

# Drunken Driving a National Tragedy

**T**ODAY Oklahomans will vote for or against saloons and alcoholic beverages, just as they did on Sept. 17, 1907, and often since.

Two main issues were on the ballot that day 77 years ago — statehood and liquor. Settlers wisely voted in statehood and voted out liquor. A minority was unhappy but seldom thirsty.

Money was to be made by peddling the drink that destroys homes, lives, careers, and health. Bootleggers, who sometimes carried their stock in high-topped boots, moved in.

Big liquor and beer interests wanted to get in on the profits and they repeatedly waged campaigns to persuade Oklahomans that taxes on liquor would support schools, law and order, reduce taxes, and give people their "freedom."

Of course, repealing prohibition never accomplished any of those things. It made life better for nobody except the manufacturers and sellers of our "national poison."

Drunken driving in high-powered cars wasn't a problem in early days

of our state, because there were few automobiles, but this habit has become a national tragedy and scandal.

Hardly a day goes by that newspapers do not report more drunken driving deaths and injuries, leaving innocent victims distressed, often fatherless or penniless. Half of all automobile fatalities involve drinking drivers but that doesn't keep people from drinking and it doesn't result in honest, diligent enforcement of laws against drunken drivers. Most get off lightly.

Last month a drunken driver swerved into a bus stop in Washington, D.C., killing seven people. A man edging his lawn in Oklahoma City was killed by a drunken driver. A park policeman writing a speeding ticket for a motorist was struck down and killed by a drunken driver. The list is endless and growing.

Probably most people have made up their minds about how they will vote on "liquor by the drink" today, unless they are like a certain politician, who said:

*"You ask me how I stand on*

*whiskey. Here is how I stand. If you mean by whiskey the devil's brew, the poison scourge, the bloody monster that defiles innocence, dethrones reason, destroys the home, creates misery and poverty, yea, takes bread from the mouths of children, I am against it with all my power.*

*"But if when you say whiskey you mean the oil of conversation, the philosophic wine, the elixir of life, the ale that is consumed when good fellows get together, then I certainly am in favor of it. This is my stand and I will not compromise."*

This illustrates the equivocating attitude of those "honest" people who claim to be in favor of law enforcement and against drunken driving while advocating more saloons where tipsy motorists may get another drink "for the road."

Honest citizens must admit that a vote for "more liquor by more drinks" is a vote for more drunken driving and in favor of liquor's many other evils.