proceeded to police headquarters and were fortunate to meet there Mr. M. C. Beckett, license inspector for North Grey, a Belfast Irishman who can detect the smell of illicit whiskey a mile away.

Whenever the provincial government has some particularly classy work to do in the way of knocking the eyes out of blind pigs, they send for M. C. Beckett. For three months of the present year he was up in New Ontario ferreting out some of the whiskey outlaws in that region.

A Boozeless Twelfth

We passed a most interesting hour in Mr. Beckett's company as we listened to his racy accounts of experience with the get-rich-quick bottlegang. Mr. Beckett is a Roman Catholic in religion, but last summer the Orangemen celebrated the Glorious Boyne victory at Owen Sound, and Mr. Beckett occupied a prominent position in the "process." There were said to be 25,000 people in Owen Sound that day, and 10,000 Orangemen in line. There are more Orangemen on the water-wagon now than used to be the case, but they have friends in abundance who regularly get toused as often as the Twelfth comes around and the supply is convenient.

It is doubtful if there was ever so arid a Twelfth since the year 1690 as that which was celebrated last July at Owen Sound.

To give any would-be blind-piggers the impression that they were not being watched, he ostentatiously walked with the Orangemen. At the same time four of the best detectives in the possession of the Provincial Secretary at Toronto were watching every nook and cranny in the town to find any evidence of illegal sale. At night they came to Mr. Beckett to report, and had to confess that they could not find a single scrap of evidence, any illegal selling, and neither could they discover a man in way under the "influence."

The following morning two of the detectives were sent back to Toronto, and two were retained to investigate reported law-breaking in the licensed village of Desborough. In two days they laid five charges against the license-holder there and secured convictions on four counts.

In the past four or five years, said Mr. Beckett he had not found it necessary to employ detectives in Owen Sound except on special occasions.

In opposition to the theory of Chief Linn of Campbellford, Mr. Beckett lays charges whenever he thinks he has a fairly reasonable case. He secures convictions in about fifty per cent. of the total charges.

Offer To Hire An Auto

We asked Inspector Beckett if there was much drunkenness around the town. In response he asked us to go and hire an auto and with it patrol the principal streets of the town from that time until midnight and if we discovered four drunken men in all that interval he would pay the hire of the car. We did not accept his offer but we did wander about the streets until pretty late that night. Neither that night, nor during our visit did we see a drunken man, nor a man who showed any evidence of having been drinking.

An Efficient Police Force

In Chief of Police William Foster Owen Sound has another official, whom Mayor McQuaker correctly described as a "terror to evil-doers." He is assisted in his work by four constables, all men of unimpeachable integrity, "men whom you couldn't buy for a hundred thousand dollars" as Inspector Beckett put it.

Chief Foster informed us that drunkenness was not twenty-five per cent of what it used to be. Sometimes two or three weeks would pass without a single man being put in the lock-up. They didn't have much trouble in making them tell where they got the goods. The first offense cost the boozers \$20 and costs, the second \$40 and costs, the third meal

without the option of a fine. They were very particular to arrest every man who showed himself on the street in an intoxicated condition.

Inspector Beckett informed us that from Jan 1 to Nov. 18 of the present year there had been 18 convictions for selling or keeping liquor.

Less Accounts On His Books

J. R. Boyd, butcher, said he was not selling so much meat as he had done, but he had fewer accounts on his books. "If that is due to local option let's have lots of it."

Local Option a First-Class Farce

In one of the members of the firm of McLaughlin & Co., biscuit manufacturers, we encountered a sturdy opponent of local option. He would not permit us to use his name, but he made some very strong statements in opposition. "Local Option is a first-class farce," he emphatically declared. "We have more trouble with our men now than ever before. We employ somewhat over 100 hands. Under local option there is no control over the liquor. The men get the bottles and they never quit until they touch bottom. The family suffers under local option. There are hundreds of places in Owen Sound where you can buy liquor."

As to the veracity of this last statement we made inquiry of Inspector Beckett, and he informed us that it was vastly exaggerated. "There are not more than two places in the city where we even have suspicions that liquor is being sold," said Mr. Beckett. The inspector then went on to tell us how he had been sent by the Department to investigate some cases of illegal sale in a certain licensed town between Toronto and Belleville. He said he was satisfied from what he saw there was more illicit sale in that licensed town of 5000 inhabitants in one night than what took place in Owen Sound during the whole month. Several recent convictions for blind-pigging in the town indicated would go to prove that there was some truth in Mr. Beckett's statement.

Owen Sound's First Citizen

Our next interview was with Mr. J. M. Kilbourn of the law firm of Kilbourn and Kilbourn who is described as "Owen Sound's First Citizen."

The career of J. M. Kilbourn would afford material for a biography that would inspire the youth of Canada to do and to achieve.

Starting with nothing or therabouts, he educated himself for the profession of law, then launched out in a business career until now he is one of the first industrial Captains of Canada and several times a millionaire.

Here are a few of his activities at Owen Sound.—

President of the North American Furniture Co., employing 175 hands.

President of the Northern Bolt and Screw Co., 150 hands.

President of the National Table Co., 75 hands.

Vice President of the Canada Malleable Iron Co., 150 hands.

Director and half-owner of the Owen Sound Chair Co., 80 hands.

President of the W. T. Harris, Wholesale Grocery Co.

He is also identified with about a dozen smaller concerns.

In addition he is vice-president of the Canada Cement Company which has works at Point Anne, Owen Sound and a number of other places in Canada.

Then as if that were not enough, he was lately elected president of a newly formed shoe company which will commence the manufacture of shoes in one of the unused hotel buildings.

We asked Mr. Kilbourn if he had any notion of moving to a real Ew-ton, and intimated that we could do with one or two citizens of his type in Belleville.

At the time local option passed Mr. Kilbourn owned two hotels. We were informed that he was then opposed to the measure, but he made no statement to that effect to us.

He is a very modest and unassuming gentleman, and was not too busy to receive The Ontario representative in a very courteous manner and give him all the time necessary.

Drunkenness Practically Wiped Out

"Drunkenness is practically wiped out," said Mr. Kilbourn in response to our inquiry as to the effect of local option on the laboring men in his various industries. Perhaps once a year a man has to be discharged because of inebriation. There is no longer any trouble among the workmen. I have relations with many of the retail grocers and they have all voiced their pleasure on account of the wiping out of the liquor evil. I can't remember having seen a drunken man on our streets. It doesn't seem to me that we have five per cent. of the drunkenness that we had before. The sentiment of our business men has changed. The great majority are now non-drinkers. One time Owen Sound was easily one of the worst drinking places in Canada. There was just as much illicit sale under license as there is now under local option. I haven't even heard it alleged that boys or minors are obtaining liquor. Business

men here is in a very healthy state, we rarely hear tell of a business failure. There is no unemployment. We want more help in several of our factories right now. I can heartily endorse local option as a most beneficial measure in every way."

An Unqualified success

Owen Sound has three excellent semi-weekly newspapers. When the local option campaign was first inaugurated all came out in support of the change. Then the hotel men banded together and started a paper to voice their sentiments and "The Owen Sound Herald" was founded. The paper was well edited but it was a business failure from the start. About five years ago it gave up the fight and was amalgamated with The Sun.

We interviewed Mr. H. Fleming the publisher of The Sun, a paper with over 5000 circulation.

Mr. Fleming briefly characterized local option in Owen Sound as "an unqualified success."

NOTES

The police magistrate was out of the city at the time of our visit. We were therefore unable to obtain from him an interview.

We tried to obtain for comparative purposes from the clerk of the police court, Mr. Menzies, a statement showing the number of convictions for drunkenness and illicit sale the last year under license and for the years 1912, '13, '14, and '15 under local option, but he asked six dollars of a fee to supply us with the information. We did not invest.

We have to thank the city clerk, and in particular the city treasurer for their courtesy in supplying us with much interesting data and facts during a busy afternoon.

Owen Sound has become a city since the passage of local option. Its population statistics shows very satisfactory growth. In 1906, the year that local option came into effect, the assessor's census gave a population of 10,765. In 1912 this had grown to 12,994. The present year's census however indicates a decline to 12,202. The decrease is accounted for by the enlistment of about 600 men for overseas service, the removal of the C.P.R.'s line of boats to Port McNicoll and the loss of about 500 residents connected with the company. Two cement companies also closed down. The large elevators were destroyed by fire.

A resident told us that he had not seen a drunken soldier in town since the beginning of the war.

Owen Sound is located at the terminus of a bay that goes by the same name as the town. There is plenty of accommodation in its harbor for all the shipping of the Great Lakes. The sloping hills on every side and the picturesque bay give to the city a most pleasing and beautiful setting.

The surrounding farm district is newer and naturally not quite so good as that about Belleville. But Owen Sound is more of an industrial and shipping center than our home town has yet come to be.

The people there are quite as well taxed as we are in Belleville. The rate this year is 30 mills. They are carrying a debenture debt of \$1,171,859.08. This is somewhat less than our own.

Owen Sound owns its electric light, gas, and waterworks services. Aside from the gas all are in a very prosperous condition. Only last week the city was linked up with the Hydro system getting its power from the 540-foot head at Eugenia Falls.

In 1906 the income from the three services was—

Electric Light and Power	\$12,572
Waterworks	12,807
Gas and its by-products	20,359
Mayor McQuaker points with reasonable pride to the fact that the income from these services had grown by the year 1914 to—	
Electric Light	\$46,448
Waterworks	19,350
Gas	23,507

The Electric light paid its big increase notwithstanding that it was steam-generated and was reduced from a ten-cent rate in 1906 to a 6.4 rate in 1914.

He thinks the fine increase in these domestic services indicates prosperity in the homes of Owen Sound.

A report reached The Ontario office that we were being paid by a certain organization to make these visits and publish the accounts relating to local option towns. In reply we would state that no one outside our office knew of our intended action in the matter. It was not carried out at the suggestion of any outside organization or individual but entirely upon our own initiative as a service to our readers. We paid our own expenses and will receive no reimbursement from any quarter whatever.

As title before, we will publish opinions both favorable or unfavorable, just as we receive them from the officials concerned with law enforcement and more prominent business men, without seeking any advance in-

formation as to their attitude. We will present the evidence on both sides just as we receive it. What more can anyone ask?

In the short time at our disposal, we regret that we were not able to interview more of the merchants of the city.

We also had not time to call upon Wm. Kennedy and Sons, founders and steel manufacturers. We however wrote them a note asking for a brief resume of their impressions as to the effect of local option upon their employees and town generally. We have not as yet received a reply, but will publish one if received later.

Tomorrow or Monday our representative will furnish a report of a visit to the City of Galt, "the Manchester of Canada," where local option has been in effect since 1910.

Military Notes

Definite announcement has been made of the authorization of a new battalion, the 14th, to be recruited in Frontenac County including Kingston with Lt-Col. Charles A. Lowe in command, now Junior Major the 89th Battalion stationed in Belleville. It is felt that the department has made an excellent choice in Lt-Col. Lowe and that he will be the means of recruiting many Kingston men. Lt-Col. Lowe is a soldier through and through and it is said that in the many years he served with the 14th he never once missed a parade.

It is understood the 59th will leave Kingston within a week for the various places to which it has been assigned.

Today's transfers to the 80th in Belleville were E. G. Gunter, Opie Hill and R. E. Goodfield, Huffs' Island.

Lt-Col. Ketcheson, and Capt. Watson accompanied Col. Hemming to Picton today on his tour of inspection of "D" Co. 80th battalion.

The men of the 80th are preparing for an evening's entertainment and are hard at work on rehearsals.

Quite a few changes are expected to be announced in the orders concerning the staff of the 80th Battalion, owing to the appointments of Lt-Col. Adams and Lieut-Col. Lowe to the command of two overseas battalions.

Lieut. Harris is on duty at the Y.M.C.A. tonight. Tomorrow's officer for the khaki club will be Lt. R. Sillis.

Col. T. D. R. Hemming, O.C. the Third Division arrived in the city yesterday afternoon from Napanee, accompanied by Lt-Col. Ketcheson, Lt-Col. Adams, and Major Low (soon to be gazetted Lt-Col. of the 146th). Col. Hemming and the officers of the 80th went over the quarters of the C company of the 80th at Napanee yesterday. While in Belleville Col. Hemming inspected the battalion and the troops as they marched at the barracks parade ground. He is going to Picton today to look over the situation there.

Lt-Col. Smart of Port Hope who left Belleville last June 23rd with the 39th battalion will return to Port Hope to command the 138th Battalion being organized at that place.

In three days Major J. Hamilton, Kingston, was able to secure 250 mechanical drivers from this district for service with the Imperial army.

A Peterborough member of the 2nd Battalion, Pte. Geo. Curson, was one of the victims last week when the British hospital ship Anglia struck a mine in the channel and went down with the loss of some 90 lives, of which twenty-two so far reported were Canadians. The casualty list reports Pte. Curson as "missing and believed drowned on the hospital ship Anglia, Nov. 17th."

Bull Caused \$10,000 Action

A bull which took upon itself to stray was the innocent cause of much court litigation, which terminated at Osgoode Hall yesterday, when Chief Justice Falconbridge dismissed the action for \$10,000 damages for malicious prosecution brought by Thomas Scarsott, a farmer of Hastings County, against James McMath, a Lennox & Addington Twp. bull, which was owned by McMath, strayed and joined a herd which Sexsmith said. The bull was sent to Toronto and was later recovered in Wellington County, 160 miles from its home. McMath subsequently entered a charge of theft against Sexsmith, which was dismissed by the Napanee magistrate. Sexsmith in turn brought the action for damages for malicious prosecution, which the Chief Justice yesterday dismissed and awarded McMath \$25 expenses on counterclaim. W. R. Northrup, K.C., for plaintiff, D. L. McCarthy, K.C., and J. English, Napanee for defendant.

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Cheese Board Closes

Today the last session of the Belleville Cheese Board was held until the third Saturday in April. Naturally the price was higher than last week. It reached the figure of 17-16c per pound. Five hundred and forty boxes were sold.

The milk abundance this season responsible for the late operation of the cheese factories.

Nearly Right

The nearly right Watch

won't do any longer—

BECAUSE no one can afford to own that kind—

BECAUSE men now - a - days make minutes count. They want to know the right time all the time.

So when your Watch first starts to "do things," Bring it to us— quickly it is running like new again.

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