Prohibition's Last Hour Nears

Demand For Change By 5,000,000 New Voters is Sure to Doom National Dry Law, Says Sullivan

The total vote in the coming Presidential election will probably be somewhere between 30,000,000 and 40,000,000. We can infer that from the total in recent Presidential elections. The total vote cast in each of the three since woman suffrage doubled the electorate has been:

- 1920: 20,705,346
- 1924: 29,061,417
- 1928: 30,970,414

Of the 30,000,000 to 40,000,000 who will vote for President in November, something like 5,000,000 will be "first voters." About 9,000,000 new voters, who were born in 1910, who will vote, but only about five, according to the national habit, will actually do so.

These 5,000,000 will be young men and women who this year cast their first vote for President. They are persons who are 21 or over this year, but were not 21 in 1910. In short there are the voters who this year are 21 years old, or 23, or 22, or 21.

Indignant Youth.

These 5,000,000 new voters, together with a slightly older group, are the ones who are demanding prohibition. They are the voters too young to know what existed before national prohibition came. A young man or woman who is 21 years old this year and casts his or her first vote for President was only nine years old when national prohibition was enacted in 1920. As a child of nine he knew little or nothing of the way the liquor business was conducted at that time, or the evils that attended it. What he knows is the sale of liquor as it is now conducted, through speakeasies and bootleggers, accompanied by the crime they foment. With a rather apparent indignation and angering indifference, these young voters are determined to end the evil that now is.

Presently, after the change comes, unless we are careful, these young voters will see again, within this generation, the evils of the old system. Then they will be again, indignant.

This constitutes the weakness of those who proposed "naked repeal," a blind jump backward to what was before 1920. If that is all we do about the liquor business, it is fairly certain that after we have made the change we shall merely have got rid of new evils only to go back to old evils.

Older voters, in a diminishing number because as they become old, they die, are going to try to keep prohibition as it is now. Young voters in increasing numbers because about two million young people get the right to vote each year, are going to vote against prohibition as it now is. And unless some one sees to it that the change when made is carefully made, these new voters will again in a few years become disillusioned.

Messengers of Doom.

In any event, it is these new voters and others a little older than in the coming election will put down upon prohibition as it now stands. For 12 years, the controversy over the Eighteenth Amendment has been a struggle between old voters and new. The fight has been between older voters who in 1910 and preceding years had seen the evil of the old system and in overwhelming numbers determined to end it, and on the other hand new voters who knew only the evil of the present system of distributing liquor, and are now determined to end it.

To such a struggle between old and young, there could be but one outcome, for old dies, while young renews itself and increases. In the fight over the Eighteenth Amendment, the supporters of it had a show. The statistics of population worked against them invincibly.

The first time the writer of this article knew—knew as an impression taken in by the eyes—that national prohibition was fighting a losing battle, was when he looked in upon, within a week meetings of the Anti-Saloon League and the W. C. T. U. In those two meetings, there was hardly a man or woman under 50, hardly a head that was not white. About the same time I happened to observe the membership of the ar...
Has Republican Leanings.

The central question of the campaign is, which candidate will carry New York state? That the Republicans at all times have the better chance of carrying New York in Presidential elections is a matter of history. In every Presidential election in almost 40 years the Republicans have carried New York, except once, 1912, when the Republican party was divided into Republican and Progressive. There is no reason why New York in the coming November election should depart from habit. One cause of New York voting Republican is stronger in this than in normal years.

The Democratic position on the tariff is always a handicap to that party in New York. It is not the Democratic partiality for a lower tariff that primarily hurts the party in New York—much of New York wants a lower tariff. It is the fact that Democratic victory usually means a tariff revision in every Presidential campaign in 40 years except once when the Democrats were already in power and were electing Woodrow Wilson to succeed himself the Democrats have said that if elected they would revise the tariff. They are saying it this year. Tariff revision means change, the process of change takes a long time, and that means prolonged doubt.

The Tariff Question.

For example: Imagine that the Democrats win in November. They would not enter into power in the White House until March, 1933. The first regular session of the new Democratic Congress would not meet until December, 1933. Assume the new Congress embarks on a tariff revision promptly. Tariff revision have come to take a long time. The last one took 14 months, from April, 1929, to June, 1930. If the Democrats should enter power, if they should begin tariff revision promptly in December, 1933, they would not normally conclude until early in 1935. Even if they should be in a special session in March, 1934, they would not conclude until about the middle of 1934.

In other words, the business community of New York reasons, or feels instinctively, that Democratic victory next November would mean uncertainty about rates of tariff duty until some time in late 1934 or early 1935. And this is a year when uncertainty about the future in all areas of business makes added uncertainty about the tariff untenable to appeal to New York, or the Eastern states nearby New York.