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THE INTEMPERANCE OF FANATICISM

Intemperance has been usually considered as the over-indulgence in alcoholic liquors. It has occurred to few however, that one of the problems with which we are faced is caused by an entirely different kind of intemperance. I refer to that intemperance in lawmaking and that orgy of legislative edicts which are to-day menacing the rights and liberties of our citizens.

Undoubtedly, the most striking illustration of the results which follow from such intemperance, is the failure, in certain sections of the country, of the Volstead Act. It is apparent, to-day, that far from aiding the cause of prohibition, federal control and federal enforcement have in many cases grievously injured it. One has only to look back to the conditions which existed in 1920 to appreciate the force of this assertion. In 1920, 38 states already had prohibitory laws. In the remaining states, public opinion was so rapidly crystallizing against the evils of the liquor traffic that it was evident that they too would have similar laws. And this same public opinion, which was securing the passage of these laws, was also demanding that they be effectively and wholeheartedly enforced.

Contrast those conditions with the situation that exists to-day under federal control. In those states which did not have prohibition laws, we see open defiance of the Volstead Act. The imposition of this federal law has only succeeded in raising a feeling of bitterness which has swept away the public sentiment that was once aroused against the liquor traffic. And even in those states that already had prohibition laws we see today a steady increase in drinking. Economical state legislatures have been only too willing to let the over-burdened federal government assume the task and the expense of enforcement. Crime, corruption, and bribery are to be seen on every side. It is little wonder that alarmed public opinion is now turning against the whole cause of prohibition. Those great reforms which the states had been able to accomplish are being swept away by the tyranny and unenforcement of this federal law.

Every one is familiar with the reasons for this lamentable change. Unfortunately for our country the safe and sane progress of the states was too slow to please a great number of well-meaning, well-organized, but impatient people. These people believed that prohibition should be enforced at once in all the states, whether the people in those states believed in the law or not. In their intemperate zeal they forgot that a law cannot be enforced in a state in which the majority of the people are against it. They forgot that the federal government was never created to act as a police agent over such a vast country as ours; it was never constituted to regulate the habits and the morals of a hundred and ten million people. They forgot all of these self-evident facts, and the 18th amendment was the result of their ill directed efforts.

Thus has intemperate zeal delivered a most crushing blow to the whole cause of prohibition. Yet even this mistake shrinks into insignificance when compared to the still more crushing blow which these same impatient reformers are today delivering to the cause of freedom. These fanatics seem to have secured the control of the prohibition movement. They are the most vociferous in their arguments, the most vituperative in their attacks, the loudest in the praise of their own virtue. Their constant cry is for laws, more laws, and still more stringent methods of enforcement. The great mass of people who believe in temperance and in reasonable prohibition are seldom heard above this fanatic din. Intemperate bigots seem to have secured the throne and now, drunk with their power, are wielding their scepters of unjust persecution.

The mind of the fanatic can see only one thing; the bringing about of the standard which he desires to enforce. And now he is faced with the realization that under our present laws, and under our present methods of procedure, national prohibition cannot be enforced. What wonder then, that he favors the abolition of any rights of the citizen which interfere with the enforcement of this despotic law. We see this tendency on every side. We see, through the use of the injunction, men deprived of their right of jury trial, we see homes being entered without even the pretence of a warrant, we see our citizens being persecuted by fanatical laws, and on every side we see the

historic rights and liberties of our citizens being swept into the discard. These fanatics leave no stone unturned, they utilize every agency in order to bring about the result which they desire. They have glorified the maxim that the end justifies the means.

The inevitable result of this intemperate bigotry can easily be foreseen. Unchecked it will surely result in a loss of all of those rights and all of those principles which are an inherent part of our traditions of liberty. Already the property of the convicted man can be confiscated by the state; it will be but a step until we shall award half of it to his informer. Already men and women are being sentenced to the penitentiary upon the most incomplete evidence; it will be but a step until we shall have bills of attainder. Already the injunction is being used to take away the jury trial; it will be but a step until we shall have abolished the first principle of Anglo-Saxon law. Nor is this mere idle theorizing. On the contrary it is being seriously contended today, that we should take away this right from the six million citizens of New York. The impossibility of enforcing this unpopular law in that great city, has brought about the demand that American citizens be deprived of a right which they have inherited from the days of the Magna Carta. Perhaps, when even this has failed, the Kansas Militia will be called to New York to enforce this arbitrary standard of conduct.

Sometimes, when men and women set their eyes solely upon a specific reform, and mask themselves in self-righteousness, they lose sight of the deeper virtues of the soul. Just a few months ago The Anti-Saloon League issued a manifesto to show the enforcement of the Volstead Act. In this manifesto it was boasted that during 1925 in the city of Chicago, nearly one thousand storerooms had been closed by the use of the injunction, that nearly two and one half millions of dollars had been collected in fines, and that thousands of men and women had been convicted and sentenced to the penitentiary. But as one reads this he wonders just how Christian, and just how civilized these impatient, overzealous reformers are. Surely, civilized beings do not boast of having caused an economic loss of millions of dollars through depriving property owners of the enjoyment of their possessions. Surely civilized beings do not boast of having

wrung out millions of dollars in fines, and surely Christian men and women do not boast of having sentenced thousands of their fellow men and women to spend grim years in a penitentiary. No, Christian, civilized men and women do not talk that way. It sounds more like savages boasting of the scalps at their belt.

When shall we stop this onward march of intemperate bigotry? What folly it is to abolish one evil, if we create a score of greater ones. What will it benefit us to secure prohibition, if we lose all our rights and all our liberties? Must we become slaves of the state in order to achieve a superficial virtue. No, we must call a halt in this destruction of our rights and invasion of our liberties. And right now is the time to call that halt.

JOHN A. DAILEY.