

to improve the national health services. But there is no single agency operating to produce disease that is more potent than the liquor trade. What could be said of a policy which seeks to improve national health and yet sets up concurrently an official institution for the dissemination of disease?

A further duty of the State is to maintain public order but, in making provision for the supply of intoxicants, the State is adding to its own difficulties and is throwing a more arduous task upon those responsible for the maintenance of public order.

The provision of social security also finds a place in the legislative aims of the post-war world. Investigators of the problem of poverty are unanimous that whilst there is one kind of poverty which is economic in origin and can be solved by economic remedies, there is a secondary kind of poverty which is moral in its origin, because it is the result of the misdirection of family purchasing power. Amongst the causes of secondary poverty in the Western world the drink habit easily takes first place.

Occupational Hazard

Nor must it be forgotten that in making employees of the liquor trade the servants of the State, the State becomes responsible for the most notoriously dangerous of all occupations. Judging from the experience of Great Britain in this connection more than 1,500 men employed in the drink trade die each year, who would not have died, had they been engaged in ordinary occupations. Proximity to alcoholic drink is a temptation that proves much too strong for the average individual.

Nationalisation of the drink trade has a deplorable effect upon the mind of the adolescent. A feature of education in many countries today is the recognition that mere scholastic training is not enough and that moral, ethical and spiritual training are essential in the equipment of a good citizen. As long as the liquor trade is in private hands the State can justifiably teach children in the schools the facts about alcohol and the dangers of the drink habit. But what is to be the effect upon the mind of a child who discovers, after receiving such instruction, that it is the State itself which is supplying the alcoholic beverages against which he or she has been warned?

Hitherto the arguments which have been used have been theoretical, but we now pass to the realm of practical experience. There have been a number of experiments in nationalisation in various parts of the world and in each case they reinforce the contention that this policy provides no remedy for the drink problem.

The Carlisle Experiment

In Great Britain there has been for more than 30 years a limited experiment in public ownership. In the City

of Carlisle, in the north of England, public houses and breweries are the property of the Government and the Home Office is the responsible department for the management of the scheme. Undoubtedly the early experience in Carlisle in 1916, when the trade was first acquired by the State, gave tremendous encouragement to the idea that progress in temperance reform could be made along these lines. It is not necessary to minimise the spectacular achievements of the Board of Control which was the responsible body for the experiment at the beginning of its existence. The number of licensed houses was rapidly reduced, Sunday closing was introduced and spiritless Saturdays were observed by order of the Board.

At that time the city had to face an enormous increase in public drunkenness, owing to the temporary presence there of a multitude of Irish navvies, who had been imported to construct a large munition works at Gretna Green. The new restrictions made an immediate improvement in the situation and this was accelerated by the movement of the navvies to other districts when the munition works was completed. There was, therefore, a most impressive decline in drunkenness in the city. For some years Carlisle proudly boasted of its improved sobriety, but, unfortunately, the position has not been maintained and, for the past quarter of a century, there has been no statistical evidence from Carlisle which would at all reinforce the case for this method of progress.

Almost as soon as the 1914-1918 war ended, any zeal for temperance reform which might have been exhibited by the Control Board during the war years, disappeared and the business has been conducted by the State as a purely commercial enterprise. From the financial point of view it has been an undoubted success. After being in operation for 10 years, the profits more than wiped out the capital expenditure involved in the purchase of the trade. During the 20 years between the two world wars, a comparison of the drunkenness in the 85 County Boroughs of England and Wales reveals the fact that Carlisle never occupied a place higher than 49th in the order of sobriety and, just before the outbreak of the recent war, its position was less desirable than that of 60 other County Boroughs. Whilst the number of public houses has been substantially reduced the size of many of those remaining has been considerably increased. There is no obvious attempt to stimulate the sale of food and non-alcoholic drinks as was once claimed by the advocates of the Carlisle system.

The only acid test of any temperance reform policy is the answer to the question "What has been the effect on the consumption of intoxicating liquor?" Judged by this standard there is nothing to commend the Carlisle experiment.

PUBLIC APATHY

SYDNEY BREWERY STRIKE

The Commonwealth Government has lost about £500,000 as a result of the nine-weeks-old beer strike in Sydney.

During that period about 2,000,000 gallons of beer, the excise duty on which is 4/7 a gallon, have not been produced.

Overseas visitors note with amazement that during the currency of the strike no concrete protest has been made by the unions, trade organisations, or drinking public, though the strike has all the appearance of an unnecessary stoppage.

Nine weeks ago, maintenance men in the breweries went on strike over a collections of claims, the most important of which seemed to be that they wanted access to the telephone and canteen in working hours, writes the special correspondent of the New Zealand Press Association. They refused conciliation, and as the employers granted several of the claims the strikers produced stronger issues, such as four weeks' holiday and provision for three weeks' sick leave annually.

Further attempts at conciliation have been met with a truculent refusal to compromise. This attitude has continued despite the fact that the strike has been condemned by the licensed victualling trades group of unions as frivolous and ill-timed.

The strikers, who number 256, are completely alone. Their fellow-unionists have refused all help and have even declined to make collections to defray strike expenses.

The attitude of the public and the Trades and Labour Council alike is hostile to the strikers who stolidly refuse to take advantage of the arbitration system. Unionist truck drivers have repeatedly crossed the picket lines to remove consignments of spirits and aerated waters from the breweries. Everything seems to be against the strike—except an outburst of public opinion which would bring it to a speedy conclusion.

"During more than two months a beverage popularly supposed to be indispensable has been virtually unobtainable, yet there has been no outcry sufficient to influence a settlement," comments the "Sydney Morning Herald." "In fact the police and ambulance authorities, their duties substantially lessened, suggest that for them the beer drought has been a blessing in disguise."

Australian newspapers advance the alarming theory that Australian consumers have been so schooled to accept deprivations and departmental dictation during the post-war years that their capacity for effective action has been replaced by a spirit of apathy and resignation.