

WHY PROHIBITION

By
BHARATAN KUMARAPPA

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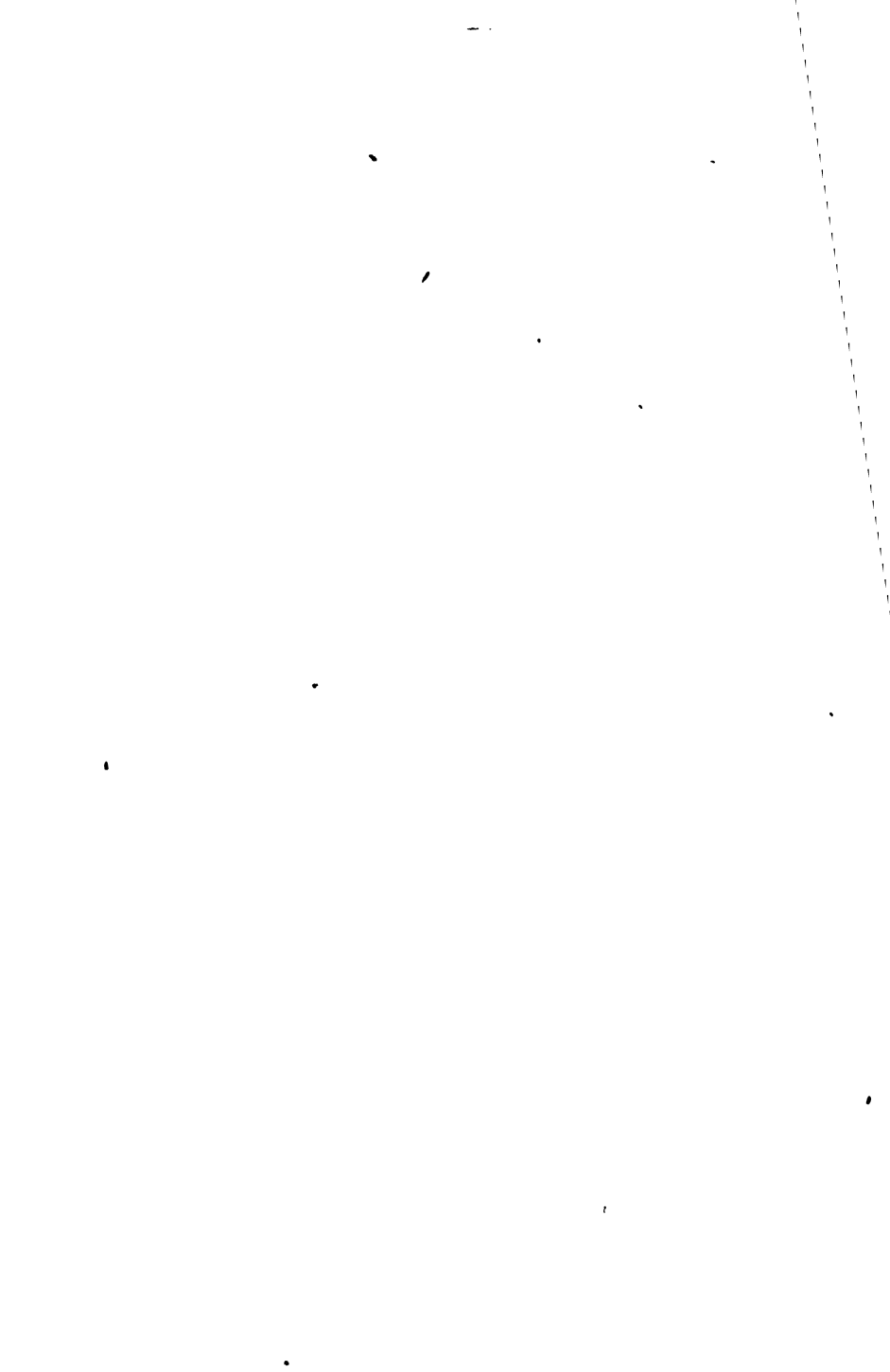
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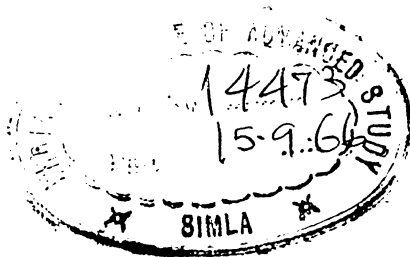
By

BHARATAN KUMARAPPA



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TO

OUR ANCIENT NATION-BUILDERS

who centuries ago through faith, determination,
incessant teaching, legislation and social
ostracism, achieved the miracle of wiping
out drink from this vast land, except
among the few who were
regarded as being outside
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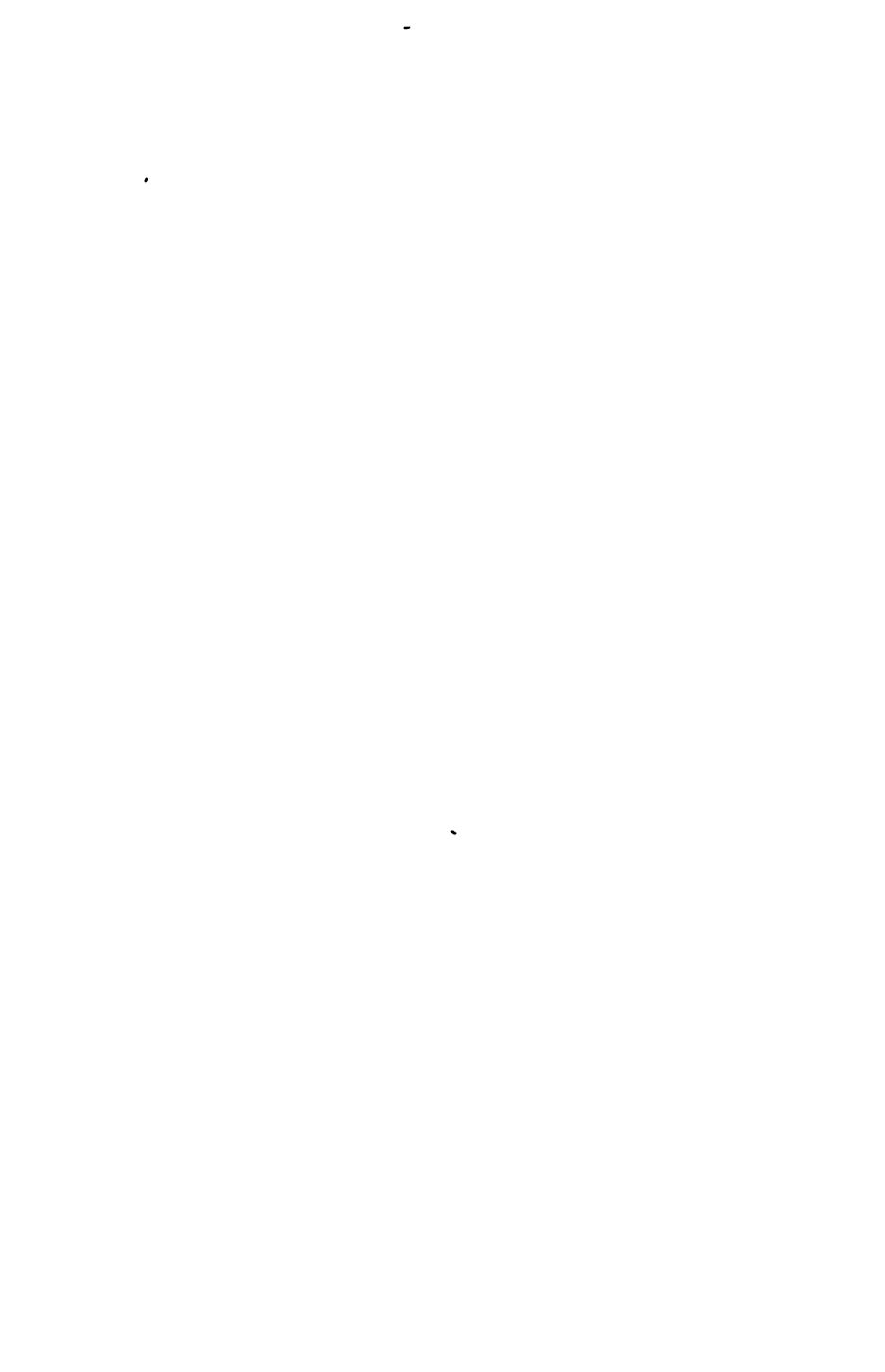
PREFACE

Between 1919 and 1922 I was a student in the U. S., during the early days of National Prohibition there. When I returned to the U. S. in 1949, I was shocked at the contrast. There were taverns round every street corner and one came across drunken people in buses and trains. It seemed to me a definite turn for the worse. India had launched on Prohibition and I, therefore, became much interested in knowing why America went back to drink. During my travels in the U. S. between 1949 and 1951, I collected some information on this question. When I returned to India in 1951, to my great disappointment I found that newspaper opinion in India seemed to be drifting away from Prohibition. It appeared most important especially after my American experience that this drift should be stopped by all means and that the public should look upon this great social legislation with favour. I read with anxious interest whatever our papers had to say against Prohibition and then during May and June 1952, I published a series of six articles in favour of Prohibition trying to meet the various objections which I had found raised against it in our press.

Friends suggested that the articles should be published in the form of a booklet. As I knew that newspapers grudged space, I had to confine myself in the articles to a few major points. But as they are now being published in booklet form, I have taken the opportunity of adding some fresh matter to them and have increased their number.

I am thankful to the Navajivan Trust for readily undertaking to publish the material.

Bombay, July 13, 1952 BHARATAN KUMARAPPA



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WHY PROHIBITION

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I

IS NOT PROHIBITION COMPULSION ?

One finds the average enlightened middle class person in our country, though himself a non-drinker, wondering today whether we were right in launching out on Prohibition.

He asks, in the first place, if Prohibition does not involve compulsion. It does. In the abstract, none can deny that it is wrong to force people even to do right. It would be tantamount to seeking to convert them by the sword, which most enlightened people will regard as reprehensible and barbarous. It would be denying man his inalienable right to think and act for himself. It would amount to reducing him to the level of a beast, led hither and thither by the nose to do another's bidding. One can, therefore, at once admit the great force of this objection which many honest people have against Prohibition.

And yet we also know that in human affairs we cannot go by mere abstract rights. We know that in the abstract we have the right to think and act for ourselves. Still we allow this to be restricted on all sides. We find, for example, that in living we are up against the desires and rights of fellow beings which we must respect as we do our own. That at once sets a limit to our freedom. We may be in a terrible hurry to catch the next bus or train, and yet we have to queue up and take our turn. We may need more in the way of food grains and sugar than our ration provides, and yet even if we have money to buy, we must

not. We may need very much the money in the other man's pocket, and yet we may not take it without his permission. We may love another man's wife, but that does not give us the right to her. It is obvious, therefore, that the freedom we have in the abstract is hedged in on all sides in concrete living.

That being so, it is necessary to ask, what principle do we observe in all these cases where we regard it right to restrict an individual's freedom? It is obvious that the principle observed, stated briefly, is non-injury to others or consideration for their good. My freedom to act in a particular way has to be restricted if it causes injury to my neighbours. It was not wrong a few years ago to buy all the rice I wanted, for there was adequate supply of it in the market, but today it is wrong, just because there is not enough of it to go round, and if I took more than my share, A, B, and C have to starve.

Applying this obvious principle to the case of intoxicant drinks, the right to drink them is certainly to be respected in the abstract, but not if it does injury to those around you. Prohibition has been conceived in India primarily in the interests of the poor. Well then, what is wrong with letting the poor drink? After all, they lead a humdrum life, and surely we should not grudge them this only way many of them have of escaping, even if only temporarily, from their miserable and joyless existence. Quite true, so far as the drinker goes. But what about his wife, children and other dependents? Admittedly the poor man earns a pittance, hardly sufficient to feed and clothe himself and his family. Are we right in encouraging him to cultivate a habit which masters him in such a

way that he forgets his obligations to those dependent on him, that he leaves them practically destitute ?

Here is testimony which can be multiplied a hundred fold from various parts of our country. Before Prohibition, the man, a mechanic had to spend 'about all his daily earnings on drinks. At times he and his wife had to starve for want of money to purchase food. The poor woman was forced to work in fields on daily wages for the maintenance of the household and even then the husband used to deprive her of her earnings for purposes of drinks. He was also ill-treating his wife due to intoxication and financial difficulties and the couple were wearing dirty and torn clothes. But today, due to Prohibition, the husband does not get liquor, and his earnings go to purchase food and other necessaries for the now happy couple. The wife is no more required to work in the fields. The mechanic now possesses a bicycle and has some cash earnings.' *

If Prohibition thus brings happiness and better conditions of living for the poor, surely it cannot be regarded as an evil. It is true that by this means the drinker is forced to forgo his drink, but only thus, it would seem, his family's right to support can be maintained. Without doubt, the State has to intervene and curb the freedom of the individual when he uses it in an anti-social way against the interests of those who are helpless and are in need of protection.

It is sometimes argued against Prohibition that we cannot compel people to be moral by law. And yet what is the policy of U.S.A. and the countries of Europe in regard to drugs like opium ? These drugs are regarded as having baneful effects on the addict.

* *Harijan*, 29-3-'52.

So their sale is prohibited by law, and nowhere do we hear of the objection that you cannot make people by law. Alcohol is now recognized by physicians and scientific men to be like opium a narcotic. In spite of this, in the West they are unable to deal with drink by law, only because drink is very much more widespread there among the people than drugs and has become entrenched in social customs. In India, on the other hand, where liquor is drunk only by a small minority of the population and where public opinion is definitely against it, it should be possible to prohibit liquor just as easily as drugs in the West without involving any compulsion over most of the population.

It is sometimes retorted, 'Before seeking to make the people moral, it is necessary to make the administration moral'. We may agree that for proper enforcement of Prohibition it is necessary that the administration should be above board. But this it has to be in regard to all spheres of administration, e.g. revenue, police, justice, public works, industries, food rationing and what not. If the administration is corrupt we do not say, let us first make the administration moral before we undertake work in any of these departments. The only way is to launch on whatever is worthwhile, with the administration we have and when we find corruption, attack it in all possible constitutional ways till the corruption ceases.

As a matter of fact, legislation against drugs or intoxicating drinks does not aim at making people moral at all. All it seeks to do is to remove temptation from the way of the non-addict. Where drink is sold freely, the drink evil spreads, and people who would otherwise never drink, take to it. Open bars and liquor shops invite those who do not yet know the taste of

drink and gradually make them addicts. We are very much creatures of our environment. If our environment provides us opportunities for drink, and if in addition, as in some circles in India today, it is considered fashionable to drink, we also take to it, as we do not want to be considered puritanic, narrowminded and reactionary. It is thus that drink spreads. If, on the other hand, liquor shops are closed by law, non-drinkers who constitute the majority in our country can be saved from the drink evil. They have not tasted drink, do not miss it, and will not take to it if there is none to be had in liquor shops.

According to modern ideas, it is incumbent on the State to provide an environment which will promote the wellbeing of its citizens. A logical corollary from this is for the State to remove from the environment such detrimental factors in it as tend to enslave the individual to habits which have an over-mastering sway over him. This is all that Prohibition of the sale of drugs or of intoxicating drinks aims at. It seeks to prevent the spread of the disease of drink by removing one of the chief causes which favours its spread, viz. free sale of liquor.

When there is open sale of liquor, liquor interests advertise to draw more victims to the vice. Such advertisements even enter the sanctity of the home through the radio, and seek to make fresh recruits from the young to the army of liquor addicts. It is said that in the U.S. in 1944, 45,561,788 dollars were spent on liquor advertisements in newspapers, magazines, journals, etc. This figure does not include radio advertising, bill boards, illuminated signs, and individual advertising schemes. Dr. R. H. Martin who recently made an exhaustive study of the advertising

expenditures of firms which promote the sales of alcoholic beverages in the U.S. places the probable yearly cost of liquor advertisement at about \$100,000,000.* These shrewd business firms will not spend a dollar unless it brought several dollars in return. So it is easy to see how effectively open liquor trade spreads out to gather in as many new recruits as possible to the drink habit. To what length liquor interests are prepared to go to gain their ends is seen from the fact that brewers in the U. S. sent to Korea shiploads of thousands of cases of beer to be distributed free to the young boys who were in camps or were fighting.† The idea is that beer creates an appetite, and when it gets hold of boys at an early age, they may be expected to patronize beer for the rest of their lives and thus ensure sales and profits to the brewers for years to come.

It is true that in our country the liquor trade has not developed to these proportions. But does it not at the same time show that so long as the liquor dealer is permitted to sell his wares freely he will not stop till he has attempted to ensnare the entire nation ?

That is in fact the problem. Should the liquor trade be given freedom to spread its tentacles far and wide, or should it be summarily stopped by legislation ?

Let us not be taken in by the argument that Prohibition is a case of compelling people to be moral by law for, as already pointed out, what Prohibition is concerned with is not the drink addict but the non-drinker whom it wishes to protect from the wiles of the liquor trade. As the non-drinker does not drink,

* *Should Prohibition Return ?* by George B. Cutten, p. 76.

† *Wake Up America*, by Mrs S. Leigh Colvin, p. 23.

there is obviously no compulsion involved in his case at all. Compulsion is felt only by the drink addict and the liquor trade. And if these have cultivated something which is anti-social in its consequences, it is but right that the State should step in and compel them to give it up.

So Gandhiji wrote : ' You will not be deceived by the specious argument that India must not be made sober by compulsion and that those who wish to drink must have facilities provided for them. The State does not cater for the vices of its people. We do not regulate or license houses of ill fame. We do not provide facilities for thieves to indulge their propensity for thieving. I hold drink to be more damnable than thieving and perhaps even prostitution. Is it not often the parent of both ? I ask you to join the country in abolishing the liquor shops.' * ' If I was appointed dictator for one hour for all India, the first thing I would do would be to close without compensation all the liquor shops.' †

A stickler for words may be shocked at this last quotation and ask : ' How can Gandhiji advocate dictatorial methods ? Dictatorship is one-man rule while democracy is rule of the people. Prohibition is all right in a dictatorship but is out of place in a democracy.' Our reply to this briefly is that when a man like Gandhiji takes it on himself to oppose British rule in India or drink, he does so not as a dictator in his own right but as representing in himself the will of the vast majority of the people. Apparently he acts

* *Young India*, 8-6-'21.

† *Young India*, 25-6-'31.

as a dictator but actually he serves in a truly democratic fashion. Such a dictatorship may be a dictatorship in name but is democracy in essence.

The question whether Prohibition is democratic or not, then, turns round whether the bulk of the people of India are opposed to drink. To this our answer must be an emphatic yes, for both Hinduism and Islam which constitute the religion of the greater part of the population of India ban drink. If this is so, there can be no question of Prohibition being dictatorial or being compulsion of the majority by a minority of puritanic reformers.

But, it may be asked ' Even so, how can we legislate regarding the private life of an individual ? After all, what he eats or drinks is his own concern.' But is it ? It was possible perhaps before the days of food rationing to argue thus. But today the State lays down how much rice, bread or wheat an individual may consume, how many people we may entertain and what we may offer them to eat. Why then should we throw up our hands in horror if the State legislates against intoxicating drinks. Is drinking any more private than eating ? As a matter of fact, ultimately there is no part of an individual's life that is purely his private concern. He is so tied up with others that everything he does or does not do has consequences for others ; and much as in theory the State should leave the individual alone, it has to step in and protect the interests of its citizens when they are jeopardized by the anti-social habits of an individual, as happens as already pointed out, in the case of drink.

So far as respect for personal liberty goes, if ever an individual loved personal liberty, it was Gandhiji. He even called himself an anarchist believing that if

the individual was to be perfectly free, there should be no State. But he realized also that in the present state of development of man, unhampered freedom for the individual would mean the law of the jungle. He held therefore that the State today was a necessary evil and that legislation which the State uses to regulate the life of its members to promote the best interests of all was justified. Lover to the extreme though he was, of the liberty of even the lowliest, he was, therefore, prepared to use this weapon of legislation against drink. Why ? Because drink enslaves the drinker and takes away from him the very liberty which we prize so dearly. Under the influence of drink a man is not himself. He speaks and acts like one bereft of his senses. He indulges in crime, and immorality more easily, as through drink his moral judgment and discrimination are dulled.

Here is scientific opinion on the effect of excessive drinking of intoxicants : ' Generally liquor in intoxicating quantities acts as a depressant, which is to say that the body reactions are slowed down. Ample experimental evidence attests to the decrease brought about by large quantities of liquor, in auditory, visual, tactual and kinesthetic activity. Gross and especially the finer neuromuscular co-ordinations are impaired, hand-eye co-ordinations suffer, demonstrated by decreases of as high as 50 per cent in target-shooting scores. Errors in estimating time intervals have been shown to increase by 60 per cent as the result of intoxicating doses of alcohol, and the ability to recognize similarities and opposites declines significantly. The higher cortical processes are ordinarily believed to show the effects of liquor in a superficiality of thought, poor judgment and exaggeration of dissociative

mechanisms resulting in lowered inhibitions. Speech is slowed down, thickened and blurred.

‘ However, the really significant effects of inebriation do not lie in physiology but rather in social behaviour. Thus excessive drinking is conjoined with other forms of behaviour which run counter to the normal expectations of the sober community ; traffic accidents, sexual immorality, obscenity, brawling and disturbing the peace, destruction of property, disregard of family and occupational responsibilities, misuse of money and credit, and petty crime.’ *

Can an enlightened State allow such an enslaving and vicious habit which dulls the higher sensibilities of an individual, to spread and eat into the life of its people ? In the interests of liberty itself, i.e. in the interests of a full and rich life for its citizens, in the interests of the individual so that he may enjoy full possession of his powers, the State has to legislate against drink even as it legislates against murder or suicide. And just as we do not scrap laws against murder on the ground that you cannot make the murderer moral by law, but enforce them in the interests of the vast majority of the population, so also should we look upon Prohibition as but a means of protecting by law the average citizen against a wily narcotic trade which is capable of doing untold harm to him and his dependents.

* *Social Pathology*, by Edwin M. Lemert, University of California at Los Angeles, McGraw-Hill Series in Sociology and Anthropology, McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1951, pp. 338-340.

II

IS NOT EDUCATION AGAINST DRINK BETTER THAN PROHIBITION ?

It may be readily granted that drink is harmful, not only for the addict but also for his dependents who are bereft of the necessaries of life, and are condemned to starvation and want. But, it may be asked, why not educate the poor man by means of propaganda of the social and other evils of drink, and let him give it up of his own accord ? This is after all the permanent non-violent way of dealing with the problem, whereas the quick 'violent' method of Prohibition raises apparently more problems that it solves, for when people are forced by law to go without intoxicants they adopt surreptitious means of satisfying their craving through illicit distillation and bootlegging. When this happens, the latter state of the nation is worse than the first, for while liquor is available even under Prohibition, we have only brought on in addition crime, contempt for law and enormous expenditure over enforcement without the fat revenue that drink makes possible. Surely it would have been better if instead of launching on the costly way of Prohibition, we had first sought to win over the drunkard from his drink through nation-wide educative propaganda. Is not the slow, long way in the end the surest ?

So it is argued, and the argument undoubtedly sounds plausible. It may be granted straight off that educative propaganda against drink is without question very essential. Indeed it must exist even under

Prohibition for the drunkard can be expected to cooperate with the law, only if he saw sense in it. Therefore, it is not a question of propaganda on the one hand, and no propaganda but only Prohibition on the other. Propaganda is so essential that it must be carried on whether without Prohibition or with it. The question, therefore, boils down in the last analysis to — Should we in order to drive out drink from our country depend only on propaganda, or should we resort to both propaganda and Prohibition? When stated thus, it becomes clear that theoretically at any rate two weapons of attack are undoubtedly better than one. To borrow an analogy from our recent war experience, land forces when supported by aircraft are much more effective than either without the other.

Let us now descend from the theoretical to the practical plane, and ask ourselves how far nations who have only carried on propaganda against drink have succeeded in their attempts. Temperance societies have conducted work in our country for years. But it may be argued that their effort was rather feeble for want of adequate resources. So let us take the United States. There temperance workers, men and women, earnest and well organized, have been fighting hard against the drink evil by means of extensive nation-wide propaganda. But with what success? According to the estimates of the U. S. Department of Commerce, while the drink bill in the U. S. in regard to legal alcoholic beverages in 1934 was \$2,003,000,000, it steadily rose till in 1945 it was \$7,770,000,000 * an increase of about 380 per cent in the short space of 11 years. The latest available figure is \$8,760,000,000

* *Should Prohibition Return?* by George B. Cutten, p. 57.

for 1950.† In addition to this was illegal traffic reckoned to be one-third of the legal. A sorry tale indeed of valiant men fighting the rushing waters with a broom ! If there is one place in the world where advertising, organization, generous finance and all the ingenuity of studied technique are available to the greatest extent, it is the U. S., and yet propaganda against drink, though carried on there with the proverbial American drive and vigour has proved impotent to stem the tide.

Propaganda has its uses undoubtedly as we have already admitted. But by itself it has proved ineffective to cope with drink. If the individual is a drunkard, drink with him is a passion, and like other passions is not amenable to reason. He drinks in spite of himself and therefore, in spite of propaganda. If he is a young person, not yet given to drink, there is no doubt a possibility that educative propaganda may keep him away from drink. But even in his case, there may be a counter-reaction to propaganda, and he may drink just because he is warned against it. Besides, lots of young people take to drink to seem adventurous and sporting and in order not to be thought of as old-fashioned and goody-goody. With them also propaganda is likely to have but little effect as they regard it as sentimental and wishy-wishy. Thus propaganda as such has only limited scope and use.

Besides, the aim of propaganda is more especially to create public opinion against drink. But in our country, public opinion except with a small westernized minority is, as already said, definitely against drink. Both Hindus and Muslims have been brought

† *Wake Up America*, by Mrs D. L. Colvin, p. 14.

up to think of drink as a vice and as a disgrace, and people talk in secret of such and such a person as given to drinking the same as if he were given to immorality and thieving. Propaganda to create public opinion against drink is not therefore so much needed in India as in Europe or America, where drink is a respectable pastime. Although centuries ago drink was popular with our people, and was offered to the gods, it was a remarkable achievement that it was soon banished out of decent society and condemned to exist only among those who were considered to constitute the lowest stratum of society. Even tappers of toddy, though they may not themselves drink are up to this day regarded in some parts of our country as 'untouchables' evidently only because they are associated with the liquor trade.

Thus so far as our people go, they have been educated through centuries of teaching and tradition to spurn drink. And if some of them still drink, it means that even public opinion and propaganda, however useful, are not enough to cope with the evil so long as opportunities are provided for open indulgence. This is the crux of the matter. If we teach people not to drink how can we at the same time tempt them with open liquor shops? It is precisely because of this double-facedness, whereby whatever merit there is in educative propaganda is counteracted and made void by licenced liquor trade that propaganda has proved so impotent everywhere to cope with the drink evil where liquor shops are permitted to carry on a brisk trade. The two contradict and nullify each other. You may carry on propaganda till Doomsday, but so long as you allow liquor shops to exist you cannot get rid of drink. That is not just theory but the experience

of countries who have struggled with the problem for generations.

But, it may be retorted, even with Prohibition we have not been able to stop drink, as people drink illicit liquor. True. But the measure requires time. The addict cannot forget drink in a day. Great reforms involving millions of people cannot be carried through to success overnight. Besides, it is possible that though we have legislated against drink, we have done little else to wean the addict or to make illicit manufacture impossible. Illicit manufacture of liquor, we may further grant, may even remain till the end of time as thieving and murder do. But with Prohibition we may well hope that drink will be confined to a few and not be the vice of many. That appears to be a modest estimate of what we may expect from Prohibition. As over against it, with mere propaganda all that can happen, if we may judge from the experience of Western countries, appears to be the reverse — increase in drink and a small fervent minority ever ineffectively preaching temperance.

III

WHY NOT GET RID OF DRINK THROUGH IMPROVING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS ?

It is sometimes argued that instead of attempting to fight drink directly through Prohibition, we should seek to discover the causes which make men take to drink, and try to deal with them. When those causes are removed drink will automatically cease to exist.

Thus, it is said, one of the reasons why men drink is economic. Their work is drab, monotonous and tiring. Or it is full of worry and anxiety. They live from hand to mouth, their jobs are insecure or they are faced with unemployment. They resort to drink to escape the struggle and misery of life, and to obtain even if only temporarily a feeling of joy and wellbeing. Therefore, it is said, what is necessary is not to prohibit drink and remove from the worker even this one means he has of making his life livable but to improve his economic condition. Let there be no feeling of economic insecurity, let him be assured of an adequate standard of living, let everything be done to remove monotony and fatigue from his work, provide him with ample rest and recreation, care for his wife and children, and then you will see that the worker has little or no incentive to drink. Or take the idle rich, who resort to drink because they have nothing to engage them. They wish through drink to escape boredom. The way to deal with them is not to prevent them from drinking, but to put them to work. Give them plenty to do and they will have no time to feel bored.

Besides such economic factors which promote drink there are, it is said, social causes. Thus men who have migrated to cities in search of employment live in dingy tenements. They have left their families behind, are strangers in the city and have no friends. They have no place to go to after work. The tavern provides them with a meeting-place, where they can have a jovial time with others similar to themselves. Therefore, what is necessary to wean such men from drink is not just to order them not to drink, but to provide them with social amenities — clubs, theatres, libraries, music, games and other forms of recreation and innocent amusement.

To all this, we must fully agree. There is no doubt that men resort to drink largely owing to the socio-economic causes mentioned above, so that in order to curb drink we must promote better conditions of work and living. And yet it is obvious that merely improving socio-economic conditions, important as that is, will not put an end to drink. It is not only the poverty-stricken slum-dweller that drinks, but also the quite comfortably off doctor, lawyer, businessman and student. America has no dearth of clubs, public libraries, community centres, theatres, and places of amusement for all and sundry. Its workmen have the highest standard of living in the world. They earn well and spend well. And yet drink far from decreasing in that country is increasing not only amongst the poorer sections but also amongst the middle class, the better-off working class and students. Obviously improved socio-economic conditions alone do not suffice to root out drink. Therefore, in dealing with a thousand-headed monster like drink, it will not do to depend only on one weapon. We have to attack it on

all fronts. So in addition to improving the economic and social condition of our people by providing them economic security, recreation and better conditions of living in general we have to prevent temptation being put in the way of the unwary by prohibiting the sale of liquor.

But this also must be said. The critic of Prohibition is quite right when he says that the economic and social causes which promote drink should be removed if we really want to get rid of it. It must be admitted that Prohibition by itself will not suffice. It is too negative. Improving socio-economic conditions is the positive constructive way of dealing with the evil. Perhaps the reason why Prohibition has not been a great success in our country so far, is precisely because we have been too prone to rely merely on Prohibition to root out drink without seeking also to improve the socio-economic conditions of our people. If Prohibition is to succeed, every effort should be made to provide the drinker with alternative means of recreation and amusement — community centres, refreshment rooms, reading rooms, playgrounds, parks and healthy entertainments. These are Gandhiji's suggestions in this regard :

“ All existing liquor shops should be, wherever possible, converted into refreshment and recreation rooms.

“ Causes of the habit in typical areas should be carefully investigated and dealt with.

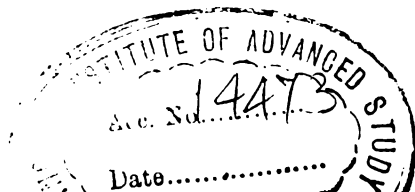
“ Absolutely peaceful, silent and educative picketing* by recognized individuals or groups should be undertaken, the object being to establish intimate personal contact with the addicts so as to help them to give up the habit. Personal visits to the addicts in their own homes would be a feature of scientific picketing.* Voluntary agency for this

* Or propaganda under Prohibition. — Ed.

work should be invited by the Government and encouraged to do this philanthropic work." †

It would seem then, that improving socio-economic conditions and educative propaganda are most important and must be undertaken if Prohibition is to be a success. But they alone without Prohibition will not suffice for the simple reason that the open tavern is a temptation even for the economically and socially better-off individual to go in and indulge himself.

† *Harijan*, 9-10-'37.



IV

WHY PROHIBIT MODERATE DRINKING ?

Many persons drink a glass of beer or whisky at meal-time and do not get drunk or suffer from evil consequences. Why should such innocuous drinking be prohibited ? It seems hardly fair that the majority who drink in moderation should be made to forgo their pleasure because of a few who drink in excess.

This is in fact the prevailing attitude in Western countries and accounts largely for the failure of various attempts made there for Prohibition. Public opinion in the West is predominantly in favour of moderate drinking rather than for total abstinence. Drink has become so much a part of their social life and customs that their parties, dinners, dances, weddings, sports, festivals and such like, would seem altogether dull and useless without drink. Therefore, they say that what should be abolished is not drink as such but drunkenness, not alcohol but alcoholism, not moderate drinking but excessive drinking.

Fortunately for us, drink has not entered into our social life to the same extent. Nevertheless, the question whether it is right to ban moderate drinking has to be faced, for it would seem to be a grievance which moderate drinkers in our country also have against Prohibition.

In the first place, our answer must be that the moderate drinker is not by any means immune from the evil effects of alcohol. The effects may not be so perceptible in his case as in the case of the drunkard. Nevertheless, they appear to be there. We have

already quoted scientific opinion on the effect of alcohol on neuromuscular co-ordinations and the higher processes of thought and judgment. It is to be expected that regular moderate drinking would impair gradually, though imperceptibly, these activities and processes. Here is the testimony of Dr. Norman Kerr, President of the Society for the Study of Inebriety, on this subject :

“I have no hesitation in making the deliberate statement from my own professional experience that more persons have their lives cut short prematurely by latent chronic alcoholic poisoning, produced by regular alcohol taking in so-called ‘moderation’ long persisted in than by unmistakable drunkenness. As I publicly stated nearly half a century ago, my observation is that apart from the moral and religious aspect of indulgence, the man or woman who gets drunk for a couple of days once a month, and is during the remainder of the period an abstainer, lives longer on the whole than one who never gets drunk, but who drinks (moderately, respectably, circumspectly if you will) day in and day out a steady allowance of a few ounces of an average alcoholic intoxicant.” *

It would seem, then, that the steady moderate drinker, who has his regular glass of liquor every day but never drinks sufficient to get drunk, is really worse off than one who gets drunk once in a while, but does not drink regularly. It is not true, therefore, that the regular moderate drinker does not suffer from the evil consequences of drink.

In the second place, who is the alcohol addict but one who started as a moderate drinker ? No one expects to be an addict when he takes his first peg. Everyone believes when he starts drinking that he will never become an addict like others but will know

* Quoted in *Harijan*, 9-10-'37.

when to stop. And yet a certain percentage of those who began as moderate drinkers become in the course of time inordinate drinkers who are prepared to sell their all for a bottle of liquor. If alcoholism or inordinate drinking is to be abolished, then moderate drinking from which it originates must also be abolished. So long as moderate drinking remains, excessive drinking will also exist.

But, it may be thought, we may, while retaining moderate drinking, prevent excessive drinking by a process of individual rationing. Thus each person may be supplied only a fixed amount of liquor, and no more ; in that case he cannot drink to excess. Although this seems a plausible solution, one suspects that it will not work. From our experience of food rationing we are led to think that any system of rationing of liquor will lead to corruption, black-marketing and illicit manufacture whereby the excessive drinker will be able to obtain through illicit means all the liquor he wants. We shall then not have solved the problem of excessive drinking at all but only brought on ourselves the additional problem of corruption, black-marketing and illicit liquor.

In the end, then, it would seem that if liquor is an evil there is not much point in playing with it through permitting moderate drinking. One has to ban drinking of liquor altogether, both moderate and excessive, for the two go together and are inseparable.

CAN WE DO WITHOUT DRINK REVENUE ?

Many people who do not themselves drink are nevertheless opposed to Prohibition on the ground that when we need money badly for nation-building activities, like food, education, housing and public health, it is inopportune for us at this stage to resort to Prohibition and thus forgo the enormous revenue that drink can bring to the Government. They agree that drink is an evil. But they feel that it may be permitted for the time being for the sake of the revenue it brings.

Thus Socialists and others have been recently holding protest meetings against increase in price of food grains due to cancellation of food subsidies till now granted by the Government, and some of them, though they say they believe in Prohibition, have suggested that the Government should scrap Prohibition, and use the revenue from drink to subsidize food grains so that the poor may continue to obtain food cheap.

There is force in the argument. And yet if we yield to it, there never can be a time opportune for Prohibition, for the Government will always need money and can use it for good purposes. So Prohibition will be put off for ever. The only right way for a Government with limited financial resources to act is to cut its coat according to its cloth, and not seek to increase its cloth by doubtful means. If drink is an evil, there is no such thing as an opportune time in the future to fight it, for procrastination is the thief of time. The opportune time is here and now. Do not

nations tighten their belts during war-time, curb other activities, and spend enormous sums of money till the enemy is vanquished? If it is possible to put up with hardships and do with whatever little is available for civilian consumption during war, it should not be impossible to sacrifice the revenue from drink and to plan our expenditure within the limits of other revenue available to us in order to drive out the demon of drink before it takes a greater hold on our nation. If we cannot undertake all worthy projects at once, why cannot we be content to limit ourselves to projects which we can finance at the moment and then hope to take up more as and when possible?

Besides, the drink revenue which is sought to be revived is vicious especially when it is harnessed to worthy ends like education or food. For then people reconcile themselves to the drink evil on the ground that the revenue from it is being used for a good cause which cannot be pursued without that revenue.

Moreover a Government which depends on revenue from drink can never in the last resort be interested in putting an end to drink, for that would be to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. Such a Government would, on the contrary, be anxious to increase drink as much as possible in order to obtain more revenue. The only effective way of getting rid of drink, therefore, is to turn away from the revenue derived from it and to make up our minds to get on without it.

In this connection, it is noteworthy that the Madhya Pradesh Prohibition Committee, the majority of whom are reported to be against Prohibition, have nevertheless unanimously condemned Excise taxation for revenue purposes. Amongst other reasons which

led them to this view, Shri P. Kondanda Rao, an eminent member of that Committee, gives the following : 'The incidence of the Excise tax is perhaps the highest. For instance, in Madhya Pradesh, where nearly half the population is under Excise the cost price to Government for a gallon of liquor in 1950 was Rs 2 and the selling price to the customers ranged from Rs 13-2-0 to Rs 52-3-0. Considering the economic status of the consumers, the incidence of taxation is unconscionably high. The bulk of the Excise revenue is collected when the consumers are inebriate and not sober. Intoxicants are sold to consumers by contractors who sought the right to sell them at annual public auctions at competitive bids, and have an incentive to stimulate consumption and inebriation and often resort to questionable practices to make maximum profits in minimum time. The bulk of the Excise revenue is spent for the benefit of those who contribute least to it. Above all, it is a tax on the consumption of intoxicants of which both the consumers and the Government are apologetic. In its resolution of 1905, the then British Government of India formulated the policy of raising prices of intoxicants by taxation solely for the purpose of reducing consumption and enjoined that to this end all considerations of revenue should be absolutely subordinated. In practice, however, revenue considerations prevailed over reduction in consumption.' *

Thus Excise revenue is iniquitous. The mode of collecting it through contractors who are out to make the most they can for themselves is worse. Drink revenue accordingly represents utterly unjust taxation

* *Harijan*, 15-3-'52.

of extreme poverty at excessively high rates. If more revenue is needed than the sales tax which is levied to make up for deficiencies in revenue consequent on Prohibition, it is surely open to Governments to impose other taxes which will be spread out evenly on all sections of the population and not fall on the poorest only. As Shri Kodanda Rao in conclusion urges, 'it is somewhat surprising that anybody and above all those who espouse the cause of the economically poor and politically weak should ask for the restoration of Excise taxation for the sake of revenue, particularly when other and better taxes are available and in operation. It would be even more surprising that any Government in India, run by the Congress Party, which takes the name of Mahatma Gandhi, should continue the Excise system where it still exists or revive it where it has already been abolished.' *

Therefore, for whatever other reasons it may be argued that Prohibition should at present be given up, let it not be on the ground of obtaining revenue. For then Prohibition, however desirable, will never see the light of day, and such revenue if it is to be revived will have to be extracted chiefly from the most miserable and abject sections of our population who can least afford it.

* *Harijan*, 15-3-'52.

VI

WAS NOT PROHIBITION A FAILURE IN THE U. S. ?

Often it is argued against Prohibition that it has been already tried and found wanting by other nations, and that we should profit by their experience. Why should we persist in pursuing what others have found futile and discarded? In support of this contention the experience of the United States is often cited.

Strangely enough, the view that Prohibition failed in the U. S. is not held in that country except by some. When quite innocently I stated in one of my talks there that though Prohibition had failed in the U. S. we hoped to succeed with it in India, I raised quite a storm of protest from my audience. They asserted that Prohibition, far from having failed in their country, was a wonderful success, and since that meeting I have been sent facts and figures in evidence. I glean the following from *Should Prohibition Return?*, by George B. Cutten, D.D., Ph.D., LL.D., 1946.

“Herbert Hoover, as Secretary of Commerce, declared in 1925 that Prohibition was undoubtedly a factor in a ten per cent increase in productive efficiency.

“Compiled from Federal reports, the annual statistical abstract and other authoritative sources, the following seven economic developments of the first decade of National Prohibition are revealed.

“1. The Prohibition years brought home-building to its peak of popularity. Assets of building and loan associations leaped upward nearly 150 per cent in the five years 1921-26.

“2. Membership in home-building organizations more than doubled, membership rose from 4,962,919 in 1920 to 12,343,251 in 1930.

"3. Savings deposits mounted from \$144 per capita in 1920 to \$211 per capita in 1926.

"4. Life insurance investments soared from \$342 per capita to \$680 per capita.

"5. The automobile industry nearly tripled its total sales, increasing from 64 cars per 1,000 families in 1921 to 164 in 1926.

"6. During the period of National Prohibition, Government figures recorded a 212 pound per capita increase in consumption of milk and dairy beverages (1917-26).

"7. Expansion in sales of fruit and vegetable juices and other products used in non-alcoholic beverages developed a new billion dollar industry".*

"In 1927 Dr. Haven Emerson assembled the following facts (among others) from data revealed by the U.S. Census Bureau comparing the years 1920-26 with the pre-prohibition years of 1910-16.

"1. The death rate from alcoholism fell to 19 per cent of the pre-prohibition rate.

"2. There has been less delinquency from alcoholism, fewer crimes against chastity, and less brutality to and neglect of children.

"3. There has been an increase in the proportion of all children who have continued in school beyond the minimum grades required by law.

"4. A large proportion of the commercial, philanthropic, State and other institutions for the care of alcoholic patients have been closed since Prohibition." †

Now look at figures relating to the period *after* Prohibition was repealed.

"1. The first ten years following the repeal of the 18th Amendment (1933), according to the official reports of the Industrial Revenue Bureau, Federal Department of the Treasury, have shown an extraordinary increase in the consumption of all alcoholic beverages...an increase of 235 per cent.

* pp. 148 and 149.

† p. 150.

"2. Arrests for drunkenness...have nearly doubled per 100,000 of the population in ten years' time. In 1932 the proportion was 831.3 arrests for drunkenness per 100,000. In 1942 arrests were 2,077.6 per 100,000 showing 149.9 per cent increase.

"3. In 1920, \$580,014,000 in new Life Insurance was written, and Prohibition saw this increased to \$1,063,000,000 in 1929, a uniformly steady year by year increase. The first full year of Repeal (1934) saw only \$712,762,000 written and by 1940 under Repeal it had fallen to \$609,881,000.

"4. Assets of Building and Loan Associations in 1920 were \$2,520,000,000; in 1930 under Prohibition they increased to \$8,829,000,000, an increase of over 300 per cent. In 1934, the first full year of Repeal they stood at \$6,450,000,000 and by 1939 they had steadily declined to \$5,674,000,000." †

It is sometimes argued that owing to Prohibition crime and open violation of law increased. Actually however it would seem that crime increased not during Prohibition but after Repeal.

"1. From 1924 to 1932, during National Prohibition, the number of persons per year committed to U.S. Penal institutions for violation of the liquor laws was 9,078—and from 1934 to 1941 under Repeal the yearly average was 10,508.

"2. Arrests for drunkenness in cities of U.S.A. increased from 1,019.6 per 100,000 in 1932 (last Prohibition year) to 2,076 in the Repeal year of 1942.

"3. Arrests for driving while intoxicated rose from 63.2 per 100,000 in 1932 to 129.6 in 1942." *

And in regard to general prosperity :

"1. *Bank Deposits*: The total deposits in 1920 of over 37 billion dollars rose to more than 56 billions in 1928, 10 billions higher than in 1940, the last pre-war Repeal year.

† pp. 151-53.

* p. 153.

"2. *Income*: The per capita income (net) of the American citizen averaged \$387.30 from 1910 to 1919 under the open saloon, under Prohibition it averaged \$574. The average for the first five years of the Repeal is down to \$476.

"According to the authentic Economic Almanac (1914-42) the saloon took \$103.7 from families in 1914, the bootlegger \$73.20 in 1925 (a purely guess-work figure which many believe too high by 50 per cent) and the saloon \$136.68 in 1937." †

All these figures tell their own tale and point to only one conclusion, viz. that Prohibition did not by any means fail in the U. S. "National Prohibition reduced drinking over 76 per cent: Repeal has increased it over 300 per cent as measured in gallons." ‡

Further I was told repeatedly in the U. S. that Prohibition was such a brilliant success the first year or two after it was launched that it scared the liquor interests who thereafter did all they could to encourage illicit distillation and bootlegging, carried on a whirlwind campaign, and pulled political wires till finally they succeeded in having National Prohibition withdrawn. In this they were richly aided by financial magnates who, to evade increased Federal Taxes which were levied on their incomes in order to make up the loss in revenue to the State from drink, moved heaven and earth to scrap Prohibition. But now that America has had experience of Repeal, there is again, it is said, a demand in that country for National Prohibition. Moreover, many in India do not know that though National Prohibition was withdrawn in the U. S., Prohibition as such was not, for individual

† p. 154.

‡ p. 155.

States can, and some to this day actually do, enforce Prohibition within their own territories.

The view that Prohibition failed in America should not therefore be accepted unquestioningly. Even if it fails there in the future, it does not follow that it will fail in India also. We have many points of advantage over America in this respect. (1) Our liquor trade is not so wealthy and well organized as that of the U. S. (2) Only a small percentage of our people drink, which means that if handled efficiently now, the drink evil can be nipped in the bud before it has had a chance of getting entrenched as it appears to be in the U. S. (3) Public opinion in India is already for the most part against drink. This is not the case in the U. S. In fact, if there is one country in the world, eminently fitted to make Prohibition a success it is India. If we retract, the cause of Prohibition throughout the world will receive a staggering blow from which it will take long to recover. If we succeed, we shall have given a lead to humanity everywhere struggling to exorcise the demon of drink.

VII

IS NOT PROHIBITION TOO COSTLY A VENTURE ?

The one objection which is raised repeatedly against Prohibition and to which we have already referred is that it is altogether a wasteful proposition ; for while the Government is deprived of crores worth of drink revenue, it has at the same time to spend enormous sums of money on enforcement, and all for no purpose as those who want, get all the drink they care for, even under Prohibition.

Taking the last point first. Possibly a few people who are intent on drink can get what they want even when sale of liquor is illegal. Prohibition does not aim at them. As already explained, all it seeks to do is to prevent temptation being placed before non-drinkers by open taverns and liquor shops. Nor need we believe that liquor is available everywhere under Prohibition. This simply cannot be true, for there are many people who used to drink formerly but who now go without it just because it is harder to get when it cannot be obtained from shops openly. Many are forced to abstain because of the high price of illicit liquor, or because of fear of being caught. It cannot therefore be claimed that Prohibition has made no difference whatsoever. And if it has made a difference but not an adequate difference, then obviously what has to be done is for us to strive all we can to make Prohibition effective. Why throw up our hands and say it is useless and must be scrapped ?

Money spent on enforcement cannot be regarded as a waste, if drink is a national evil which we want to fight. If a nation does not count the cost when faced with an invader, is it not even more necessary to fight with every means possible the enemy within who subtly eats into the vitals of the nation ? Expenditure on enforcement will naturally be heaviest when Prohibition is started and the addict is prepared to go to any length to get his drink, and the liquor dealer, deprived of his income, does all he can to carry on his trade underground. But gradually we may expect that as fewer people are enslaved by drink, and as the liquor dealer finds other means of gainful employment, enforcement will be easier and less costly. Besides, today owing to difficult conditions of living, people are drawn into illicit liquor manufacture and sale for the sake of the quick and large returns it brings. The remedy for this is not to scrap Prohibition, for illicit manufacture to escape excise goes on even without Prohibition. The better way is to improve the general economic condition of our people by promoting cottage and village production which can give employment to the largest number. Gradually, therefore, it should be possible with improved economic conditions to reduce expenditure on enforcement till the illicit liquor dealer and consumer are only stray individuals like thieves and murderers, from whom it is not too expensive for States to protect the average citizen.

Lastly there remains the question of forgoing drink revenue. Far too much is being made of this difficulty than is warranted. We have already dealt with this problem, and said that when fighting a national evil like drink we must be prepared for every sacrifice and get on with whatever financial resources

are available. So Gandhiji wrote : 'I count loss of this revenue as of no account whatsoever.' *

The fact that so much is being made of this problem, when actually the loss from drink revenue has in many States been made up by Sales Tax and can be more than made up by other means if needed (e.g. death duties, tax on tobacco including bidis, and short-term loans), makes one suspect that this objection is raised chiefly by financial interests who do not want their incomes further taxed. In U. S. A. for example Big Business which had to pay Federal Taxes in millions during Prohibition was naturally very much interested in bringing about Repeal. Records in regard to this sordid deal, whereby millionaires for the sake of saving themselves from heavy taxation worked for Repeal, and let loose drink on the nation, are given in detail in *The Amazing Story of Repeal*, by Fletcher Dobyns. Writing on the same matter Dr. George B. Cutten says : "It seems that about two hundred and fifty of this country's prominent capitalists opposed the enforcement of Federal laws and openly rejoiced in the success of crime and lawlessness, coerced if they did not bribe legislators, distributed an unlimited amount of propaganda which proved to be false, and made promises which they knew they were unable to fulfil, in order to bring back a liquor business the taxes on which they thought would relieve them of their income taxes. One of them testified in a congressional hearing, that a 'tax on beer would save one of my companies \$10,000,000 a year.'" † Thus the tendency is for the heavy tax payer to throw all his

* *Harijan*, 31-7-'37.

† *Should Prohibition Return ?*, p. 124.

weight against any measure which will mean more taxes for him however good the measure may be for the nation. One suspects that behind the recent propaganda in our country against Prohibition lies such narrow self-seeking and greed. So let us see it in its true colours, and not be taken in by it.

In deciding whether a venture is worthwhile or not we have to consider its cost on the one hand, and on the other the gain we may expect from it. If the cost is more than the gain, then the venture is futile and should be given up. Let us examine Prohibition from this point of view. On the side of cost is loss of drink revenue and the cost of enforcement. On the side of gain, looking at it purely from the monetary angle, there is money otherwise spent by the nation on drink and the money which will have to be spent by Government on crime and disease caused by drink when they do not have Prohibition. Strike the balance and judge for yourself whether Prohibition is worthwhile or not. To state it in simple terms, where a drunkard pays Re 1 as tax on his drink, he pays at least Rs 3 more for his drink. Through Prohibition the State has lost the Re 1 it would have got from his drink, but the consumer has saved Rs 4 which remains with him for other expenses. The State's loss is as nothing compared with the gain to the consumer. For what does this Rs 4 gain to the consumer mean? It means better food, better housing, better health and education, and therefore, greater efficiency. And when the consumer spends more he stimulates production. Thus let us say the nation buys more cloth. It will mean growing more cotton, more manufacture of cloth and, therefore, more employment, more trade and greater prosperity. Thus what the State lost in

the way of drink revenue can be more than made up by more revenue derived from the efficiency and prosperity of its people. After all a State derives its revenue only from its people. When they are poor, the State is poor. So the State should do all it can to promote the well being and prosperity of its people. If, on the other hand, for the sake of immediate returns, it promotes drink among its people, it is pursuing a suicidal policy, for the people becoming ill-nourished and impoverished become less and less able to pay it revenue. Therefore, far from Prohibition being too costly, it is drink and the revenue derived from it that are too costly for a poverty-stricken nation.

Further, when people in our country are starving for food can we afford to waste in intoxicating liquor the grain and the sweet juice of our palms from which wholesome gur can be produced? Think of the vast quantities of rice, bajri, maize, and other grain which go into the manufacture of liquor and of the tons of gur and palm sugar which would be available for the people but for toddy. Thus it is not only money that is thrown away on drink but good food is snatched away from the mouths of the starving, to manufacture liquor.

Nay more, besides the money loss and the food loss, great as they are, we must add to the debit side of drink immorality, murder, theft, family squabbles, broken homes, hungry children, and ruined careers, and in short a general lowering of moral sense, judgment and intelligence. Surely no one in his senses can claim that the nation should put up with this loss for ever, because of the revenue that drink yields. Preposterous reasoning indeed! It is like saying that

we must not spend a rupee to stop a leak in a drum holding a large quantity of ghee ; we must rather let the drum leak ! Even a child knows that it is wiser to spend the rupee and save the ghee. Of all arguments against drink which we have examined, this one that argues that to prevent drinking is too costly a venture appears, therefore, to be the flimsiest. If drink brings such colossal loss to a nation, no expenditure and no sacrifice can be too great to put a stop to it. Prohibition, therefore, must never be withdrawn, for considered against the terrible drain that drink causes, it is cheap beyond compare.

VIII

CONCLUSION

Our Part

We have tried in the foregoing to meet various objections and to show that Prohibition of intoxicants is in the best interests of the nation. The Congress, under the leadership of Gandhiji, had been clamouring for Prohibition for well nigh 30 years, and when it came into power, one of the first measures it adopted was Prohibition. At that time Gandhiji wrote exultantly : " God willing, Prohibition has come to stay. Whatever other contribution may or may not be made by the Congress, it will go down in history in letters of gold that the Congress pledged itself to Prohibition in 1920, and redeemed the pledge at the very first opportunity without counting the cost." * And yet today individual Congressmen seem to be turning away from it, and some of them are even actively working against it. Why ? Is it because it has failed ? And if it has failed in States where it has been tried — as it is said by some to have — whose fault is it ?

The Government of Free India did the right thing by launching on Prohibition. But Prohibition will remain a dead letter so long as the people do nothing about it. An evil like drink cannot be wiped off by mere legislation. Those who believe in getting rid of the evil should do all they can to make the legislation a success.

* *Harijan*, 25-9-'37.

Judged by this standard, what have we as a people done to further Prohibition? Have we gone all out to make Prohibition a success? Many educated people complain that illicit liquor can be had in plenty. If so, have they raised a little finger to prevent it or bring it to the notice of the authorities concerned? If Prohibition has failed completely, is it not the duty of him who regards liquor as an evil to take on himself the responsibility of seeing that Prohibition succeeds? Social legislation like Prohibition cannot possibly succeed without public co-operation. A responsible citizen should feel ashamed of talking about the availability of illicit liquor, without doing something himself, directly or indirectly, to stop it. For he is then like a coward who sees a street-fight between two men, and walks by quietly on the other side lest he be hurt if he tried to intervene. Have we organized ourselves as citizens to prevent smuggling and illicit manufacture? Have we tried to establish contact with smugglers, illicit manufacturers and illicit drinkers to wean them away from their evil ways? If, on the other hand, we have done none of these things, but content ourselves with merely abusing the Government for its Prohibition policy, we act in an irresponsible way, and become ourselves party to the sorry state of affairs about which we complain. There was a golden rule which Gandhiji practised and which we would do well to remember, i.e. to take on oneself the responsibility for the evils in one's neighbourhood, and to fight them even single-handed if need be, and not merely talk about them. Today individuals and newspapers loudly proclaim the alleged break-down of Prohibition, but no effort is forthcoming on their part to make it a success.

Here are a few casual suggestions made by Gandhiji in regard to agencies that may effectively work for creating a sober India :

“ There are our professors and teachers, and students of colleges. They may well be called upon to devote a couple of hours each day to the task. They should go to the areas frequented by the drinkers, associate with them, speak to them and reason with them and do peaceful picketing of an educative character. I look to the medical profession to put their heads together to find out why people drink, how they can be weaned from drink, find out effective wholesome and healthful substitutes for drink. Then there are our sisters. They did great work during the non-cooperation days. They should be organized again to revive the work under better auspices now. Whilst their presence will be a sure deterrent, they will have few difficulties in the way. Before, the police looked on indifferently, and even helped the ruffians in the days gone by. Now, women can count on their help in their holy crusade. Then there are the temperance associations. Most of them have been up to now inert and inactive. We should now ask them to pull themselves together and engage actively in the crusade. We might well have a Prohibition League under which all these agencies may work in a regular and systematic manner. Above all find out the plague spots and concentrate your forces on them. Have meetings of the liquor contractors and liquor dealers, teach them how to turn an honest penny by converting their liquor booths into recreation centres.”*

Again Gandhiji wrote :

“ Women and students have a special opportunity in advancing this reform. By many acts of loving service they can acquire on addicts a hold which will compel them to listen to the appeal to give up the evil habit. Congress Committees can open recreation booths where the tired labourer will rest his limbs, get healthy and cheap refresh-

* *Harijan*, 28-8-'37.

ments, and find suitable games. All this work is fascinating and uplifting." †

India is the only country in the world, which through the ages succeeded in banishing drink from respectability. At one time in her history, drink was even deified and hymns were sung in its praise. But gradually, especially it would seem under the influence of Buddhism, drink was completely abolished except among the outcastes who were regarded as outside the pale of civilization. Are we, who are the heirs to this great and unprecedented heritage, going to betray it, work against it, and turn back the wheel of progress, so carefully and patiently set by our ancestors towards complete abolition of drink? Or shall we place ourselves in line with it, and work ceaselessly till we have totally banished drink from our land? The first step towards this goal was taken by our Government in launching on Prohibition. The rest lies with us, the people. Let us not blame any but ourselves if it is not working as well as it should. Its success depends on you and me.

† *Constructive Programme*, p. 10, 1941.

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