E. R. FORBES

Prohibition and the Social Gospel in Nova Scotia

The success of the Prohibition movement in Nova Scotia in 1921 was a result of the transformation of a narrow nineteenth century temperance crusade, based upon rural values and ideas of personal salvation, into a broad campaign for progressive reform. Armed with a new idealism, leadership and greatly expanded institutional support, prohibition became politically irresistable. The change was brought about largely through the churches, in which development of a collectivist, reform theology accompanied the rise of progressive ideology in secular thought. As influential elements among the clergy became committed to the social gospel, as the new theology was called, they provided both an agency for the propagation of reform ideas and the leadership for their implementation.[1]

Viewed in this context, the popular image of the prohibitionists as frustrated puritanical zealots bent on suppressing the pleasures of others rapidly breaks down. A detailed examination of the prohibition movement in Nova Scotia suggests that the prohibitionists were motivated primarily by a desire to eliminate the roots of human unhappiness. They wanted to create a new society in which crime, disease and social injustice would be virtually eliminated. Their success in committing society to these goals would be reflected both in the victory of prohibition in Nova Scotia and in its ultimate defeat.

1 Richard Allen's pioneering study of the social gospel provides the key to an understanding of the prohibition movement in Canada. Although more concerned with the impact of the social gospel in moulding attitudes towards labour, Allen devotes a chapter to prohibition and indicates the leading role played by the social reformers in the temperance movement. The Maritime Provinces, however, are largely neglected in this general study. A. Richard Allen, "The Crest and Crisis of the Social Gospel in Canada, 1916-1927" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 1967). Also valuable are his "Salem Bland and the Social Gospel in Canada" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1961); "The Social Gospel and the Reform Tradition in Canada, 1890-1928", *C.H.R.*, XLIX (1968), pp. 381-399; and "The Triumph and Decline of Prohibition" in J. M. Bumsted, *Documentary Problems in Canadian History* (Georgetown, Ontario, 1969).

12 *Acadiensis*

The Nova Scotia crusade for prohibition rested upon a strong temperance tradition. In 1827, the community of West River, Pictou County, established what was later claimed to be the first organized temperance group in North America[2] The extension of an American fraternal Order, Sons of Temperance, to Nova Scotia in 1847 gained immediate acceptance and the colony served as a point of export for this item of North American culture to Great Britain[3] A similar group, the Order of Good Templars, entered the province in the early fifties. By 1900 other "total abstinence" groups included the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Church of England Temperance Association and the Roman Catholic League of the Cross.

The agitation for prohibition dated from the mid-nineteenth century. It seems to have been spearheaded by the fraternal groups and actively supported by the evangelical churches. By the end of the century the movement had made some progress towards regulating and restricting the sale of alcoholic beverages. The *Report of the Dominion Royal Commission on the Liquor Traffic* in 1895 described Nova Scotia as "a strong temperance province."[4] It noted that liquor could be legally sold only in Halifax City and the two counties of Halifax and Richmond. Of the remaining sixteen "dry" counties, sales were prohibited in twelve under the Canada Temperance Act (Scott Act) of 1878 and in the other four by a stringent provincial act which required an annual petition by two-thirds of the local electorate to permit the renewal of liquor licences. Strong popular support for prohibition appeared to be indicated by the plebiscites of 1894 and 1898 which yielded majorities of more than three to one in favour[5]

Yet one could easily exaggerate both the extent of prohibition and the sentiment supporting it in Nova Scotia before 1900. Certainly the people had never experienced nor, perhaps, did many of them yet envision, the "bone dry" legislation which would later be attempted. While it is true that the saloon had largely disappeared from rural Nova Scotia, there was nothing in the existing legislation to prevent an individual from ordering liquor from legal outlets. Shipments were regularly sent out by mail coach or train, frequently under the guise of groceries and other merchandise. To facilitate matters, the Halifax merchants deployed agents to take orders and make deliveries. In several towns, sales persisted as local councils, which were

2 *Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Traffic* (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1895), p. 770. See also R. Elizabeth Spence, *Prohibition in Canada* (Toronto, The Ontario Branch of the Dominion Alliance, 1919), p. 38. Spence mentions similar claims by Montreal and Beaver River, N. S.

3 *Centennial Book of the Order of the Sons of Temperance of Nova Scotia, 1847-1947* (n.p., 1947), p. 22 and the *Sons of Temperance of North America Centennial* (n.p., 1942), p. 169.

4 *Report*, p. 661.

5 *Debates and Proceedings of House of Assembly of Nova Scotia*, 1907, pp. 308-309, and E. Spence, *op. cit.*, p. 218. In 1894 the vote was 42,756 to 12,355 in favour; in 1898, it was 34,678 to 5,370.

sponsible for enforcing the Scott and License Acts, arranged "deals" with retailers by which certain periodic fines served to replace the inconvenience of the licencing system.

It is clear that the prohibitionists of the nineteenth century had, to some degree, persuaded governments to regulate and remove the more blatant features of the liquor traffic. By the end of the century, however, it became evident that the politicians were unwilling to go farther. Both federal parties, after stalling by means of royal commissions and plebiscites, made it clear that action could not be expected from them. The Liberal government of Nova Scotia, under the leadership of George Murray, not only rejected any further extension of prohibition but in 1905 appeared to move in the other direction. In that year the government legalized the on-the-premises consumption of liquor in Halifax hotels and extended the hours of sale for that city. It is doubtful if the prohibition movement would have had any greater impact on Nova Scotia had there not been in motion at this time a fundamental change in the social theology of the churches which directly affected their attitude towards prohibition.

In broad terms this change might be seen as part of the growth of a collectivist trend in social thought. In the 1870's, Herbert Spencer's widely publicized portrayal of society as an evolutionary organism governed by the law of the "survival of the fittest" was initially employed as a doctrine justifying poverty and laissez-faire capitalism. But it soon produced a strong progressive response. Henry George in *Progress and Poverty* and Edward Bellamy in *Looking Backwards,* for example, both accepted organic and evolutionary concepts, but made them the basis for an optimistic projection of social progress and reform[6]

Collectivism in secular thought was closely paralleled in theology by a similar movement which became known as the social gospel. In the United States, Washington Gladden, Richard Ely and Walter Rauchenbush developed theories of an organic and dynamic society.[7] It was a society which might ultimately be perfected on the principles of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man as expressed by Jesus in the "Sermon on the Mount" and elsewhere. Such a belief transformed the social attitude of many churches. No longer could the primary emphasis be placed on individual salvation. If "Christ . . . came to save society" as the Nova Scotia Methodist

6 See Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (rev. ed., New York, 1959), pp. 42, 108 and 112-113, and Daniel Aaron, *Men of Good Hope* (New York, 1961), pp. 72, 103.

7 For a discussion of the origin and nature of the social gospel in the United States see Charles H. Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915* (New Haven, 1940) and P. A. Carter, *The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel* (Ithaca, 1956).

Conference claimed in 1907,[8] the churches were obligated to follow his example.

Both the secular and religious movements for reform owed much of their popular appeal to the serious social problems which confronted the people. In Canada the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the Laurier era created or threw into sharp relief a host of social ills. Red light districts abounded in the towns and cities, alcoholism increased sharply, the exploitation of workers became blatant and the failure of traditional institutions to provide security for the less fortunate was increasingly manifest.[9] Rural residents were alarmed not only by the moral and social problems of the cities and towns but also by the depopulation of their own communities. Nova Scotians, who were noted for their strong church allegiance,[10] tended to look to the clergy for leadership in solving their problems. The latter proposed as a general solution implementation of the social gospel — a fundamental reform of society on the basis of Christian principles.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the official attitude of most of the Nova Scotia churches towards intemperance was one of personal sin. This provided the basis for their limited support of prohibition. In replies to the survey by the Royal Commission of 1892-4, a spokesman for the Methodist Church based his advocacy of prohibition upon the Church *Discipline* which contained a "footnote" including intemperance among such "sins" as dancing and playing cards. The Presbyterians, although admittedly divided on the question of prohibition, denounced intemperance as "sinful". The Anglicans and Roman Catholics commended personal abstinence, but showed no sympathy for prohibition directly on humanitarian grounds.[11]

The acceptance of the new theology by the churches had profound implications for the prohibition movement. Firstly, the social gospel tended to justify or even compel a church's interference in politics. If society were

8 *Minutes of the Nova Scotia Conference of the Methodist Church* (hereafter cited as *Minutes, Methodist),* 1907, p. 78; from the Report of the Committee on Temperance and Moral Reform as adopted by the Conference.

9 For a brief description of conditions in one Nova Scotian city see *Sydney, Nova Scotia: The Report of a Brief Investigation of Social Conditions by the Board of Temperance and Moral Reform of the Methodist Church and the Board of Social Service and Evangelism of the Presbyterian Church* (n.p., 1913).

10 W. S. Learned and K. C. M. Sills, *Education in the Maritime Provinces of Canada* (New York, 1922), p. 14.

11 *Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Traffic,* 1895, pp. 81-82, 684. This is not to say that social concern was not behind the church's pronouncements on intemperance. But the language used in condemning intemperance appeared to be primarily that of personal censorship on moral grounds. Perhaps the most striking example of the change was the removal in 1911 of the list of "sins" which had been included in a footnote to the Methodist Discipline in 1886. See Marion V. Royce, "The Contribution of the Methodist Church to Social Welfare in Canada" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Toronto, 1940), pp. 263-265.

capable of regeneration along Christian lines, a heavy responsibility rested with the churches to employ every means in bringing this about. To those firmly imbued with the reforming vision, traditional methods of teaching and preaching appeared too slow. Legislation and government activity represented the obvious method of implementing large scale reform. Secondly, the social gospel changed the emphasis and strengthened the motivation in the churches' advocacy of prohibition. It was understandable that progressive churchmen, as they surveyed the ills of their society, should emphasize the problem of intemperance. Not only was alcoholism a serious social problem in itself, but it was thought to be an important contributory cause to a host of other ills, including poverty, disease, the disintegration of the family, and traffic and industrial accidents. Prohibition thus became an integral part of a sweeping programme for social reform. In this form it exerted a much wider appeal particularly among the young and idealistic than under its previous image of a mere crusade against sin. Finally, in accepting the principle of an organic society, the church was subtly undermining the primary grounds for opposition to prohibition — that of the infringement of personal liberty. If Christ died to save society, individual whims and wishes would have to be sacrificed for the same goal. The reformer only need prove that society was being harmed by a certain abuse and it was the duty of the Christian to support its removal, individual "rights" notwithstanding.

If the social gospel contributed to prohibition, the question of prohibition played a key role in the transition of the churches to the social gospel. This was one issue on which religious conservatives and progressives could readily unite. It was thus no accident that the social gospel made its initial appearance in the churches by way of the temperance committees. These in fact served as useful agencies through which the social gospel ethic might be spread in each church.

The Methodists appear to have been among the first in Canada to accept formally the implications of the new ideas. A move in that direction was indicated by the change in name of the Committee on Temperance to that of Temperance, Prohibition and Moral Reform at the Canadian Conference of 1898. This committee became a permanent board in 1902 and Dr. S. D. Chown was appointed its full time secretary. In the Nova Scotia Conference, the change in name of the committee was accompanied in 1903 by what appeared to be a general acceptance of the social gospel. The report of the committee which was adopted by the 1903 Conference declared in its opening sentence that it was the "intention of the Lord that . . . through his faithful ones the principles of the gospel of Christ are to be made supreme in all departments of human activity."[12] The report went on to discuss tactics for the defeat of intemperance, cigarette smoking by the young, commercial dishonesty, social

12 *Minutes, Methodist,* 1903, pp. 80-81.

vice and political corruption. In the next three years, other abuses singled out for attack included the opium traffic, race track gambling, prize fighting and in 1906 the committee expressed its wish to investigate "any forms of commercial or industrial oppression affecting our people."[13] As part of their programme for social reform, the members of the Conference in 1905 endorsed the policy of provincial prohibition and pledged themselves to vote only for men who would support this measure in the Legislature. Ministers were urged to promote the cause of "temperance" in the pulpit and the church appointed delegates to attend a Temperance Convention in Truro called to organize a province wide campaign.[14]

More dramatic was the simultaneous adoption of the cause of prohibition and the social gospel by the Maritime Synod of the Presbyterian Church. The convener of the Temperance Committee which proposed the acceptance of the social gospel was H. R. Grant, the man who would dominate the prohibition movement in Nova Scotia for the next thirty years. A native of Pictou County, Grant had undertaken his theological studies at Queen's University where the new theological trends appear to have received full consideration under the principalship of George Monro Grant.[15] After further study at Edinburgh and experience in mission work in Manitoba and New Brunswick, H. R. Grant returned to take charge of the congregation of Trenton in his home county. Keenly interested in temperance and social reform, he served as convener of the Temperance Committee of the Maritime Synod from 1902 to 1907. In 1904 he resigned his charge in Trenton to undertake full time the task of temperance organization in Pictou County. In 1906 Grant participated in the formation of the Nova Scotia Temperance Alliance of which he became general secretary in 1907. He held his post until 1917 when he assumed a similar position in the Social Service Council of Nova Scotia.

In delivering the report of the Temperance Committee to the Maritime Synod in 1907, Grant rejoiced at the "advanced ground" which the General Assembly had taken in creating a committee to investigate such questions as the relation of the church to labour, political and commercial corruption, gambling and the liquor traffic. He then went on to present a clear statement of the principles of the social gospel.

> Public affairs, the social and political business of the country must be brought under the ten commandments and the sermon on the mount . . . the pulpit must have an outlook on the every day life of men . . . the state as well as the individual has a character and the social and political life of the state must obey the . . . teaching of Christ . . . temperance [is]

13 *Ibid.*, 1906, p. 83.

14 *Ibid.*, 1905, pp. 76-77.

15 H. H. Walsh, *The Christian Church in Canada* (Toronto, 1956), p. 330. See also A. Richard Allen, "Salem Bland and the Social Gospel in Canada," pp. 30-32.

> but one of the social, we might say national, questions which the church must consider . . . . Abuses must not only be discovered but reformed as well.[16]

In the following year, the new committee on moral and social reform submitted a series of resolutions calling for the formation of moral and social reform councils and a direct commitment by the Synod to prohibition and other social measures. The resolutions went much further than those hitherto entertained by the General Assembly. One called for the Synod to express its "cordial sympathies with the workingman in all their just and worthy efforts to improve the conditions under which they live and labour" and denounced child labour, "undue long hours of labour" among adults and "conditions associated with the sweating system". Another demanded the adoption of a penal system designed to reform rather than punish.[17] The resolutions appear to have implied too sharp a transition for some members of the Synod and were referred to the presbyteries for further discussion. The next year they were introduced again in the same form, and after an amendment favouring local option had been defeated by "a large majority", passed *in toto*.[18]

The Baptists seem to have pursued a similar course in the direction of the social gospel. In 1903 the Temperance Committee of the Maritime Baptist Convention under the chairmanship of W. H. Jenkins submitted a report which clearly viewed the temperance problem in terms of the social gospel. Christ's "mission", it stated, was both "to save souls" and "to save society". Christ was "the greatest social reformer that the world has ever seen". "Loyal hearts" were needed "to battle boldly with that monster iniquity, the liquor traffic which . . . gathering under its banner all the supreme ills that afflict the people . . . stalks forth to challenge Christianity to mortal combat".[19] In 1908, a resolution of the Convention urged Baptists to "rise above party in voting on questions of temperance and moral reform" and denounced the idea of government control as "complicitly with the drink traffic."[20]

The Church of England, lacking a strong temperance tradition and proud of its conservative stance, responded more slowly to the new ideas. Yet respond it did. Some Anglicans seemed prepared to accept them on the grounds that if members did not find them being implemented in their own church, they might go elsewhere. This was the argument used by the Temperance

16 *Presbyterian Witness,* 19 October 1907, p. 34.

17 *Minutes of the Maritime Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada,* (hereafter cited as *Minutes, Presbyterian),* 1908, p. 25; from the Report of Committee on Moral and Social Reform. Compare with the Report of Committee on Temperance and Moral Reform in *The Acts Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Canada,* 1908, pp. 248-252.

18 *Minutes, Presbyterian,* 1909, pp. 28-29.

19 *Year Book Maritime Baptist Convention,* 1903, p. 22. Jenkins later became a staunch supporter of J. S. Woodsworth's Labour Party.

20 *Wesleyan* (Methodist), Halifax, 23 September 1908, p. 1. Taken from the *Maritime Baptist.*

Committee of 1902 in urging the need for a temperance organization in every parish.[21] Others such as Rev. D. V. Warner of Shelburne, advocated the acceptance of a new social ethic on theoretical grounds and pointed to a social gospel tradition within the Church of England itself. Warner in 1909 published a pamphlet entitled *The Church and Modern Socialism* in which he referred specifically to the tradition of "Christian Socialism" set forth in the writings of the nineteenth century English cleric, Charles Kingsley. By analyzing Christ's teachings as illustrated in the "Sermon on the Mount", the "Lord's Prayer" and other selections from the New Testament, he sought to prove that socialism was closer to "practical Christianity" than was the practice of the Church.[22]

The Anglican debate on the social gospel appeared to reach a climax in the Nova Scotia Synod of 1912. The conservative position was strongly stated in the opening address of Bishop C. L. Worrell. Worrell expressed his alarm that "some of the clergy . . . have endeavored to take up the socialistic tendency of the time" and cautioned against "undue playing with this dynamic force". While it might be proper for individual churchmen to take the lead in movements which tended to the "purity, sobriety and thrift" of the people, it was not the Church's duty to devote its attention to the social problems of the day "except through the general instruction of Christian principles." In conclusion he quoted the dictum of Dean Inge that "political agitation is not the business of the clergy".[23] The Synod disagreed. Its "Report of the Bishops Charge" opened with a reference to the "Sermon on the Mount" and argued that "The Church of God exists for his glory and the true happiness and well being of his children, the sons of men, and therefore anything which emphasizes this aspect of his kingdom is to be fostered and strengthened".[24] By 1914 this creed had been translated into practical action with the formation of a Diocesan Commission of Social Service. A year later the Synod passed a resolution calling for the "fullest possible measures" by Dominion and Provincial legislatures to prevent the sale and use of intoxicating beverages in Nova Scotia.[25]

The Roman Catholic Church in Nova Scotia also reacted favourably to the new ideas. The papal encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* of 1891, had paved the way by its rejection of economic liberalism and condemnation of the exploitation

21 *Journals of Nova Scotia Synod, Church of England,* Appendix N, printed in the *Year Book* (hereafter cited as *Year Book, Church of England*), 1901-1902, p. xxxi.

22 D. V. Warner, *The Church and Modern Socialism* (Truro, N. S., 1909).

23 *Year Book, Church of England,* 1911-1912, pp. 111-113.

24 *Ibid.*, Appendix Q, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

25 *Ibid.*, 1914-1915, pp. 149 and 320. The Nova Scotia Conference seems to have been acting in advance of the rest of the Church in urging prohibition as the National Synod remained uncommitted. See *The General Synod of the Church of England in the Dominion of Canada.* 1915, p. 268.

of workers by employers. The Antigonish *Casket,* a spokesman for Celtic Roman Catholicism in the eastern half of the province, displayed an increasing interest in the problems of labour, particularly in the mining areas. In 1909, the Rev. Dr. Thompson of St. Francis Xavier University represented the reform wing of the church in calling for the creation of a strong public opinion, which would empower governments to interfere in the "liberties" of persons and corporations and "put an end to the strikes and lockouts in the most effective way . . . i.e. by removing the causes which produce them."[26]

The Roman Catholic view of prohibition seemed ambiguous. The Antigonish *Casket* conceded that the liquor traffic should be suppressed, but argued that public opinion was opposed and advocated a generous licensing law providing for "drinking on the premises" but limiting licenses to 1 per 750 of population.[27] The *Casket* also suggested that the activities of the League of the Cross, the Roman Catholic temperance organization, should be limited to converting people to temperance through teaching. Yet as early as 1903 the League was reported to be nominating candidates in the municipal elections and in 1907 was campaigning for the repeal of the Scott Act so that the more stringent License Act might apply in Cape Breton County. In that year its president reported a membership of 2108 in 29 branches.[28] While the motivation of the League is unclear, from its actions it would appear that at least some of its leaders were fired by the reform spirit of the age.

Against this background of changing opinion and demand for reform by the churches, a political agitation was building up which would make the passage of prohibition almost unavoidable. But the Liberal administration of Premier George Murray did everything it could to keep from having to act on the question. In fact the story of the struggle for prohibition between 1904 and 1916 is largely the story of a political duel between the temperance forces led by H. R. Grant and the provincial government led by George Murray. On one side were the churches, leading moulders of public opinion in the province, on the other the Liberal Party, holding every seat but two in the Assembly and having as its leader one of the wiliest politicians in the country.

The object of the struggle soon became clear. The Liberals wanted to avoid taking a definite stand on the controversial issue of prohibition. The pro-

26 *Casket,* 12 August 1909. Students of the social gospel including A. R. Allen, C. Hopkins and P. Carter, have ignored the impact of its ideas on the Roman Catholic Church. That their influence was important is suggested most spectacularly by the leading role played by such reform minded priests as Fathers "Jimmy" Tompkins and M. M. Coady in the development of the co-operative movement in Nova Scotia in the latter part of the 1920's. Coady's later justification of the Church's role in this movement would appear to differ little from some Protestant versions of the social gospel. See M. M. Coady, *Masters of their own Destiny* (New York, 1939), pp. 144-148.

27 *Casket,* 29 August 1907, p. 4.

28 *Ibid.,* 31 January 1907, p. 6; 15 January 1903, p. 4; 8 August 1907, p. 2; and 12 September 1907, p. 2.

hibitionists were determined to manoeuvre the government into a position where it would be compelled to act or publicly demonstrate its disdain for the stated wishes of a large element of the population.

Each year between 1902 and 1905, a bill was introduced to prohibit or render more difficult the sale and shipment of liquor into the dry areas of the province.[29] For the first three years, these were debated briefly and unceremoniously rejected. In 1905, when R. M. McGregor, Liberal M.L.A. for Pictou County, introduced a bill prepared by H. R. Grant and the Pictou County Temperance Association, the members showed greater discretion. The bill, which provided for both the prohibition of the shipment of liquor into the "dry" areas and provincial enforcement of existing legislation, appeared to receive sympathetic consideration from the House. Government members vied with the opposition in expressing their admiration of temperance and "Temperance people". Premier Murray's enthusiasm, however, was tempered somewhat by statements to the effect that his government was not united on the issue and that such a law might be unconstitutional.[30] The bill was approved in principle and then disappeared into committee where it was effectively chopped to pieces.

The churches voiced their anger in unmistakeable terms. In the Presbyterian Synod, the Temperance Committee condemned the legislature for its encouragement of the liquor traffic and called for "more definite, united and aggressive action".[31] The report adopted by the Methodist Conference pledged its members to secure "by voice, influence, and vote the defeat of that portion of the Legislature that stood for the liquor traffic against the moral and material welfare of our people". It concluded:

> If we are to do permanent work we must enter the field of politics as our opponents the liquor interests have done and fight this battle for God and our homes.... [We] express the hope ... [that] the curse of blind partisanship may be done away with and all our people... may rise in the strength of God and by the exercise of that God given privilege — the Ballot — smite the liquor traffic to the death.[32]

With an election planned for June of 1906 and the Conservatives committed to a promise of provincial prohibition,[33] Murray decided that an appropriate gesture to the churches would be in order. In the 1906 session, the government introduced a bill prohibiting the shipment of liquor from "wet" to "dry"

29 For a brief sketch of these early attempts see E. Spence, *op. cit.*, pp. 330-333.

30 *Debates*, 1905, pp. 311, 85-86.

31 *Minutes, Presbyterian*, 1905, p. 31.

32 *Minutes, Methodist*, 1905, p. 78.

33 See below n. 35.

areas of the province. In general, the bill was similar to those advocated by prohibitionists in previous years. But a large "joker" had been added by the phrase restricting the application of the bill to liquor "to be paid for on delivery".[34] The effect of the bill was merely to require people in rural areas to order their liquor prepaid rather than C.O.D. The Conservatives strove valiantly to make this fact clear, while demonstrating their own championship of prohibition with an amendment designed to restore the restrictive intent of the legislation. Government members replied by strongly denouncing those who would make the "sacred" cause of prohibition a party issue. Only two Liberals broke party lines on the amendment which was defeated eighteen to four.[35]

In the election campaign which immediately followed, prohibition played a prominent role. The Conservatives included in their platform a promise of provincial prohibition within a year of a successful plebiscite on the question. At Pictou, Conservative Leader Charles Tanner issued a reform manifesto which called for prohibition, purity in elections, public interest as opposed to corporate power and betterment of the working classes.[36] In most counties, temperance groups attempted to pledge their members to support prohibitory legislation. The Methodist Conference even went so far as to endorse formally two independents in Kings County.[37] But the Government's last minute "prohibition" bill had helped to blur party divisions on the question and in the constituencies candidates adopted positions which were locally popular. In rural areas where temperance sentiment was strong, such as Yarmouth County for example, all candidates pledged themselves to support prohibition.[38] In Halifax, with its military and seafaring traditions, opposition to prohibition was predominant. Here local Conservative newspapers left the prohibition plank out of the party platform, while Liberal Premier Murray promised the inhabitants that his government would not impose prohibition upon the city without their consent.[39] Thirty-two Liberals, five Conservatives and one "Methodist" Independent were elected.

The Liberals had apparently suffered little on the issue, but the prohibitionists had gained in the election a solid corps of M.L.A.'s pledged to support their demands. Meanwhile, the temperance groups of the province co-ordinated their efforts in the formation of the Nova Scotia Temperance Alliance. As secretary of the new organization, Grant stationed himself in the gallery

34 *Debates,* 1906, p. 309.

35 *Ibid.,* pp. 312, 330-331.

36 J. Castell Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review,* 1905, p. 331 and 1906, p. 393 (hereafter cited as *C.A.R.*).

37 *Minutes, Methodist,* 1906, p. 81.

38 *Debates,* 1907, pp. 313 and 372.

39 *Ibid.,* pp. 313 and 400.

of the Legislature to direct the strategy of the temperance forces.[40] The first step was the introduction of a prohibition bill by E. H. Armstrong of Yarmouth, a young Liberal M.L.A. pledged to the cause in the election. Armstrong made clear that he was serving as the mouthpiece of the Alliance and that he himself had nothing to do with the drafting of the measure.[41] The bill called for the prohibition of the sale of liquor throughout the province and enforcement by provincial inspectors.

The bill was immediately rejected as unconstitutional by the Premier on the grounds that only the government could introduce bills which encroached upon the revenue of the crown. Armstrong was prepared for this development and at once gave notice of a resolution requiring the introduction of the bill by the government.[42] Obviously Grant had manoeuvered the Government into the position he wanted. The resolution could only be debated on the open floor of the House. Members would have to take a definite stand which could be identified by their constituents. Meanwhile, as the debate proceeded, the Legislature was bombarded with over thirty petitions in favour of the legislation and resolutions of support from the Synods and Conferences of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist churches, the Sons of Temperance, the Order of Good Templars and the Grand Orange Lodge.[43]

Armstrong's speech in introducing his resolution clearly reflected the characteristic social gospel approach to prohibition. The measure was necessary as a basic social reform. Problems of poverty, neglect of wives and children, disease, and accidents could be traced in large measure to intemperance. Its influence was both direct, as people on "sprees" caught pneumonia or were injured, and indirect, since in spending their money on "drink", men failed to provide the care and nourishment for themselves and their families necessary to ward off diseases such as typhoid fever or tuberculosis. Armstrong quoted a Dr. Reid who estimated that "90% of the cases in our hospitals are directly or indirectly due to the evil effects of intemperance" and suggested that prohibition might even put the hospitals out of business.[44]

In anticipating possible objections from the critics of the Bill, Armstrong's arguments reflected the growing collectivism of the period. Opponents of prohibition frequently argued that "prohibition was a curtailment of personal liberty". According to Armstrong this view might have some relevance in the "classic past" but not in the twentieth century. "The organic unity of society",

40 Speakers frequently gave H. R. Grant credit for supplying the information with which they "corrected" statements of the opponents of prohibition. See for example, *Debates*, 1916, p. 180.

41 *Debates*, 1907, p. 301.

42 *Ibid.*, pp. 224, 227.

43 Nova Scotia, *Journals of the House of Assembly* (hereafter cited as *J.H.A.*), 1907, various references pp. 45-154 and *Debates*, 1907, p. 310.

he stated, "is a principle political science recognizes at the present time".[45] It was only a question of whether the social weakness at issue was great enough to require a stringent measure of reform.

Armstrong went on to deal with the constitutional argument, which had hitherto been one of the government's favourite means of escape. Reviewing the ancient controversy over whether Dominion or provincial governments had the power to impose prohibition, he cited various decisions of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council to establish the limits of each level's authority. While it was true that only the federal government had the power to prohibit the shipment of liquor from outside of a province, provincial governments, as had been clearly determined in 1901 in the case of Manitoba, could legally prohibit the sale or shipment of liquor within the province. It was this and no more that the Alliance's Bill proposed to do.

But once again, the members of the Legislature were saved from having to declare themselves unequivocally on the issue. Liberal M.L.A., C. F. Cooper, Baptist clergyman from Queens County, proposed an amendment calling for an address to the Dominion Parliament to request legislation banning the importation of liquor into "dry" counties from other provinces. When this was achieved, provincial legislation could then be secured to prevent its importation from areas of the province where liquor was legally sold. This, according to Cooper, was a much greater step towards prohibition that the measure proposed by the Alliance.[46]

Certainly Premier Murray was much happier with the latter proposal. The imposition of prohibition in Halifax would be in Murray's words "a dangerous experiment." Nova Scotia was already far in advance of other provinces in temperance legislation and "fully up [to], if not in advance of what public opinion demands".[47] Nevertheless, Murray quite agreed with Cooper's idea of an address to the federal parliament. To Murray the ideal solution was Dominion legislation enforced by municipal authorities.

After a long and tedious debate which filled nearly one hundred pages in the official record, the amendment was carried twenty-two to twelve. The Liberal strategy had worked; the members of the party who wished could still pose as champions of prohibition. Nevertheless, the vote did reveal the friends of the Alliance, as in addition to the Conservative opposition, five Liberals and the independent member opposed the amendment.[48]

44 *Debates,* 1907, p. 304. This was probably Dr. J. W. Reid, M.D. of Windsor, N. S., who was elected to the House in 1911 and therafter gave strong speeches in support of prohibition which were crammed with similar statistics. See for example, *Debates,* 1916, p. 170.

45 *Debates,* 1907, p. 306.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 317.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 385.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 400.

At its annual meeting of 1908, the Alliance outlined more clearly the goals which genuine prohibitionists would be expected to support. It wanted to replace the existing jungle of temperance legislation with a federal measure outlawing the importation and manufacture of alcoholic beverages, and a provincial law prohibiting their sale. Both would be enforced by provincial officers. These proposals were presented to an unsympathetic Premier Murray by a delegation from the Alliance led by H. R. Grant. Murray explained that it was government policy to seek an amendment to the Scott Act which would prevent the importation of liquor into the province. Grant refused to be associated with any such legislation, which would apply only to areas where the Scott Act was in effect and merely serve to increase the confusion.[49] In the legislature in 1909 Premier Murray described as "incomprehensible" the Alliance's repudiation of the Government's proposal and suggested that this could only arouse "suspicions" as to the motives of the organization. In a remarkable reversal E. H. Armstrong opposed the prohibition measure introduced by Independent M.L.A., C. A. Campbell, and suggested that the Alliance was plotting with the Tories.[50]

The Liberal concern was understandable. Far from keeping the "sacred" cause of temperance out of politics, prohibitionists appeared to be using every opportunity to embarrass the government politically and force them to adopt the Alliance programme. Speakers imported from other regions added their testimony to the failure of the government. For example, Dr. J. G. Shearer, secretary of the Committee on Temperance and Moral and Social Reform of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, denounced the lack of law enforcement in Halifax claiming that "sixty-four bar-rooms, with shop licenses which expressly forbid selling for consumption on the premises, are doing business in direct violation of section 63 of the Licence Act".[51]

The prohibition forces were operating from an ever-expanding base. In January of 1909, H. R. Grant represented the Alliance in the creation of the Social Service Council of Nova Scotia, which included representatives of all the major churches, the farmers' associations, organized labour and boards of trade. The provincial organization was to be supplemented by similar councils in the municipalities. Intemperance was listed as one of the primary social problems with which the council proposed to deal and the solution advocated was education and prohibitory legislation.[52]

In 1909 and 1910, by-elections were fought in five counties. In two, Queens and Hants, Conservatives were elected on platforms including provincial

49 *C.A.R.*, 1908, pp. 426-427, 108.

50 *Debates*, 1908, pp. 334, 374.

51 *C.A.R.*, 1908, p. 427.

52 Halifax *Herald*, 22 January 1909, p. 6.

prohibition.[53] With a general election approaching, the worried Liberals introduced a bill in the session of 1910 providing for provincial prohibition. The bill forbade the sale of intoxicating beverages (those containing more than 3% alcohol) in the province outside the city of Halifax. The only exception was for medicinal, sacramental, art trade and manufacturing purposes. "Spirits" for these uses would be supplied by specially authorized vendors. Liquor might not be shipped from Halifax to any other part of the province unless actually purchased in the city for personal or family use. In the capital city, the number of licenses was reduced from 90 to 70 with further reductions promised. The act was to be enforced by municipal officers under the supervision of a provincial inspector-in-chief. Early in 1911, with an election still pending, the Act was tightened to include all beverages containing alcohol, to prevent societies and clubs from keeping such beverages on their premises and to provide mandatory sentences of three month imprisonment for second offenders. At the same time the Legislature passed a resolution urging the federal government to prohibit the transportation of liquor into the province.[54]

The Alliance had attained a large portion of its demands. The obvious reason for its success was political. The Liberal Government was acting to satisfy an aroused public opinion before the election — a public opinion which had been largely moulded by the influence of the churches under the impact of the social gospel. The weight of this opinion was responsible not only for prohibition. In fact the latter was only one item in a broad slate of reform legislation passed by the Murray Government in 1909 and 1910. Other measures included workmen's compensation, factory legislation, stricter limitations on child labour and a system of contributory old age pensions. In a relatively prosperous economy the vision of a transformed society was yielding practical results. The churches expressed their appreciation to the Government,[55] and in the election of 1911, the Liberals were returned by a comfortable majority of sixteen seats.

The Alliance's pressure on the government was not eased for long. H. R. Grant soon declared that prohibition must be extended to Halifax, both to save the young men of that city from destruction and to cut off a major source of supplies for illicit sale in the rest of the province.[56] In 1912 the Liberals sought to divert attention from this issue by "packing" the annual meeting of the Alliance with government supporters. E. R. Armstrong, by this time a member of the Cabinet, requested several M.L.A.'s to have their friends attend the meeting of the Alliance to block "unsound" proposals and the efforts of those who

53 E. Spence, *op. cit.*, p. 339; *C.A.R.*, 1909, p. 432, and 1910, p. 459. In the latter constituency this was reputed to be the first election of a Conservative in thirty years.

54 *C.A.R.*, 1911, p. 551.

55 *Minutes, Presbyterian,* 1910, p. 29. *Minutes Methodist,* 1910, p. 89.

56 E. Spence, *op. cit.*, pp. 341-342.

would "complicate the situation as far as the local government is concerned".[57] This attempt was a failure. The following year, Conservative leader C. E. Tanner openly championed the Alliance's cause by introducing an amendment to the Nova Scotia Temperance Act to extend the application of its prohibitory clauses to Halifax. This was defeated eighteen to thirteen. In May of 1914 a similar proposal was lost fourteen to thirteen and in 1915 the measure was defeated only by the vote of the speaker. Early in 1916, with another election just months away, a similar amendment by Conservative H. W. Corning passed with only the three members from Halifax in opposition.[58]

The War was an obvious factor in overcoming resistance. In the final debate, several of the members mentioned the endorsement of prohibition by the Nova Scotia Synod of the Church of England as influencing their decision on the question.[59] Although a prohibition resolution had been submitted to the Synod before the outbreak of war, the matter had been referred to the Social Service Commission for further study. Canon C. W. Vernon, who moved the resolution of 1915, was quoted as saying that he himself had been converted to prohibition by the needs of the war effort and that without the War his motion would never have passed.[60] The need for conservation created by the War was mentioned by some speakers and the need for sacrifice by others. Premier Murray, still very sceptical of the measure, called it "experimental legislation" which the province might afford in "days of strain and stress . . . as we perhaps could not do under more normal conditions".[61] The emotional climate in which the bill was passed was further illustrated in Corning's concluding speech in which he appealed for a moral regeneration of the Empire and quoted Admiral Beatty on the need for a religious revival as a necessary prelude to victory.[62] Amid this climate of idealism and sacrifice the standard objections to prohibition as an infringement of personal liberty appeared to carry little weight.

Yet one should not exaggerate the influence of the war on the prohibition movement in Nova Scotia. The major break-through had taken place in 1910 when the government, protesting that the Alliance's policy of pledging members was "unfair and indecent",[63] had nevertheless enacted a major part of the prohibitionists' demands. In 1914, before the outbreak of the War, prohibition for Halifax had been defeated by only one vote. With the Conservative party becoming clearly identified as the champions of prohibition, it is difficult to see how Murray could have avoided making this concession to the

57 Armstrong to Dr. J. W. Reid, 15 February 1912 and Armstrong to W. M. Kelly, 15 February 1912, E. R. Armstrong Papers, P.A.N.S.

58 *Presbyterian Witness,* 4 March 1916, p. 5 and *Debates,* 1916, p. 225.

59 *Debates,* 1916, p. 176.

60 *Ibid.,* p. 143.

61 *Ibid.,* p. 206.

62 *Ibid.,* p. 258.

63 E. Spence, *op. cit.,* p. 341.

temperance interests before another election. He had acted to disarm his opponents on the issue before each of the previous elections and it is doubtful if he would have acted differently on this occasion. As it was, the Conservatives tried to make Murray's alleged fondness for the liquor interests a major issue in their campaign.[64]

Where the influence of the war did prove decisive, however, was in convincing the federal government to adopt prohibition. In 1916 the Dominion Temperance Alliance called for prohibition for the duration of the war and a three year reconstruction period thereafter. In January, H. R. Grant was a member of a delegation that called upon Robert Borden to press for Dominion prohibitory legislation. In March, the so-called Doherty Bill banned the importation of intoxicating beverages into provinces where provincial legislation was in effect. Since they still might be imported for personal use, this had little effect in Nova Scotia. In December, 1917, as a part of the war effort, the importation of intoxicating beverages was prohibited for the whole country. This still left the door open for Nova Scotians to order, legally, in unlimited quantities, liquor for personal use from Quebec.[65] Finally in March of 1918, by an Order-in-Council under the War Measures Act, the manufacture and sale of intoxicating beverages was prohibited throughout the whole country. Thus "bone-dry" prohibition came to Nova Scotia for the first time.

Thereafter attention shifted to the problem of enforcement. In 1917 the temperance forces of Sydney organized a citizen's league which campaigned in the Municipal elections and overturned a council which it claimed had failed to enforce the Act.[66] Inspector-in-chief J. A. Knight stated that "on the whole" prohibition in Halifax had been a success.[67] On this occasion Knight's opinion appeared to be supported by statistics, as the number of arrests for drunkenness in the province, which had reached 3614 in 1916, dropped to 2546 in 1917.[68] Evidence of improvement in restricting consumption of alcoholic beverages came from other sources as well. Sixty-nine per cent of the Anglican clergy of Nova Scotia who responded to a poll by the Council for Social Service of the Church of England in 1919, testified to the success of prohibition in their province.[69] Perhaps even more indicative of the drying up of traditional sources of supply was the Inspector-in-chief's report of

64 See Halifax *Herald,* 10 June 1916, p. 6.

65 See Report of the Inspector-in-chief for 1919, *J.H.A.,* 1920, Appendix 26, p. 1.

66 *Year Book, Church of England,* 1916-1917, p. 146.

67 Report of Inspector-in-chief, 1917, *J.H.A.,* 1918, Appendix 26, p. 1.

68 *The Control and Sale of Liquor in Canada* (Ottawa, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1933), p. 9, Table 5.

69 Compared with only 48.3% who were of a similar opinion in 1917. See *Prohibition II* (Kingston, 1919), p. 9. and *Prohibition I* (Kingston, 1917), p. 6. (Bulletins of the Council for Social Service of the Church of England).

1919, which for the first time mentioned smuggling and moonshining.[70] It was apparent that prohibition was beginning to make a significant impact upon the province.

On December 31, 1919, the Orders-in-Council prohibiting the importation of liquor were repealed in favour of an amendment to the Canada Temperance Act, providing for provincial plebiscites on the question. A simple majority vote in favour of prohibition would result in the extension of the necessary federal legislation to the province concerned. In Nova Scotia the plebiscite was scheduled for October 25, 1920, after the provincial election of that year. Meanwhile, the people quenched their thrist and stocked up for the dry years to come.

By the time of the plebiscite, prohibition had acquired new enemies and friends. Organized labour made unsuccessful representations to the legislature to plead for the exemption of beer from prohibitiry legislation and thereafter became increasingly hostile.[71] Organized farmers took the opposite view and in 1920 the newly-formed United Farmers' Party campaigned on a platform advocating "bone-dry" liquor legislation.[72] Nevertheless, with the plebiscite already scheduled, it is doubtful if prohibition played a major role in the election of 1920. Challenged by the new farmer and labour parties, but taking full advantage of the division among its opponents, the Murray Government remained in power on a minority of the popular vote and lost only one seat from its majority in the House.[73]

The most important accession to the temperance forces was the direct support of the Roman Catholic Church, the largest denomination in the province. During the campaign for the plebiscite, the Antigonish *Casket* came out strongly for prohibition claiming it "has done wonders but it has not yet had time to do its best". This was supported by a letter from Bishop James Morrison of Antigonish which concluded ". . . let me say once more than *(sic)* the adoption of the prohibitory law has my strongest word of approval, and let us all hope it will be given a fair trial in this province."[74] In the plebiscite, Nova Scotians declared for prohibition 82,573 to 23,953, the largest support for prohibition ever recorded in the province.[75] Every county yielded a majority except Halifax, whose people still appeared to resent the fiat imposed upon them in 1916.

70 Report of Inspector-in-chief, 1919, *J.H.A.*, 1920, Appendix 26, p, 9.

71 *C.A.R.*, 1919, p. 703; Halifax *Citizen*, 30 May and 22 August 1923.

72 *C.A.R.*, 1920, p. 678.

73 See J. M. Beck, *The Government of Nova Scotia* (Toronto, 1957), p. 162 and Anthony MacKenzie, "The Rise and Fall of the Farmer Labour Party in Nova Scotia" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1969), p. 77.

74 *Casket*, 14 October 1920, pp. 1 and 6.

75 *Presbyterian Witness*, 20 November 1920.

The overwhelming victory of prohibition in the plebiscite again reflected the strength of the social gospel sentiment which seemed to reach its climax in Nova Scotia after the War. As in the rest of the country, however, other reform measures associated with the movement did not enjoy similar success. All provinces faced the problem of lack of revenue which most reforms required. The aging Murray Administration was prepared neither to incur the odium of increased taxes nor to offend corporations with fundamental changes in labour legislation. Its sole gesture to the mounting demands for reform immediately prior to the election of 1920 was the appointment of a Royal Commission to consider "mother's allowances".[76] That this was much less than the people demanded is indicated both by the appearance in the election of the new farmer and labour parties and the support of 55 percent of the voters for the hastily-assembled and divided opposition.

The prohibition movement had reached its zenith by 1921 and thereafter began a gradual decline. The social gospel ideology on which it was based was approaching a crisis which would undermine its position of influence within the churches. Already it had been compromised to some extent by the Russian Revolution. In urging a fundamental reconstruction of society most social gospel reformers were forced to distinguish after 1917 between the right and wrong kinds of revolution. Many clergymen apparently judged from the newspaper reports available in Nova Scotia that the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 was a dangerous experiment of the wrong kind. The focus of Communist activity in Cape Breton in the early 1920's — especially the activities of J. B. McLachlan, leader of the largest union in the province (District 26 United Mine Workers), in promoting "Bolshevist" doctrines and attempting to affiliate his union with the Red International[77] — tended to confirm their fears and strengthened the conservative element in the churches. The dilemma of the social gospel wing was reflected in the churches' initial failure to support labour in its critical struggle with the British Empire Steel Corporation. Not until International President John L. Lewis dismissed McLachlan and his radical executive in 1923 did the assistance materialize which one might expect from a socially committed clergy.[78]

76 *C.A.R.*, 1920, p. 673.

77 See William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International* (Toronto, 1968), p. 111. Rodney portrays a variety of Communists in this period optimistically channelling their energies into work in the industrial areas of Cape Breton.

78 The *Casket,* while bitterly denouncing agitators such as McLachlan, was equally critical of Besco (British Empire Steel and Coal Corporation) and suggested the problem might be solved by nationalization of the coal fields. *Casket,* 21 October 1920, p. 1. The Methodist *Wesleyan* in 1923 denounced the "nest of anarchists" in Cape Breton and suggested that the "firebrands" be eliminated from the country. *Wesleyan,* 4 July 1923, p. 1. By 1925 although still critical of labour's resort to violence, it was directing its fire against the Corporation and demanding relief "for the labourer who grinds his face to produce dividends for stocks for which no single dollar has been paid." *Wesleyan,* 1 April 1925, p. 4. In that year the clergy played an important role in providing relief for the families of the striking miners and in 1928 the Ministerial Association of Sydney petitioned the Tariff Advisory Board that the Corporation should not be given tariff or other subsidy until it had substantially improved the labouring conditions of the steelworkers. Papers of the Advisory Board on Tariffs and Taxation, Vol. 9, P.A.C.

The re-imposition of Federal prohibitory legislation on Nova Scotia in February of 1921 did mark the beginning of a "new era" in the province, but it turned out to be the era of the "rum-runner". In January 1920, the Volstead Act prohibited the importation of liquor into the United States. An elaborate system of smuggling quickly evolved in which the Nova Scotian fisherman and ship owners came to play a prominent role. With the return of prohibition to Nova Scotia the new techniques were applied at home.

Attempts to enforce the legislation led to co-operation between Custom officers attempting to prevent smuggling, the Department of Revenue officers hunting for stills and the Temperance inspectors trying to suppress bootlegging. Assisting all three were the prohibitionists, operating on their own initiative in an attempt to make effective the legislation for which they had worked so hard. Thus in 1921, these groups began a game of "cops and robbers" with the smugglers, bootleggers and moonshiners which would continue until the end of the decade.

It was a game which before long the ill-equipped, untrained and quite inadequate municipal and provincial officers were obviously losing. In 1925, a discouraged Inspector-in-chief, J. A. Knight, gave the following assessment:

> So much liquor is now smuggled and distributed throughout the Province in motor cars and by bootleggers that the closing of bars and blind pigs does not have much effect on the total consumption. It is beyond the power of local inspectors to control smuggling or even check it to any appreciable extent. Dominion Officers, whose duty it is to deal with smuggling, are few in number and quite unable to keep an effective watch on all parts of the coast where liquor may be landed . . . Owing to the prevalence of home manufacture, the consumption of intoxicating beer in some country districts, probably, has been greater in recent years than it was under the old licence law.[79]

He might have added that in the three years between 1922 and 1924, the government had received over a million dollars in revenue from the sale of liquor for "medicinal, sacramental and scientific purposes".[80]

Despite the manifest difficulties of enforcing the law, which received such prominence in the daily press, there was some evidence that prohibition was fulfilling its main objective. Liquor was expensive, not always easily obtained and, by the time it had passed through the hands of several bootleggers, not very strong. This was reflected in the arrests for drunkenness which had risen steadily in Nova Scotia from 1,255 in 1900 to a high of 3,999 in 1914. With the resumption of federal prohibition they declined from 3,140 in 1920 to a low of 1,392 in 1923. In 1925 they were still only 1,466.[81]

79 Report of Inspector-in-chief, 1925, *J.H.A.*, 1926, Appendix 18, pp. 5-8.

80 *The Control and Sale of Liquor in Canada,* p. 8, Table 4.

81 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

In July of 1925 a Conservative government came to power in Nova Scotia. Murray had retired from politics in 1923 leaving the reins of government to the one-time prohibition advocate E. H. Armstrong. The luckless Armstrong was left to face a critical depression, disastrous strikes in the major coal and steel industries, mounting costs of government and dwindling revenues. The result of the election of June 25, 1925 was almost a foregone conclusion as the Conservatives under the leadership of E. N. Rhodes won 40 of the 43 seats in the Assembly.[82]

Rhodes appeared to have viewed the termination of prohibition as a potential solution to the critical problem of government deficits. By 1925 the four Western Provinces and Quebec had abandoned prohibition for a system of so called "government control," that is, government sale of liquor. It was proving an extremely lucrative business for the provinces involved. British Columbia for example in 1923 realized a net profit from liquor sales of over three million dollars,[83] an amount equal to three-fifths of the entire Nova Scotia budget. In 1926, Rhodes reported to Sir Robert Borden that he detected: "a marked swing towards Government control of liquor. This will probably be accelerated by our financial position as we are faced during the current year with a deficit of $1,050,000."[84]

Nevertheless, Rhodes was in no position to abandon prohibition. Temperance sentiment was still strong and well organized. Rhodes was also cognizant that a large element of his party's support in the election of 1925 had come from the reform element in the province. His personal manifesto and the party platform had contained promises of "mothers' allowances", a less partisan government, and full scale investigations of labour problems and rural depopulation — all of which had been urged by the churches and the Social Service Council. Although prohibition had not been mentioned in the platform, party candidates in rural areas had been strong in their denunciation of Liberal deficiencies in enforcement.[85] Within the first six months of coming to office his government was presented with petitions supporting prohibition from nearly five hundred organizations in the province — temperance societies, church groups, women's institutes and agricultural clubs. In September, 1925, the Maritime Conference of the newly created United Church endorsed prohibition by an "unanimous standing vote".[86] Early in 1926, Rhodes adopted a policy intended to reassure reform elements of his sincerity

82 See E. R. Forbes, "The Rise and Fall of the Conservative Party in the Provincial Politics of Nova Scotia, 1922-1933" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1967), chapter 2.

83 *The Control and Sale of Liquor in Canada,* p. 8.

84 Rhodes to Borden, 1926, Rhodes Papers, P.A.N.S.

85 In Shelburne a Conservative convention even went as far as to nominate an "independent" candidate to run on a prohibitionist platform. Halifax *Herald,* 10 June 1925.

86 Rhodes Papers, P.A.N.S., vol. 81 and *Minutes of the Maritime Conference of the United Church of Canada,* 1925, p. 23.

in enforcing prohibition while leaving the door open for its subsequent abandonment. He pledged his government to a determined effort to enforce the prohibition laws, but if, after a reasonable time, this proved impossible he would introduce a program for government control. Lest any should doubt his sincerity in enforcing prohibition he appointed as his inspector-in-chief Rev. D. K. Grant, a lawyer, clergyman and prohibitionist. It was an appointment which won the immediate and grateful approval of the United Church.[87]

D. K. Grant promised no miracles in enforcement. In his first report, after six months in office, he stressed the difficulties of reforming a situation which had become entrenched after "years of administrative neglect and indifference on the part both of the Federal and Provincial authority". The problem was also aggravated by "the fact of a sharply divided public opinion, a large element of society, including the magistry *(sic)* itself being either openly antagonistic or passively resistant to the present law".[88]

Nevertheless, Grant set to work in a burst of energy to increase the size of the provincial force, raise the wages of the municipal inspectors and propose fresh amendments to the Nova Scotia Temperance Act. Assisted by the newly created Dominion Preventive Force of the Department of Customs and Excise, Grant and his inspectors launched a determined assault upon illicit liquor traffic. During his first year in office, arrests, seizures and convictions by provincial inspectors more than doubled, while successful prosecutions by both provincial and municipal inspectors increased from 716 for 1926 to 938 for 1927.[89] This increased activity was far from appreciated by influential elements in both political parties. The Conservative Halifax *Herald* began a campaign against Grant for his "arbitrary" methods of prosecuting offenders.[90] Some Liberals indicated their displeasure by securing the dismissal of the federal Preventive Officer at Glace Bay for being "too active in his duties."[91]

In fact, despite Grant's best efforts at enforcement there was evidence of a gradual decline in support for prohibition and an increase in the consumption of alcohol. In 1926 there were 1,898 arrests for drunkenness, 2,053 in 1927 and 2,176 in 1928.[92] There also appeared to be an increased reluctance on the part of juries to convict bootleggers, especially in the case of second offenders for whom jail terms were mandatory.[93]

The resistance to prohibition as usual was strongest in Halifax. The Conservative M.L.A.'s from the city found it expedient to show their opposition by

87 *Minutes, United Church,* 1927, p. 27.

88 Report of Inspector-in-chief for 1926, *J.H.A.*, 1927, pp. 5, 12.

89 *Ibid.*, 1927; *J.H.A.*, 1928, pp. 6, 15.

90 Halifax *Herald,* 1 March 1928.

91 "Memorandum Re: N. S. Affairs," 1927, vol. 7, Col. J. L. Ralston Papers, P.A.C.

92 *Control and Sale of Liquor in Canada,* p. 9, Table 5.

93 Report of Inspector-in-chief for 1927, *J.H.A.*, 1928, Appendix 8, p. 10.

resolutions in the House. These Rhodes deflated with amendments to the effect that the law would not be changed without a referendum. Such signs of growing hostility stimulated a flexing of muscles by the prohibitionists. On January 1, 1928, H. R. Grant announced that the Social Service Council, the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Sons of Temperance were joining forces to prevent any changes in the Temperance Act.[94]

The pressure upon the provincial administration to resort to government control was substantially increased in 1926 by the federal government's announcement of an old age pension scheme, the costs of which were to be shared equally by the provinces and the Dominion. While such a plan might be within the reach of the western provinces and their relatively young population, it was totally beyond the resources of the Nova Scotia government with its much larger percentage of potentially eligible recipients.[95] In 1928, Rhodes appointed a Royal Commission to explore methods of financing old age pensions and called an election before the Commission was due to report. During the campaign he reiterated his promise not to abandon prohibition without a plebiscite but gave no indication when such a referendum would be held.[96]

The election nearly proved disastrous for the Conservatives as their majority shrank from 37 to 3. Both prohibition and old age pensions were issues in the campaign. Discontent over the former was probably a factor in Halifax where Conservative majorities of over 7,000 in 1925 melted away and three of the five Conservative candidates were defeated.

After the election the Royal Commission presented its report. To the surprise of no one, it recommended government control of liquor sales as a possible source of revenue for old age pensions.[97] Shortly thereafter, Rhodes scheduled a plebiscite on the question of prohibition versus government control for October, 1929. Armed with the ammunition supplied by the Commission and with the tacit encouragement of the provincial government, a new Temperance Reform Association was organized in Halifax in September, 1929. Its President, J. A. Winfield, attacked the Nova Scotia Temperance Act for its adverse effect on youth and claimed that his Association was seeking through "moral suasion" and education the most effective means of encouraging temperance in Nova Scotia. This claim was scouted by the editor of the *United Churchman,* who pointed to the rapid disappearance of similar groups in other provinces once the prohibitory system had been destroyed.[98]

94 Halifax *Herald,* 1 January 1928.

95 4.7% of Nova Scotia's population was over 70 years of age compared with 1.2% to 1.8% for the four Western provinces. Report of the Royal Commission on Old Age Pensions, *J.H.A.,* appendix No. 29, p. 43.

96 Copy of speech delivered at Windsor, 8 September 1928, Rhodes Papers, P.A.N.S.

97 *Report of the Royal Commission on Old Age Pensions,* p. 41.

98 *United Churchman,* 25 September 1929, p. 4.

As the campaign increased in intensity, it became evident that the prohibitionists had lost many of their allies of 1920. The Anglican *Church Work* was conspicuously silent before the plebiscite and expressed its "relief" when it was over. The *Casket* went to considerable pains to explain that the Roman Catholic Church had never endorsed more than personal abstinence and that membership in the League of the Cross did not convey any obligation to vote for prohibition.[99]

The Rhodes administration apparently did everything possible to aid the campaign for government control. Rhodes, particularly, seems to have seen the future of the government riding on the question. His jaundiced explanation of the opposition to government control is perhaps more revealing of his own commitment than of the forces described. According to Rhodes, three elements were fighting for retention of prohibition: the Liberals, on the principle that "if government control carries, Rhodes is in power for twenty years", the towns, "because of the revenue from fines", and the bootleggers "who were practically solid against us and the rum-runner as well".[100]

Government control won a decisive victory in the plebiscite, 87,647 to 58,082. It received a majority in every county but six. Only the rural counties of Shelburne, Queens, Kings, Hants, Colchester and Annapolis — counties in which the Baptist and United Churches were predominant — did prohibition retain a majority.[101]

The government lost no time in implementing the wishes of the people. The old Act was quickly repealed and a Liquor Commission was set up with a complete monopoly of liquor outlets in the province. Sale by the glass was to be limited by local option; otherwise Commission sales would be unrestricted. Within less than a year the Commission had established a store in every town and city in the province plus a special mail-order agency in Halifax for the convenience of rural customers.

The prohibitionists were bloodied but unbowed; the Social Service Council and its indomitable secretary, H. R. Grant, denounced the Government for its "complicity" in the socially demoralizing liquor traffic, a position endorsed by the United Church.[102] Within a year Grant and other temperance workers were to be found hard at work in a vain effort to pledge members of the Legislature to support a measure for local option on a county basis.[103]

A number of obvious factors might be mentioned in explaining the defeat of prohibition in Nova Scotia. The *United Churchman* claimed that the lack of enforcement discredited the movement among its friends and led to the

99 *Church Work*, December 1929, p. 3 and *Casket*, 16 May 1929.

100 Rhodes to J. Philip Bell, 4 November 1929, Rhodes Papers, P.A.N.S.

101 *J.H.A.*, 1929, Appendix 27, p. 38.

102 *United Churchman*, 1 January 1930.

103 Halifax, *Chronicle*, 14 November 1929.

desire to experiment with government control.[104] This raises the question of whether enforcement was possible, given the opposition to the law by such a determined minority. The answer would appear to hinge on the goal desired. Even with the relatively lax enforcement of the early 1920's, the arrests for drunkenness had been halved throughout the period from 1922 to 1926. Still it is doubtful if even the most rigorous enforcement would have ended the accounts of smuggling, illegal manufacture and related crimes which filled the press of the period. And it was these which made many Nova Scotians wonder if the prohibition cure were not worse than the disease. Such doubts must have become more acute as the prohibitionists saw their cause abandoned by every other province but Prince Edward Island. Then came a positive factor in the Province's need for additional revenue, which the demand for other reforms made crucial. This was certainly the main consideration for the Rhodes' Government, and after the report of the Royal Commission on old age pensions, the issue apparently achieved a similar clarity for the people of Nova Scotia. They were given a choice between prohibition and old age pensions and opted decisively for the latter.

There were more fundamental reasons for the rejection of prohibition in 1929. In the early twentieth century, the movement had rapidly increased in strength, rising upon the tide of optimistic, idealistic reform which accompanied the churches' conversion to the social gospel. As the tide began to ebb, prohibition suffered accordingly. The reform movement of the social gospel reached a climax in Nova Scotia immediately following the World War. People had confidently prepared to create the new and better society which they expected would be within their reach. But conditions in Nova Scotia in the 1920's were conductive neither to optimism or reforms. Instead of the anticipated triumph of humanitarian justice, there came a critical and lingering depression, bankruptcy, wage-cuts, strikes, violence and emigration. In the industrial sphere, proposals for social reform were blocked by the financial difficulties of the corporations on one side, and compromised by the strident voice of radical Marxism on the other. Little could be expected in the realm of legislation from a Government whose economic difficulties precluded the social welfare legislation which seemed to be required as never before.

It is nor surprising under such circumstances, that some churchmen apparently re-examined their consciences and concluded that the church was more useful in consoling suffering mortals, than in shattering lances against an unrepentant society. Disillusionment, however, was avoided by many, who apparently saw as the impediment to the attainment of their goals, nothing more invulnerable than an inept provincial administration, and a federal government whose policies accentuated regional injustices under which their their province suffered. Their reform enthusiasm, retaining some of the rhetoric of the social gospel, became channeled into a broadly based movement

104 *United Churchman*, 6 November 1929.

to rehabilitate the region economically from within, while securing economic "justice" from without. Yet for those who looked with exaggerated hopes to the success of "Maritime Rights" candidates in provincial and federal elections, disillusionment was perhaps but the more severe for being deferred.

The decline of prohibition to some extent paralleled that of the general reform movement. As partially a utopian reform, it had suffered on implementation from the inevitable reaction. It did not yield the results predicted by its proponents. There was apparently no spectacular decline in disease, mental illness, poverty or crime in the province. On the contrary, prohibition was blamed by its opponents for much of the crime which did occur. For a time, many of its supporters maintained faith in their programme by attributing its deficiencies to the obvious lack of enforcement by the Murray-Armstrong administration. Then came the expected transition in government and with it the ultimate disillusionment of the prohibitionists, as one of their own number was no more successful in securing the desired results from prohibition than his predecessors.

Still another factor contributed to the decline in popular enthusiasm for prohibition. In the long battle for enforcement, the goals of reform appeared to receive less and less discussion. Harassed clergymen in their pre-occupation with the struggle began to denounce rum-running and bootlegging as "sins". Unconsciously, the prohibitionists were reverting to the language of the nineteenth century movement. Prohibition was becoming divorced in the mind of the public from the main stream of social reform. Gradually it was acquiring the image of censorious fanaticism, which, exaggerated by its opponents, it has retained to the present day.

There was a note of irony in the defeat of prohibition in 1929. Prohibition had acted as mid-wife at the birth of the social gospel in Canadian Churches. The two had been closely linked in the flowering of the reform movement. But the latter, in creating the public demand for social welfare legislation, contributed significantly to the economic pressure providing the immediate cause for the defeat of the former. It was a measure of the success of the social gospel that as one dream was being destroyed, others, perhaps more realistic, were gaining a hold on public opinion. J. S. Woodsworth's victory in forcing the Mackenzie King government to adopt old age pensions had contributed to the fall of prohibition in Nova Scotia. Yet it also symbolized a future victory of the social gospel ideals in secular society, the ultimate goal of the leaders of the prohibition movement in Nova Scotia.