

Temperance Column

AMERICA'S THIRST VERSUS EUROPE'S HUNGER

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President Truman has appealed to the country to do with less food for awhile in order to feed starving Europe. On February 6 he announced a nine-point program for the conservation of our food resources in an effort to meet what he called a world crisis "which may prove the worst in modern times."

Point two in the President's conservation program states that "the use of wheat in the direct production of alcohol and beer will be discontinued; the use of other grains for the production of beverage alcohol will be limited, beginning March 1, to five day's consumption a month; and the use of other grains for the production of beer will be limited to an aggregate quantity equal to that used for this purpose in 1940 which was 30 per cent less than the quantity used in 1945. This will save for food about 20,000,000 bushels of grain by June 30, 1946."

Why the Delayed Decision?

Americans generally will not mind eating less bread, and that of a darker color, and stinting themselves on poultry, eggs and dairy products, if their self-denial will save lives in Europe. But one cannot help wondering why President Truman waited until February, 1946, to promulgate his order. He must have realized soon after moving into the White House that the situation abroad would be very critical for several years following cessation of hostilities. Putting this order in effect as early as June, 1945, would easily have resulted in a double saving, or approximately 40,000,000 bushels of grain by the end of June, 1946. Maybe the additional saving would have made unnecessary the curtailment of our daily food consumption while sending liberal shipments abroad to reduce the number of deaths from starvation.

Bread or Booze, Which?

The nation's predicament was stressed in Congress on February 8 when Representative Edward H. Rees, of Kansas, spoke in part as follows:

"Many months ago, other Members of this House, together with myself, called attention to the need of diverting grains for food that was consumed for liquor. It being our contention that it was more important that we have food than liquor.

"During the past five years, millions of bushels of wheat, corn, and other grains have been used for making liquor. These grains should have been used for food. It would have greatly relieved the situation in which we find ourselves today.

"I am informed there is about 3½ years' supply of hard liquor on hand. No one, surely, can seriously complain if we cease making hard liquor for 2 or 3 years, or, at least, until this emergency is over."

As pointed out by Congressman Rees, the time to have curtailed food wastage was during the war. Instead of that, the liquor traffic was permitted to go on using grain and sugar products grown on approximately 5,339,500 acres of farm land. During 1944 the manufacturers of distilled and fermented beverages virtually required 4,150,000,000 pounds of grains and 238,660,000 pounds of sugar, syrup and molasses.

Think on These Facts

Let us appraise the value of grains wasted in

production of whiskey and beer by another system of measurement. It has been estimated, for instance, that grains used in the manufacture of whiskey and beer in 1943 would have been sufficient to feed 4,223,000 civilians for an entire year at the rate of three pounds of food per day per person. Stated another way, enough grain was thus destroyed to have fed an army of 2,303,000 for one year, each soldier receiving 5½ pounds per day. (This estimate is based on a statement made by Major-General E. B. Gregory at a United States Senate hearing on April 14, 1943.)

There is a joker in President Truman's order, which cannot be overlooked. Since the purpose of the order was to save grain, why did he wait until March 1 to limit the use of "other grains" by the brewers and distillers? Surely President Truman and his advisers knew that this delay would allow them three weeks in which to lay in large supplies of grain for future use.

It so happens that the order which limits the amount of wheat that a miller may keep on hand does not apply to brewers and distillers. They are again the recipients of special favors from the government at Washington. Apparently the liquor traffic can always get what it wants. Even though Europe faces starvation, the profits of the vested liquor interests must not be jeopardized.

OUR GREATEST PERIL

One of the many questions which should interest us and which might evoke a great variety of answers is "What is the Nation's greatest peril?" We have many perils. Which do you consider "the greatest?"

It is not the saloon menace. True, liquor does figure largely in crime today. True, its effects are becoming more and more apparent (and the end is not yet, for we are still sowing a greater crop of drinking people!). The relation of alcohol to poverty, disease, and crime is unbelievably great. The "inns," "taverns," "road houses," and whatever else they may be called, spring up like mushrooms without regard to their proximity to churches or schools. But they are not our greatest menace.

The cigarette menace is not our nation's greatest peril. The "new freedom" so completely emancipated woman that she not only went to the polls to vote, but to the bar room to drink and to public places to smoke. What does the average woman care for the opinions of those who are grieved at her sophistication? With the smell of booze on her breath, a pack of cigarettes in her purse, and foul language on her lips, she is a sorry spectacle. So much has the cigarette menace increased until grandmother and "Tiny Tim" also smoke. In fact, it has become the exception rather than the rule not to smoke. But even so, there is a greater menace than that of booze and tobacco.

Defiling and Destructive Forces

The pornographic literature menace is also great, inflaming as it does by words and pictures the base passions, which Satan would use to destroy both soul and body, mind and morals, the individual and society. Filth is being sold by the ton in cities, towns, and villages under the name of literature. The more salacious it is, the more popular it becomes. The constant subjection to the suggestions of such literature tends to wear down resistance to the encroachment of immorality.

The divorce evil is great, and growing greater; but even it is not our greatest peril. So lightly do people esteem their sacred marriage vows that the home, the very foundation of an enduring social order, is disintegrating. The results of this

domestic breakdown are very grave menaces to the Church's progress. Before the recent war began, an average of one-sixth of American marriages ended in divorce. Now the percentage is even greater.

The crime situation is grave, but it is not our nation's greatest peril. We had three and one-half times as many criminals in America before the war as there were students in our colleges. For each school teacher there was an average of 4.5 criminals among us. One out of four homes are touched by crime in one way or another during each year. We were paying four times as much for crime during pre-war years as we paid for education. Our crime bill equalled our nation's food bill; and is more than the pre-war payments of Federal, State and municipal taxes.

The Greatest Peril of All

The previously mentioned menaces are great. Their havoc is beyond man's power to fully comprehend. But there is a reason why these things have gained such a foothold. The civilization of which we boast is threatened with decline, and that always means "the debauchery of law and order." We should, as citizens, especially Christian citizens, heed the admonition of J. Edgar Hoover, F. B. I. Chief, who challenged: "Let us abide by the truism of the ages and put first things first."

Our greatest peril is the neglect of youth's spiritual life. "Spiritual illiteracy is the forerunner of moral bankruptcy and national decay." We have heard a great deal about reconversion of industry, we need to hear more about the conversion of individuals. We have heard much about the control of prices, but there has been almost nothing about the control of passions. We have had much publicity about the redeployment and demobilization of our armed forces; but there has been nothing about recovering our lost virtues and launching a spiritual crusade which would rehabilitate the character casualties of the war era. We are busy talking about, and tinkering with, results when what we need is to lay the axe to the root of the trouble. Our present course is as foolish as for a man to buy and use hundreds of dollars' worth of rheumatism medicine while refusing to give up decayed teeth and diseased tonsils.

We have, generally speaking, lost one generation of youth by our neglect. This poses a real problem. The case is serious, but not hopeless. There is a remnant left. But we will multiply our peril by carelessness regarding the rising generation. We cannot afford to lose two generations. If we do, the results will be well nigh disastrous to the Church and its work.

The Church's existence tomorrow is jeopardized today. Millions of youth are without religious instruction. Millions more are without parental restraint. A majority of our citizens are indifferent toward the Church. Many of them are hostile toward it. They want to enjoy its blessings, but they deny any moral responsibility for its support and promotion.

If we are to strengthen moral character and turn the tide in favor of national morality and righteousness, we must begin to emphasize spiritual values. The children (it must begin with the young children) must be taught the pre-eminence of sacred things. The home must assume its responsibility and stress "truth, character, wisdom, honesty, and faith." We must, indeed, rebuild the foundation upon which we hope to raise an enduring superstructure. And unless that foundation is the solid rock of spiritual values there will be a crash in the hour of crisis which is coming to test our work. And failure will result in eternal tragedy.—*Wesleyan Methodist*.