

NEW ZEALAND WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION

(Incorporated)

Organised 1885

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"For God, and Home, and Humanity"

WELLINGTON, JUNE 1, 1948.

LIQUOR TRADE REFORMS

FORECAST OF BILL

Major Points Already Considered

The redistribution of redundant hotel licences, a national poll on the proposed evening hours for hotels, and an alteration of the ballot paper for the triennial liquor referendum, are among provisions reported to be under consideration for inclusion in the Licensing Bill which the Government has announced will be placed before Parliament this year. The Bill arises out of the report of the Royal Commission on Licensing in August, 1946. A Government caucus committee has been appointed to discuss the draft of the Bill, and already consideration has been given to some of the major points.

Although the proposals are yet only at their preliminary stage, prohibition, trade and Church interests closely concerned consider that the following are some of the chief issues raised in the commission's majority report which any legislation is expected to deal with:

Hours of Hotels

1. A national poll on the commission's majority proposal that hotels should be open during evening hours. The hours recommended by the commission were: Mondays to Fridays,

10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.; Saturdays, noon to 6 p.m. The commission proposed that evening hours should be observed only for the consumption of liquor on premises, not for the sale of liquor to be taken away.

2. Provision in the triennial national liquor poll for a different form of voting paper. Instead of the paper, as in the past, with three issues—continuance, State control and prohibition—there would be a vote on two issues—continuance and prohibition, with provision for electors to have a second vote to say whether, in the event of continuance being carried, they prefer corporate control. This system of voting, it is considered, would enhance the polling prospects of the corporate control issue, which, put in the form of State control, has been rejected in the past.

The commission recommended that corporate control should include the taking over of breweries as well as hotels, but it is believed to be unlikely that the manufacture of liquor would be included in the proposal for corporate control to be placed before the electors. State ownership of breweries is one of the questions on which there is the sharpest difference of opinion. One of the largest Churches is now seeking within its membership an expression of views on this point.

Redistribution of Licences

3. The establishment of a board to administer the redistribution of licences considered redundant; this work to be carried out over a fixed number of years, existing licensees to be compensated where their licences are taken over.

4. Strengthening of the powers of local licensing committees.

5. Provision for local trust polls where restoration is carried or new licences issued under redistribution. It is generally agreed among interests directly concerned in the future of the liquor trade that the full proposals of the Royal Commission for the government of the liquor trade would prove too unwieldy to operate. Redistribution of licences, mooted for so many years, is considered most likely to be approved.

The commission, in its majority report, said that on the West Coast of the South Island, for instance, there were undoubtedly redundant licences.

Hotel Statistics

A summary of hotel statistics was handed in by the Commissioner of Police and recorded by the commission, showing that hotel licences are at present held in various districts as follows: Greymouth, 144; Christchurch, 129; Auckland, 116; Dunedin, 100; Wellington, 77; Nelson, 70; Invercargill, 64; Napier, 64; Palmerston North, 61; Hamilton, 57; Timaru, 56; New Plymouth, 56; Gisborne, 39; Whangarei, 38; Wanganui, 35.

Redistribution of licences was among many reforms in the liquor trade proposed in a Bill sponsored in Parliament by a former Prime Minister, Mr. Coates, in 1926, 1927 and 1928. It was defeated in the House of Representatives by 34 votes to 33.

—"N.Z. Herald."

OPPOSING VIEWS

EFFECT OF BEER SHORTAGE

"The beer shortage, due to the strike of brewery workers which is now in its eighth week, is having a very bad effect on the health of Sydney people, according to Dr. H. J. Foley, who has been elected to the Health and Recreation Committee of the Sydney City Council. He told the council that the effect on health was caused by bad spirits, which were being drunk widely as a substitute for beer.

The police at the main city stations, however, claim that over the past two months arrests for drunkenness and crime associated with it have decreased sharply. They say that the period is the slackest they have known, that arrests have declined by about two-thirds, and accidents caused by drunken drivers and pedestrians are practically non-existent.

This statement has been challenged by Mr. N. H. Connolly, president of the United Licensed Victuallers' Association, who produces metropolitan Court figures to show that there has been a definite increase in cases of drunkenness.

The strike has deprived the Commonwealth of about £2,000,000 excise duty, and the State revenue has suffered by about £40,000.

—"Evening Post."