
EDITORIAL

PROHIBITION, A FAILURE?

IS PROHIBITION a good thing? Nobody knows; it has never had a chance.

When prohibition was adopted, all good people assumed that the law would be respected and that it would at least be given a fair trial. But there were too many against it. The police were down on it naturally; they will arrest a poor autoist for parking wrong and then let fleets of booze trucks pass in the night, week after week and year after year, without even seeing them.

The lawyers were mostly against it, and many of the judges also. The doctors hated the restriction on their right to prescribe alcohol if they thought it beneficial. The legislators who passed the laws were themselves largely opposed to prohibition; they might like to provide it for others, but they had no idea of accepting it for themselves. In fact many of our most active lawmakers are confirmed boozers, who can't wax eloquent unless they are tanked up.

Finally, drinking was made fashionable, and sottish all-night gin parties became the accepted thing everywhere. Country clubs sprung up like magic, because this gave people a chance to drink without let or hindrance, under the guise of playing golf.

In business it has got so that the best way to secure a contract is to pass a bottle or a case of whisky to the man (or woman) who has the decision. Conventions of all sorts have degenerated into drinking orgies. No president would dare enforce prohibition, as it would hit too many good friends.

Even if the 18th amendment isn't formally repealed, it will no doubt become a dead letter. It will be nullified, like some of the other amendments. The supreme court has admitted that a constitutional amendment doesn't enforce itself and that if the people choose to forget it or evade it there is nothing to do about it. So if Congress passes a bill doing away with the Volstead act, as appears likely, we may look for the practical end of the "noble experiment" of prohibition which never prohibited.

A sad, sad affair, for all concerned—except the bootleggers, who have built up one of the biggest industries in the country in spite of the laws. When the farce is over, Uncle Sam will get some of the money the bootleggers have been getting, and this ought to lighten the tax burden under which the people are now staggering.