

Larson Article Pleases L. D. S. Church Leaders

An article written by Gustive O. Larson, Director of the Cedar City L. D. S. Institute of Religion, and published in the December issue of the Utah Educational Review, so pleased church authorities that it is to be used extensively by the church. It is to appear in various church publications and in addition several thousand copies are to be printed for distribution over the state. The article, entitled "A Birthright For Sale?" deals with the tobacco, narcotic and liquor problems of the nation. The complete article follows:

Wealth in furs was increased a century ago through debauching the American Indian with liquor. Many an Indian's soul was for sale after he had once tasted the white man's fire-water. Unscrupulous mountain men thought nothing of exploiting the native if only the yield in furs increased. We are experiencing a modern parallel to this sacrifice of human well-being to mercenary interest. The thousands wrung from the former enterprise were as a drop in the vast sea of modern liquor profits. And where the former prey was regarded as an inferior remnant without claim to overmuch consideration, you and I and a hundred million other Americans are the intended victims of the present program for mounting dividends.

If this sounds extravagant consider the fact that in a single year the American public pays over four billion dollars for liquor. All this

expenditure diverted from channels of necessity and human welfare to the purchase of a non-essential which experience has proved to be harmful to the individual and a menace to society. It represents a staggering tribute to the narcotic gods for temporary escape from the world of reality into the illusion of well-being. The expenditure however, does not represent a normal but rather a stimulated demand. And herein lies the viciousness of the modern exploitation of human beings. Through all known devices the liquor interests push their program of making every non-drinker a drinker and every user an increasingly heavy user of their products. Without shame or hedging they announce their aims. Said the American Brewer in January, 1936, "The main objective of the wise brewer today is to win new customers. There still are millions of persons in the United States who are not regular beer users—they offer the greatest opportunity for profit." Or consider the following from the Brewers Digest in May, 1941: "One of the finest things that could have happened to the Brewing Industry was the insistence of high ranking officers to make beer available at Army Camps. . . . Here is a chance for brewers to cultivate a taste for beer in millions of young men who will eventually constitute the largest beer consuming section of our population." The statement gloats over its newly claimed victims, "The present conscripted army is the jealously guarded pride and joy of the nation."

So, because the normal demand for alcoholic products never equals the desire for increased profits the liquor interests go on bombarding the nation with every appeal conceivable. And the nation's narcotic menace increases in proportion to the success of their advertising. The liquor industry can never prosper without a heavy toll upon civilization.

The great American tragedy is that while alcohol is known to reduce efficiency, boost our crime record, menace our highways, wreck our homes, and pauperize our people, we smile indulgently while the liquor interests continue to push the sale for increased profits. Legislators point to the billion dollar tax income from the industry as though that were compensation for immeasurably greater economic losses to the nation to say nothing of human values involved. And we go on ignoring the nullifying effect of liquor upon every organized effort to educate and build a healthy normal citizenship. The situation is well summarized by President George B. Cutten of Colgate University: "Everything I am trying to build up as an educator alcohol drink tends to tear down. The results of a college education and consuming beverage alcohol are represented by opposite poles."

While alcoholic sponsors continue their program of educating the public in proper liquor etiquette, let us look at their products in the light of the present national emergency. Pearl Harbor has added its testimony to similar disasters of the past, and that testimony is that all the best equipment in the world can never substitute for responsible man power—clear headed physically fit, and morally sound. And yet alcohol, which destroys manpower in billion dollar doses annually, continues unrestricted to undermine our national vitality. While we spend billions willingly to make ourselves strong, we spend other billions unwittingly to keep us weak. Experience elsewhere has demonstrated tragically that a house divided may not stand.

If democracy is to be strong it

must demonstrate its ability to create a strong citizenship. France failed and now lies under the dictator's heel. She had her Maginot Line and her "invincible army" but she without physical and moral stability meant nothing. Her fate was already sealed as the farseeing editor, Payot, wrote in 1925, "Alcoholism under the indifferent eyes of the authorities is indeed destroying our nation. . . . I solemnly affirm that from now on one might inscribe on the windows of all the public houses in France the fateful words: Finis Galliae."

On the other hand, while France blindly increased her liquor consumption, Germany was steadily erasing the retarding effects of both alcohol and tobacco from her manpower. Reflecting the awakening which was accompanied by strong narcotic regulation the German Association of Neurologists and Psychiatrists wrote: "The Association feels duty bound to declare that the customs of drinking and the advertising of the many kinds of beer are a great menace to the health of the population. The drinking of liquor and also of beer, even in such quantities not ordinarily considered intoxicating, lessens personal resistance to all kinds of disease, shortens life, and produces crime and accident." Such statements were supported by the Ministry of Health and other state officials who warned against narcotic dissipation of German manpower and pointed out that the fight against liquor, as well as against tobacco, was a fight to strengthen national defense. The government Bureau for control of Alcohol and Tobacco included in its program the protection of minors against both; total abstinence in face of special responsibilities, control of advertising with representation of spirits and tobacco as "health products" forbidden, increase in production of non-alcoholic drinks and establishment of centers for their low cost distribution, education of the public to the dangers of alcohol and special emphasis on healthful living for youth. Abstinence became a basic principle in the Nazi Youth Movement.

All this our enemy was doing to strengthen her manpower and protect her youth while we were reading the American Brewers exulting chant, "Millions not now users. . . Here is the greatest opportunity for profits." "Here is a chance for Brewers to cultivate a taste for beer in millions of young men."

Radical changes are being wrought in American life. Individual and corporate adjustments are made willingly to the all-out war effort. No sacrifice is held too great for the preservation of democracy. But if democracy encourages seeds of disintegration as it did in France wherein lies our gain? Democracies must breed strength for their own well being and their preservation. If some corporations producing real essentials are asked to adjust their programs to more direct war effort, why should not others, engaged in production and distribution of harmful non-essentials, be cut to fit the emergency pattern? Certainly it would be in the public interest and in harmony with our defense program to prohibit all stimulation of narcotic consumption and let it follow a normal demand. This much achieved in control of high pressuring Americans into harmful indulgence, the rest might be left to education.

In these channels of legislation and education lie promising possibilities for lessening of America's narcotic menace. And as that menace is relieved our national defense will be strengthened proportionately. With reference to legislation

for control of high pressuring the American people into use of injurious products distinction must be made, in the use of the press and radio, between dissemination of truth and falsehood. This regardless of whether the latter be expressed directly or by implication. To mislead the American people with subtle phrases into consumption of harmful products is as much an attack upon our vitals as any form of sabotage with results, at present, equally devastating. Alcohol should no longer be allowed to masquerade in American life as wholesome company contributing to social and economic well being, but should be exposed and frankly presented to the public for what it is. Instead of soothing, relieving, steadying, bracing, all of which appropriately enough describe the effects of narcotics, the public should be reminded that alcoholic drinks really are narcotic and that their continued use will bring physical degeneration, and moral debauchery. The people of a democracy have a right to the facts so that knowing the truth they may at least choose to be free. Certainly the youth of America have as much right to freedom from this evil as the Nazi youth who, ironically, have been the first to throw off the narcotic chains in order to become strong to defeat democracy!

Education in democratic America has no greater responsibility than to lead youth into paths of sound physical, mental and spiritual well being. While we fight to preserve our freedom we must make sure that that freedom is not used for our own destruction. Therefore, in face of existing conditions in which only seventy-five cents is spent for education to every dollar expended for use of alcohol, the former should be increased to emphasize the importance of health and public safety in their relation to the use of narcotics. The joy, the power, and the glory of health deserve at least as much attention as is now given by private agencies to deceive the public into physical and moral degeneration.