

REGARDING - MRS. IDA B. WISE SMITH

Ex-National President, U.S.A.
W.C.T.U.

An article of quite peculiar interest to W.C.T.U. members the world over appeared in a "Readers' Digest" last year, entitled "God's Angry Lady." This referred to the then national president, U.S.A., Mrs. Ida B. Wise Smith, who retired from office at the 1944 convention after eleven years as president.

In the article, the writer drew a graphic picture of Mrs. Smith's methods in dealing openly with all her energy with the hosts of evil in their activities connected with the liquor traffic. The article is certainly illuminating.

"Once," says the writer, "when Iowa's liquor dealers held their convention in Cedar Rapids and were greeted officially by the mayor, the doughty Mrs. Smith prepared her own 'greetings.'"

"'Shall we greet you as those who wreck homes, debauch manhood, prostitute womanhood, disgrace and impoverish childhood?' she asked in a pamphlet that has since been translated into twelve languages. 'Shall we greet you as those who place upon the tax-payer the heaviest burden in caring for the results of your traffic?'"

"The pamphlets showered down upon Cedar Rapids like rain, and the conventioners were felled like ninepins by her broadside."

Reference is made to the fact that through her "legions" Mrs. Smith is able to have temperance gospel "trumpeted on the air and in the newspapers," and evidently there is little trouble in having temperance dramas and speeches put over the air, when she provides the transcriptions free.

"As a twenty-year-old lass she burned when she read that Chicago saloon-keepers had invited children into an adjoining room and given them a mixture of whiskey and lemonade," continues the writer. "Mrs. Smith's slogan-makers coin signs that people remember, to the sorrow of the liquor dealers, who have ceased laughing her off as 'just one of these reformers.' 'A Friendly Glass May Cause An Un-Friendly Crash!' is a typical road sign erected by local branches of the W.C.T.U."

"One of the W.C.T.U.'s many pamphlets is called 'How to have Fun without Hangovers.' An habitual drunkard in Detroit picked up the piece and found to his surprise that he could have fun without drinking. He attributes his happy home life today to the cheerful advice in the pamphlet."

"In Massachusetts the influence of the W.C.T.U. is so profound that liquor advertisers are forbidden by law to use pictures, names, characters or phrases lifted from the Bible."

"Ida Smith has no patience with polite hush-hushing of any social evils, especially those she attributes to the

operations of 400,000 retail liquor outlets. 'I say, talk about it,' she says cracklingly. 'When thousands of women set out to talk about a thing, it's apt to come about. The same elements responsible for repeal may bring about the repeal of repeal.'"

Some years ago, Mrs. Smith backed the city fathers of Rochester into a corner by asking why they allowed relief clients to cash checks in saloons. "So taxpayers are now setting up the drinks to persons on relief!" she purred. The situation was soon changed.

In Dallas, a group of high school disciples of the W.C.T.U. went out and bought 170 bottles of whiskey, wine and beer, although all were under age. Mrs. Smith's organ published their photograph revealing them standing next to a table laden with their illicit purchases. Worried Dallas "cops" tightened up on such illegal sales after that.

Getting back to the liquor people—their mood is positively indigo, thanks to Mrs. Smith's sorties. As one Chicago distributor mourned: "If only she'd have stayed in Iowa, everything would have been jake!"

So the article concludes. As W.C.T.U. members, we are proud to realise something of the effect produced by the devotion to the cause of Mrs. Smith and her "legions." Inspiration follows on the reading of such a story. Opportunity awaits us here in New Zealand to use some of the weapons indicated in this article. We have a "slogan" competition and a leaflet competition in progress now, but there is no need for our ideas to remain dormant even when the closing date is past, for our Dominion officers are always delighted to receive suggestions along these lines.



IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

A Cradle Roll Banner which has been held since 1944 should be sent at once to Mrs. Mitchell, 111 Lonsdale Street, New Brighton. It will be needed at Convention.

For Reporters and Contributors. Owing to Convention, the editor asks that all reports sent after February 28 should be addressed to Mrs. Christian, W.C.T.U. Convention, Durham Street Methodist Church, Christchurch.

Two Hundred Band of Hope Recitations

The second thousand copies of the book of 200 Band of Hope recitations written by Mr. George Dash, and published as a gift from him to Youth is now in the press. The first thousand were given as follows:—

W.C.T.U., 150 copies; workers and temperance friends in New Zealand, 230 copies; New Zealand Bands of Hope, boys' and girls' homes, Sunday schools, etc., 320 copies.

Overseas, 300; mainly in Australia, but going as far as Nova Scotia.

Copies from the second thousand are available on application to Mr. George Dash, Box 27, Waimate, New Zealand.

FROM OUR "EXCHANGES"

The "New Zealand Baptist," January issue, 1946, says, speaking on the Liquor Commission:—

People should not forget that the whole set-up of the liquor trade in the Dominion has been scrutinised by a Royal Commission. A mass of evidence has been collated and argued over by learned counsel. Till the Commission pronounces, through Mr. Justice Smith, on the whole issue, it would be improper to comment. The public should, however, recognise that when the report comes forth it will not be legislation. If drastic proposals are made—and we have every right to expect that they will be—the lobbies of the House will buzz with intrigue. The trade will fight against everything but innocuous reform. But who, that has casually read the evidence through the past few months, will doubt that the interests of the country demand "root and branch" treatment. We have been very impressed with the care and skill shown by Mr. H. W. Milner in collating evidence, and in displaying vital points in the "Vanguard." This is especially so in the issue for August-October, on the Maori issue. The honour of the country is at stake. Most solemn imperial pledges guaranteed the Maori race from the incursions of the vulture trade. It should be remembered that the chieftains who brought the great expedition to New Zealand deliberately renounced the secret of distillation, well enough known in the Islands. They established a nation, singularly powerful and healthy, beyond all others, as Captain Cook bore witness. But "fire water," introduced by Sydney traders and by whalers, played havoc with the natives. The despoiling of lands, under the whiskey lure, was a scandal that cried to Heaven. We have no desire to enlarge on the matter here, beyond saying that the recent pact regarding the King Country makes the New Zealand Government solemnly responsible for the exclusion of liquor from the central territory. We wait, with some impatience, to hear what the commission will say and how the Government will react.

From the "Scottish Women's Temperance News":—

The "Monthly Bulletin" of July, 1945, has accurately summed up the difference between the liquor trade and temperance activities, by stating that the trade is "pressing its own interests whereas the temperance party is always urging a moral cause." It is this "moral cause" which calls for the continued devotion and energy of all who would save the nation from a return of those "bad old days," to remedy which the temperance movement came into being. We need to recapture some of the spirit and enthusiasm of those early pioneers. The country can never repay the debt it owes to them, but we, in the movement, can at least discharge part of our obligation by carrying to a successful issue the work they started.