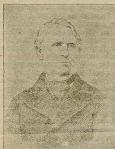


A Veteran's Evidence.

Hon. Gen. Neal Dow, of Portland, Maine, was examined by the Royal Commission on the Liquor Traffic at Montreal. Special interest attaches to his testimony, as to his efforts was largely due the enactment of the Maine Law in the first place. The following extract is taken from his statement:—



HON. NEAL DOW.

I suppose there is no State in the Union where more liquor was consumed in proportion to the population than in Maine. That arose very largely from the fact of two great industries being carried on there—one being the lumber trade, which you all know about in Canada, and the other being the fisheries, which you also know about here. The lumbermen were employed in the woods during the winter cutting down the trees, and drink would form a regular part of their rations; and the fishermen had rum as a regular part of their rations. The result was that poverty and pauperism were with the people of Maine. An immense quantity of liquor was consumed there.

There were a great many distilleries in the State, seven of them were in Portland, and two breweries. They made rum from molasses imported in large quantities from the West Indies; they made whiskey from potatoes, and some of them made apple-jack, or brandy, from apples. Now there is not a distillery or brewery in Maine, and there has not been one for a good many years.

At that time large quantities of West India rum were imported. This rum came to us by the cargo. A great many cargoes were received every year, and it was a regular trade. A large fleet of vessels was regularly employed in the West India trade. They took fish and lumber out and brought back molasses, which was converted into rum; and also West India rum. Now, there is not one puncheon of rum imported into Maine, and there has not been any imported for very many years.

The result of the change has been this: that while Maine was undoubtedly one of the poorest States in the Union in the olden time, it is now one of the most prosperous. The volume of the liquor traffic is greatly reduced. The savings of the people from that traffic are such that the State has become very flourishing.

I know all about our property in the olden times. Our industries, aside from fishing and lumbering, were on a very small scale, and our people had not sufficient capital to carry on the trade. I know all about that personally. Our industries have since then very greatly multiplied and extended, and we have abundant capital to carry on all our business, and there is besides a large amount of surplus capital which seeks investment outside of the State. A great deal of Maine capital is all over the country for investment.

The prohibition law in Maine was enacted in 1831, nearly forty-one years ago. Within six months after the enactment of the law the jails in the counties of Penobscot, Kennebec, Oxford, Franklin and York were almost empty. When I visited York jail, the keeper, as he put the key into the lock, apologized for keeping his hens there. He had no further use for the jail. In regard to the jail in Cumberland, where I live, and which is a county that has a large population, it had been overcrowded many years, and articles had appeared in the newspapers urging the building of a new jail. I visited the jail within four months of the enactment of the law, and there were only four persons there, three of whom were rum-sellers who were there for violation of the law. All this was during the first year of the enforcement of the law, and it was then vigorously enforced. There has been a laxity in the enforcement of the law at different times since.

It is quite safe to say that the quantity of liquor sold in Maine now is not one-twentieth as much as it was before the law was passed. It is quite within the mark to make that statement. Portland is the largest city in the State, and it is within the truth to say that the quantity of liquor sold there now is not one hundredth of what it was before. We had seven distilleries and two breweries, and we had many cargoes every year from the West Indies, which the people brought over for their own use. Now whatever liquor is sold there, is sold on a very small scale, and on the sly.

We are saving directly and indirectly at least \$24,000,000 every year, which but for this law would be wasted in drink, as it was in olden times. In the old days the people of Maine spent in strong drink the entire value of all their property; now it is far within the truth to say that \$1,000,000 would pay for all the liquor smuggled into Maine and sold in violation of the law. So the saving to the people of Maine has been very great, and has been the means of making the State prosperous, as it was not in the olden days. We expect to achieve still greater success in the future. The liquor sold now is the result of certain deficiencies in the law, and we have been trying to have those deficiencies corrected.

The English law can be enforced much better than the law in Maine. We have not there summary trials and convictions, as in England, and perhaps in Canada, but there are very long trials in the United States. The constitution requires that every man shall be tried by jury, and so when a man is convicted of selling rum he appeals, and there is a delay of a year or two, and I may say that facilities are given for delays. Besides, the courts have discretion in regard to the administration of the law, and as the lawyers press the courts so much, the judges are very apt to be lenient in the administration of the law.

The liquor traffic is not entirely excluded from Maine; but it is safe to say that in more than three-fourths of our territory, containing more than three-fourths of the population, the liquor traffic is practically extinguished. In all the rural districts and smaller towns and villages, there are no grog shops and no liquor traffic. A whole generation has grown up without having seen the effects of liquor, and there are men and women who have never seen a drunken man.

We may have in Canada even more effective prohibition than there is in Maine.