

# “WHO NEEDS THIS PROHIBITION ‘ISSUE’ NOW?” ASKS FOSTER

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**T**HE capitalist politicians and newspapers, with a great fanfare of trumpets, are playing up the wet-dry question as a central issue in the election campaign.

This is to divert the attention of the workers from issues that are vital to their interests, such as unemployment insurance, the growing war danger, etc. Naturally, the “Socialist” Party, as a loyal tool of capitalism, falls in step with this exaggeration of the importance of the prohibition question by its ridiculous proposal for a national popular referendum on the liquor issue. Such a referendum, the like of which has never been had upon any question in this country, would, if adopted, inflate the minor prohibition question into the appearance of a gigantic issue. The A. F. of L., of course, at its convention, makes the “wet” question a central issue.

All “Wet” and All “Arguing.”

The three capitalist parties make a great issue of prohibition in spite of the fact that their points of difference on it are rapidly waning. The “wets” have swept the industrial sections of the country. This was indicated first in the Literary Digest poll, then by the Morrow “wet” landslide in

New Jersey, and now, by both the republican and democratic parties of New York State demanding the repeal of the 18th Amendment, not to speak of other manifestations.

One of the most insidious features of the inflated debate over prohibition is the so-called economic argument of the “wets.” They maintain that the re-establishment of a legal liquor traffic will end, or at least greatly alleviate, the industrial crisis. That is, by the opening up of the many necessary breweries, distilleries, saloons, etc., hundreds of thousands of workers will secure employment, a great market will be opened up for the farmers’ grain, and thus “prosperity” will shine again.

Liquor Will Not Relieve Unemployment.

This is nonsense, but it nevertheless has much persuasive power. It is one of the principal forces behind the present popular sweep of the “wets.” In vain the “drys” cite their “economic authorities” who claim that it was exactly prohibition that produced the long period of American prosperity.

The “economic argument” of the “drys” is just as false as that of the “wets,” and for the same reason. The fact is, the millions of workers, who furnish the main potential market for alcoholic drinks, receive only a certain amount as wages—a declining figure in this period of wage cuts and unemployment. If they transfer a further portion

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of this for stimulants, as implied by abolishing prohibition, they will have just that much less with which to buy other commodities. That is, the liquor traffic can only grow at the expense of other industries. Making the country "wet" will not solve unemployment or in any way alleviate it.

### How the Soviet Union Solves the Problem.

In the Soviet Union the liquor question is solved simply, as it should be solved in every country. The government manufactures and sells alcoholic drinks through the cooperative stores. Wines and liquors may be freely purchased. Then, to avoid abuses, an intensive campaign is carried on by the Communist Party, trade unions, schools, etc., against excessive drinking. Consequently the whole problem is reduced to a minor question and is well on the way to complete solution.

But capitalist America is not interested in such an intelligent solution. The prohibition question will remain as a source of corruption and crime, like so many other "questions" under capitalism.

### "Noble Experiment" for Corruption.

The "wets" have not won a complete enough victory to enable them to open up again full blast and

legally the lovely American saloon system—as enough states will remain dry to block the repeal of the 18th Amendment. But they have gained enough strength to more openly than ever defy the prohibition laws. Enforcement now becomes impossible altogether; now we are in for a big exposure of the already vast bootlegging industry. Hoover's noble experiment has failed completely.

To the big capitalists who, for efficiency purposes, need "dry" workers, the growing wet wave brings but little inconvenience. They will be able, even better than before, to enforce, by reason of the great unemployment, the necessary "dryness" among their workers.

Workers, the main thing is not to allow the hub-bub raised over the prohibition question to divert our attention from issues of real importance to us. We must unite all our forces to fight for unemployment insurance and against wage cuts. We must struggle against the menacing world war. We must defend the Soviet Union. We must build the revolutionary unions of the Trade Union Unity League. We must support the Communist Party. Workers! Vote Communist!

(Written at Hart's Island Penitentiary.)