

AUG 25 1981

Argument for Liquor by Drink Phony

AN ARGUMENT offered by the liquor industry to try to win the money-making privilege of legally selling more liquor by the drink is that the industry is not now obeying the law.

They are trying to make the public believe that if selling liquor by the drink were to be made legal, operators of saloons, bars and other liquor outlets would become law-abiding citizens.

This phony argument was used to persuade people to accept their proposal to legalize liquor stores years ago. It would mean the end of the bootleggers, they said, and tremendous sums of money would be raised to support schools and other governmental functions. The state would have so much revenue from liquor that other taxes could be reduced.

If anything, the present liquor law enforcement system is worse than it was in the heyday of the bootleggers. Liquor advocates allege that drys are hypocrites because it is so easy to buy "liquor by the wink" in so-called private clubs that really are saloons.

The hypocrites are not those who oppose liquor but those who sell it illegally, those who buy it illegally and public officials who are remiss in their sworn duties to uphold and enforce the laws.

From time to time prosecutors vow to get tough with drunken drivers. Latest in this category is Oklahoma County District Attorney Robert Macy. The test will come when one of his close friends or some influential politician is brought in for drunken driving.

The fatal accident record of drunken drivers is not the only problem. A study reported earlier this year by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism said that alcohol is a factor in 10 percent of all deaths in the United States.

Bad effects of alcohol are not restricted to individuals. Drinking problems are family problems. They are business problems. They cause health problems. Drinking often leads to moral problems, as drinkers tend to become lax in ethical behavior.

Definitely alcohol is an education-

al and youth problem as teen-age drinking increases, probably influenced by frequent displays of imbibing on television shows.

At the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers Association convention in San Francisco last spring much of the discussion focused on aiming at a younger market. The wholesalers talked about what types of liquor would be most likely to increase sales as the baby-boom generation moves into the prime liquor consumption age of 25 to 44.

Alcohol sales also are closely related to crime. In some cases alcoholics may turn to crime to support their habit; others may drink hoping booze might help them to forget the error of their ways.

Drinking and gambling frequently are associated. The leader of the current liquor-by-the-drink effort wants to keep his campaign separate from an attempt by another group to legalize gambling.

Perhaps he ~~doesn't~~ want voters worrying about enlarging two evils at the same time. They might get to thinking and veto both.

SEP 13 1981
Editorial Challenged

TO THE EDITOR:

Although your flagrantly slanted editorial positions generally leave me more amused than incensed, I am unable to leave unanswered Ferdie Deerings's rant against the pro-liquor forces ("Argument for Liquor by Drink Phony," August 25). The difficulty in responding lies in the nature of the piece, for Mr. Deering presents no cohesive argument, but rather a wild tangle of breast-beating rhetoric attacking liquor and its distributors and consumers, along with such diverse elements as profit motivation, the credibility of our law enforcement agencies in general and the Oklahoma County District Attorney in particular, television, marketing strategy, and gambling. Because of the confused nature of the piece, the riposte must be similarly fragmented.

Mr. Deering, the passage of legalized saloon drinking will not make any more money for the bar owners. Their establishments are already crowded with those of us who are among the vast majority of Oklahomans who enjoy, or who are at least not offended by, a drink at a club or restaurant from time to time. Legalizing the practice would increase the city, county, and state tax base, since only a legal practice may be licensed and taxed.

You justify your support for our current repressive laws by reference to the tragedy of chronic alcoholism. Mr. Deering, are we to assume that, because you drive, you barrel down E.K. Gaylord Blvd. at 75 m.p.h.? Because you take nourishment, are we to assume that you are an unreformed glutton? Perhaps the relatively few reckless