

Are the bootleggers running the country?

THERE'S a lot of talk now-a-days about crime and prohibition. Of course there has *always* been crime. But there has *not* always been prohibition. So it is natural to ask: Is the crime situation today materially different from what it was before prohibition?

Dr. George W. Kirchwey, President American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology, former Dean of Columbia University School of Law and former Warden of Sing Sing prison, said in the New York Times of May 26, 1929: "... the official record covering the eighteen years 1910 to 1927, inclusive, . . . shows a marked decline of from 35 to 40 per cent in the general crime rate in the United States."

And this in a period of post-war reconstruction when the normal expectancy would be an *increase*, not a *decrease*, in crime!

Liquor advocates sometimes charge that the bootleggers are running the country. It would be too bad for America if that were true! No one will deny that there *is* bootlegging—and that bootlegging has evil effects. But—contrary to the belief of many, bootlegging is *not* the step-child of prohibition. Long before the Eighteenth Amendment was ever thought of, we had thousands of moonshine stills—and tens of thousands of "blind pigs"—and deplorably corrupt politics—and liquor-bred law violations of every kind.

Liquor and crime have *always* been boon companions. If the bootlegger of today shapes his laws to suit his own desires, he is only carrying forward—and in pigmy fashion—lessons which were taught by the liquor interests of an earlier day. As a reminder of conditions existing before prohibition, it is interesting to review the following editorial from the Chicago Tribune of July 11, 1917:

"If the secret records of the brewing and distilling industries were ever brought to light, they would tell a story of social and political corruption unequalled in the annals of our history.

"If the veritable narrative of the American saloon were ever written, it would make the decadence of Rome look like an age of pristine beauty in comparison... If these men have not made a practice of committing murder and arson, it is because these crimes did not seem immediately profitable.

"The liquor business has been the faithful ally of every vicious element in American life. It has protected criminals, it has fostered the social evil and it has bribed politicians, juries and legislatures."

Even in the liquor trade itself, there were those whose eyes were not closed

to the inevitable consequences. The National Liquor Dealers' Journal of September 10, 1913, said:

"To us there is the handwriting on the wall and its interpretation spells doom. The liquor business is to blame. It seems incapable of learning any lesson of advancement or motive but profit. To perpetuate itself, it has formed alliances with the slums . . . It deliberately aids the most corrupt political powers . . . There are billions of property involved . . . but when the people decide that the truth is being told about the alcoholic liquor traffic the money value will not count."

Wherever there is liquor, there will be liquor-bred law defiance. England and Canada, with rigid government control of liquor selling, are having problems of their own today. In former days, our state liquor laws and our local option laws were not respected by the liquor interests. Bribery, smuggling, under-cover law defiance were the usual order.

Flagrant liquor-law defiance similarly exists in both England and Canada. Irving Fisher in his book, "The Noble Experiment," says of the conditions in Ontario, which has a government-controlled liquor traffic, "The increase in number of arrests for violation of liquor laws, the steady increase in bootlegging and illicit distilling are much in evidence, and the commissioners frankly state that they are unable to eradicate it."

There is only one answer to the liquor problem. And that answer was given when we adopted the Eighteenth Amendment calling for complete prohibition. Half-way measures have been tried elsewhere and have proved a failure. Sir George Paish, the head of the Commission of economic experts who recently came to the United States, said "No custom is more injurious to the British people than that of consuming alcohol either to excess or in moderation."

America has led the way in clear thinking and progressive action on the liquor problem. The ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment by 46 of our 48 states proves that beyond all question!

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