

## YOUTH'S REACTION TO PROHIBITION

By Leonard Kenworthy

During the past few months, in particular, youth has been the target of a steady fire of prohibition and anti-prohibition propaganda emanating from all factions engaged in the present battle. Realizing the importance of gaining new recruits from the rising generation to carry on their campaign, both sides have tried hard to win the approval of the young people of the nation.

It is my purpose to give you a glance behind the smoke screen into the reaction of youth to the pertinent question of prohibition, as it affects them. Such a task is difficult, for no one can accurately mould the varying sentiments of different young people into one all-embracing statement, but there are certain reactions which may readily be ascertained.

First of all we are weary of the incessant mulling over this question. We have been subjected to a constant stream of prohibition talks, good, bad, and indifferent. We have heard the question discussed at length in the family circle; we have read about it in our magazines and newspapers; we have seen it on the billboards which line our highways; heard it in the news reels; and discussed it with our fellow travelers on the trains and busses. We are weary—but we see no relief.

More particularly, we are tired of the zealot who forces his or her views on us as if we were incapable of forming our own ideas. It is obvious that many of our magazines fall into this category. Their editorial columns figuratively reek with the stench of liquor. Their jokes are turned whenever possible on the ardent prohibitionist. Their cartoons feature the proverbial dry leader with his scare-crow appearance, homely mien, talk silk hat, and antiquated umbrella. Not only a large group of magazines, but a large percentage of newspapers fit this description.

### Why Facts And Figures Are Distorted

Furthermore, we are tired of hearing that every high school and college student considers a hip pocket flask an essential of his wardrobe! We can readily see that facts are twisted and figures distorted in the hopes of bringing back legalized liquor.

Neither do our prohibition friends escape from criticism for their methods in trying to influence young people. They are apt to white-wash present conditions in the hope that their unsightliness may pass unnoticed. They tell us that there is no drinking among young people when we realize that many hosts and hostesses consider liquor

essential to the success of their social functions. Some ardent dries attempt to tell us that it is impossible to procure liquor in these days of national prohibition. Undoubtedly, drunken persons are scarce compared to the days prior to 1918; no doubt, liquor is much harder to obtain than it was a few years back; but the fact remains that drinking exists among young people in places and at times when their elders are not present.

A year ago while attending a nearby church on Temperance Sunday, the local minister told his congregation that the prohibition question was not a problem worthy of their discussion that day. He further stated that it would be impossible to procure a drink anywhere in their community. Such a situation would be a blissful state—but I doubt the basic facts behind his optimistic statement, partly because we have not arrived at such a happy position and partly because the young people in the congregation were amazed at his unfounded statements, as I gathered from their conversations after the service.

### **Youth Sentiment Well Expressed**

A prominent dry leader has expressed our sentiments well when he said: "I do not believe the average dry with an opportunity to observe, is satisfied. If a dry is satisfied, it is pretty safe to say that he is insulated. And insulated people are in no position to provide leadership for the settling of this issue." (Stanley High, *Christian Herald*, August, 1932).

This is a pitched battle; Fabian tactics are taboo. We are anxious to hear the facts, untarnished by personal prejudices. "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

Thus far I have given you a dismal picture of our reaction to various attempts to corral the majority of young people into one camp or another. I have spoken frankly and, as I see it, truthfully, for my sincere desire is that we may all profit by a thorough self-inspection.

Nevertheless, we are grateful to those millions of men and women who have spent years in ceaseless efforts to provide a better world in which we might live. The strides made in comparatively recent years were attained only by the sacrifices and struggles of those whose memories we revere. They fought against overwhelming odds, meeting each rebuff with unflinching faith and with unshaken confidence in the eventual success of their cause. We have inherited a better world because of their lives.

But in our enthusiasm to preserve the gains they made, we have abandoned many of the methods which they used.

Stanley High, of *The Christian Herald*, summarized this point when he wrote in the June number of *Harper's Magazine*: "The case for national prohibition was built up first of all out of evidence against liquor. It is doubtful if any case in the history of reform was ever more carefully prepared or more persistently pressed, educationally.



The advent of prohibition, however, brought an almost complete change in tactics. The war against the liquor traffic was brought to an abrupt halt. A new war, for the defense of prohibition was undertaken. For seventy-five years, the dries opposed the liquor traffic with moral, social, and economic arguments. For thirteen years, they have been defending prohibition with political arguments. The case against liquor is as sound as it ever was. And the American people by as large a majority could probably be brought to recognize its soundness. Meanwhile, however, the case for prohibition is increasingly debatable. The dries could afford to make almost any political sacrifice that would enable them to get out of the political fight and back into the fight against the liquor traffic."

Defensive methods must yield to aggressive tactics. We have built our prohibition structure upon the shifting sands of legislation. The powerful waves of public opinion have swept across the nation and we have found that our foundations were not firm enough to withstand the current.

We must rebuild; we must recreate, for only the breakwater of individual sobriety and temperance is sufficient to establish the safe water of the social harbor we desire.

#### **Salient Points to be Considered**

In the remaining moments I should like to present a few of the bed-rock facts which appeal to the rising generation, some of the salient points essential to our new and stronger structure.

(1) **Youth admires physical skill and prowess.** The great athletes of the nation are the idols of the average young person. Therefore an appeal to our generation to shun all intoxicants as injurious to their physical well-being, would be fitting. I would cite the testimonies of such leaders of American sport as Alonzo Stagg, veteran coach at the University of Chicago, who says: "Coaches and trainers are dead against the use of alcoholic liquors." I would repeat the statement of Connie Mack, manager of the Philadelphia Athletics baseball team who once said: "All the umpires together have not put as many players out of the game as old man booze." Yost, popular coach at the University of Michigan, avers: "I wouldn't waste time to train a boy who uses alcohol even in moderation. He doesn't give himself a chance and he jeopardizes his team."

(2) **Youth is a time of ambitious planning for the future.** Young people will chiefly form alliances with those forces which will aid them in attaining their ultimate goals. Prove conclusively that liquor will benumb their brain power and stifle their chances for success, and they will shun its companionship. To strengthen my arguments I would quote such noted leaders as former President and Chief Justice Taft who says: "He who drinks is deliberately disqualifying himself for advancement. Personally I refuse to take such a risk; I do not drink." Henry Ford has said: "The brain of the man who drinks al-

cohol cannot be wholly quick and alert. My experience has been that there can be no temporizing whatever with liquor."

(3) **Youth also looks to the future with plans for the home.** Therefore, I would prove that alcohol strikes at the roots of racial advance. According to Dr. Bouman, noted scientist and psychiatrist: "Laboratory experiments have taught us that even small doses of alcohol attack the most highly developed cells of the body—the brain, the nerves, the racial cells of procreation. These creative cells in alcoholic parents if not completely destroyed, are degenerated and the child suffers the fatal consequences before birth."

(4) **The economic arguments are also convincing to youth.** They can see the sham front behind the present drive for "Repeal for Prosperity," realizing that safer roads, sober workers, and larger savings accounts bring more prosperity than providing a few bar tenders with their jobs.

(5) And finally, **youth respects those who strive earnestly for the things they desire.** Action is one test of the sincerity of those in a cause. A former clerk of Indiana Yearly Meeting has aptly said: "Increasingly, we dries have been making Washington the packhorse of enforcement, instead of turning our major attention to the creation and maintenance of that virile public opinion at home which is the only safety of law." More zeal in presenting an intelligent program, backed up by activity at the polls, will be reflected by youth's attitude towards this question.

THESE ARE THE INGREDIENTS IN MY DRY PRESCRIPTION  
TO CURE OUR PRESENT AILMENTS.



# WHAT'S UNDER THE FROTH?



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THE LIQUOR TRAFFIC  
BEFORE THE INDIANA YEARLY MEETING  
OF FRIENDS



September 22nd, 1932



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**By David W. Dennis**

**ECONOMIC WASTES OF THE TRAFFIC**

**By Tom Millikan**

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