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The cause of sobriety: David Lloyd George and temperance reform

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David Lloyd George
and
Temperance Reform

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Temperance was a major British issue until after World War I. Excessive drunkenness, not alcoholism per se, was the primary concern of the two parliamentary parties. When Lloyd George entered Parliament the two major parties were the Liberals and the Conservatives. Temperance was neither a problem that Parliament sought to quickly solve nor the single issue of Lloyd George's public career. Rather, temperance remained within a flux of political squabbling between the two parties and even among the respective blocs within each Party. Inevitably, compromises had to be made between the dissenting factions.

The major temperance controversy in Parliament was the issue of compensation. Both Parties agreed that the problem of excessive drunkenness was rooted in the excessive number of public houses throughout Britain. Conservatives and Liberals agreed that the situation had to be rectified. A great majority of these public houses, however, were owned by the private liquor industry who were staunch backers of the Conservative Party. The Government's only real control over the trade was in the granting of public house license privileges for selling alcohol as well as the Government's right to tax alcoholic beverages. Government-appointed magistrates revoked or sanctioned the licenses during a
period in which the British economy was booming and there was little impetus to restrain the wild growth of the liquor trade. As a result, fierce competition raged between an excessive or what had been called a redundant number of public houses seeking to gain the patronage of a few customers for the profit of the many public houses. The Conservative Party sought compensation as an incentive for publicans (owners) to divest themselves of their business, thereby "rationalizing" the large amount of houses and consumption in trouble areas.

The late Victorian Liberal Party was strongly supported by British temperance reformers. Lloyd George, himself, called Liberal temperance reformers "the best fighting men in the ranks (of the Liberal Party)...."¹ Their ability to infiltrate and organize local elections sometimes led to the defeat of unsympathetic Liberal candidates.² Historian Ben Harrison said of the Victorian temperance Liberal that

he was one of the most energetic of party workers and was often an active Liberal journalist. Temperance societies, like chapels and trade unions constituted the equivalent of the Liberal party 'branch'....³

The major temperance groups such as the United Kingdom Alliance and the British Temperance League were interested in total prohibition. Strong Liberal support against
compensation also came from Welsh and Scottish areas. Wales and Scotland had sought local option as a temperance measure. Local option would grant municipalities and districts the authority to determine their own temperance legislation as well as the allotment of local licenses. Conservatives were obviously in opposition to this measure since both areas were traditionally opposed to alcohol consumption.

David Lloyd George was a Welshman. He grew up in a teetotal household and became a member of the UKA at an early age. As a Baptist, he was a member of a Nonconformist English church strongly in favor of prohibition. When he entered Parliament as a Liberal representative of Carnarvonshire, he was also a strong supporter of the fledging Welsh Nationalist movement. Nationalist fervor placed Welsh issues such as temperance and local option above British issues. Temperance, however, was secondary to the larger Welsh issue of Nonconformist church disestablishment that would free Welshmen from subsidizing the Anglican Church of England. This brings to light a much broader problem inherent within the greater body of the Liberal Party.

In the late nineteenth century, traditional reforms in education, land, temperance, and free trade were wide sought by Liberal Party members. These issues however would slowly
be eclipsed by newer and more pressing social needs. Increased industrialization throughout England brought the growth of socialist and Labour movements allied to the Liberal Party. They pressed for their own social reforms in the areas of housing and welfare after coming into conflict with traditional Nonconformist Liberal supporters. The latter would remain against growing Labour reforms within the Liberal Party until after World War I.

The electoral reform acts of 1867 and 1884 had increased voting privileges among a previously restricted number of Labourers. Consequently the major Parties had to scramble for these new constituents. The Liberal Party, led by William Gladstone, unfortunately became a menagerie of one-issue self-interested constituents. The Party was a patchwork of divided elements. The Liberal Party subsequently stagnated on a systematic reform programme since a consensus upon those reforms that should take precedence could never be reached among the factions. Gladstone, because of his political reputation, managed to hold the majority of new and old Liberals together; although, he too, by 1891, had become a one-issue politician. His advanced age (he was eighty three in 1891) did not allow him to create a durable Liberal reform programme.

Internal Liberal Party dissension would plague the Party throughout Lloyd George's political career. Only a dynamic
personality, that of Lloyd George, could sustain a Liberal unity of traditional and new supporters. Gradually, Lloyd George would alienate all these constituents by his questionable political actions and habits. He was a great public politician but many historians note his inherently footloose and flamboyant political style. He constantly moved from one issue to another with amazing dexterity leaving in his wake great optimism. Except for the war effort, however, Lloyd George would never develop a systematic reform programme. As for temperance, Lloyd George would manipulate it as a political issue to gain public support. Prohibition was his personal ambition. He soon modified this ambition for the more popular appeal of local option, yet he would never find a method by which to perpetrate his desire for local option throughout England. It can be said that Lloyd George enacted several significant changes in the liquor trade but he presided over a period in which social habits and desires were changing. These changes greatly diminished excessive drunkenness and approached the wider problem of alcoholism.
Chapter I

Young David Lloyd George made his first speech before the House of Commons in 1891. Appropriately the issue involved compensation for publicans. The Local Taxation Bill, described by Gladstone as the "Publican's Endowment Bill", was part of the new Conservative budget. A three hundred and fifty thousand pound fund was to be established by the Government to compensate those licensed victuallers who failed to receive a renewal on their liquor selling privileges. The fund was to be raised through an increased Government tax on the purchase of beer or spirits. Compensation, said the Conservatives, would eventually decrease the excessive number of public houses, while increasing the efficiency of consumption and production throughout the liquor trade. Liberals were against the public tax.

Lloyd George made a public speech at Manchester on the bill. He addressed the publicans on the issue of equity through compensation informing them that he who comes to equity must come with clean hands. Let that liquor traffic display the hands with which it meant to grab confiscation. It reeked with human misery, vice, squalor, destitution, crime and death. By that foul hand and with equity let the claim be judged.

W. S. Caine, president of the British Temperance League, afterwards confided to Lloyd George that the speech had "made your reputation in England." Lloyd George, himself,
said, "I uttered and charged my sentences with all the intensity of my heart...."^9

In the House of Commons he launched a two-pronged attack against the Local Taxation Bill. First, he attacked the bill. It was, he said, only an incentive for the publicans to sell at an extravagant price. They had a profitable business and the most "pernicious" publican would demand the most money. Only the poorest publicans would sell. Lloyd George then attacked Conservative villains responsible for the bill. Lloyd George said that Lord Randolph Churchill exemplified a sort of "mushroom teetotalism, which grew no one knew why or when and which has disappeared, how no one exactly knows...."^11 These remarks were made in light of Lord Churchill's previously apparent commitment to temperance. Lloyd George also described Joseph Chamberlain as a "contortionist" whose temperance views fluctuated as much as did Lord Churchill's position. Chamberlain, as well, had previously shown a tendency for temperance reform. The speech was significant as the Conservatives withdrew the bill. Gladstone was said to have laughed in approval at the mordant wit of the young M.P. So the newly recognized Lloyd George set out to exploit his successful national debut. He told a Liverpool working class audience

Both parties of the State have been impressed by the terror of the temperance army...all (their) calm self-assurance...has gone...we must
carry the war into the enemy's camp. The appeal of the lowly widow has risen up against it. The cry of the poor orphan and the wail of the maniac has rent the heavens (against the bill)....

A successful temperance campaign was meant to have positive effects on English society. Temperance was a moral, as well as, political issue. Historian Christopher Wrigley makes a good distinction on Lloyd George's early and later political views on temperance. He says that, Lloyd George, after 1890, became more interested in the causes of drunkenness and not so much in the elimination of drink. Consequently, Lloyd George politically assumed the popular alternatives of local option and attacks upon the liquor trade. At this early date in his career, the Welshman had already started to modify his hardline UKA approach while intermittently seeking to coerce that organization to follow a moderate position.

The Conservatives temporarily lost the Commons majority in 1892. The Liberal leader, William Gladstone, ran on a one-issue platform of Irish Home Rule; that upheld an earlier rupture in the Liberal Party between the Gladstonian Liberals supporting Home Rule and the dissenting Irish Unionist Liberals of Joseph Chamberlain. The Unionists defected to the Conservatives and would remain outside the Liberal Party, through World War I. This circumstance momentarily left the Welsh Liberals in an unprecedented position. Their
thirty-one M.P.'s now made up the difference in the Gladstone House majority. Tom Ellis was the preeminent Welsh representative (he was also a friend of Lloyd George since their first meeting at a Welsh temperance rally). His appointment as deputy whip of the Liberal majority unfortunately divided Welsh Liberal unity. The issues of peculiar importance to Wales, including temperance but most importantly disestablishment, were temporarily subordinated to Irish Home Rule. Lloyd George supported Ellis on the assumption that the Government needed a "radical element" yet the Gladstone commitment to Home Rule left not one secondary issue with a chance for legislation. Ironically, the Pall Mall Gazette estimated that practically all of the two hundred and seventy-four Commons Liberals favored temperance legislation.

Lloyd George continued to press local issues at home, while Gladstone pursued Irish Home Rule in the House. The Welsh candidates had won the 1892 elections on traditional issues. Lloyd George capitalized on this reality by concentrating his public speeches in Wales on the general progress of Welsh civil rights. The speeches he made during the Liberal majority were intentionally designed to enhance his traditional Welsh appeal. At Tredegar, in 1894, he told the crowd
Temperance reform is not altogether a question of removing the public houses; there are other incentives to drink which need attention. Poverty, misery, the sense of wrong, ill-treatment by our social system, squalor dinginess, the lack of proper nourishment and the environs which surround the poorer classes are all incentives to the people to forget their miseries in drink. Temperance was obviously given a more dramatic role during this period of Welsh nationalism. In 1895, Lloyd George continued to expand the social implications of uncontrolled drink. He bluntly informed a Manchester audience that

Drink is the most prolific cause of pauperism, poverty and social degredation. (It is) contrary to the principles of liberty....True liberty demands that the Government should take energetic and stern measures to suppress such a destructive trade, for every pound we spend...in protecting the public health...we squander five in under-mining (it)...(there is no) more galling and hopeless thraldom than ever yet afflicted the sons of men.

One Sunday, in 1895, Lloyd George paid a visit to Cardiff. The reason was to investigate complaints that the Sunday Closing Act for licensed public houses was not being enforced. This act, promulgated in 1881 by an earlier Gladstone administration, was significant as the first piece of legislation delineating historic Welsh geographic boundaries. The act provided a great impetus for Welsh support of Gladstone. Lloyd George was generally pleased
with the Cardiff situation. The closing problem, he said, existed across the border in Monmouthshire where the public houses were not affected by the Closing Act. Monmouthshire was widely regarded by Welshmen as a part of historic Wales. Lloyd George was always interested in getting Monmouthshire technically declared a part of historic Wales. Asquith's ill-fated Licensing Act of 1908 would attempt to include Monmouthshire under the Closing Act however successful Government legislation would not appear until 1921. Lloyd George, at least, was successful in confirming the role of Nonconformist issues in the upcoming general elections.22

The tenuous Liberal majority broke in the 1895 election. A Conservative majority replaced the Liberals for ten years although the Conservative era was not void of temperance action. In 1899, the Conservative-appointed Peel Commission published a report on the debilitating effects of excessive drunkenness upon the working class. The Commission helped renew political fervor for temperance reform. The Boer War also started in 1899, whereby pro-war Liberals, such as Lord Rosebery, recognized the significant demand for local options as pronounced by the Commission report. Lord Rosebery saw declining British wealth as a possible result of excessive drink.23 He nevertheless regarded local option as politically impractical since it would commit the Liberals
to the Nonconformists in a Party still handicapped by divisive constituent interests. The more prominent moderate Liberals, such as Henry Campbell-Bannerman and H. H. Asquith, were also reluctant to accept the Commission suggestion for Lord Rosebery's same reason. The two moderates did concur on the necessity of solving the temperance issue, although both men were vague on methods. Asquith and Richard Haldane, who was another moderate Liberal, emphasized the importance of maintaining a separation of religious solutions from what essentially should be contained within the sphere of politics. The obvious intention of the moderates was to compromise extreme Liberal interests in order to consolidate the Liberal Party.

Lloyd George, in contrast, was both an avowed pacifist and a strong supporter of church interference on the temperance issue. In 1903, after the Boer War had ended, he took the opportunity at Glasgow to attack the Conservative's neglect of temperance reform. His remarks were confined to Scottish temperance which had become a very strong movement throughout the Highlands. Local veto was the solution desired by the Scots, but the Conservatives and especially the renegade Unionists had been unjustly concerned with the war effort. This was a time, said Lloyd George, when Scotland unfortunately had to remind herself that she was bound to both parliamentary wars and laws.
In 1904, the Conservative Parliament invoked a new Licensing Bill. Since 1902, a significant number of licenses had been cancelled by Government magistrates. The Conservatives, thenceforth, renewed their interest in publican compensation. The new bill established a fund to be maintained by a tax on the licensed trade rather than a tax on the public. Licenses were to be renewed every year, much to the temperance reformer's delight. Licensing decisions, however, were to be placed under the jurisdiction of magistracy quarter-sessions much to the temperance reformer's chagrin. Conservatives once again claimed trade efficiency would be optimized because there would be a viable alternative for the not so profitable public houses.

The future of local veto, however, was obviously in jeopardy. Sir Wilfred Lawson, president of the UKA, spoke before their annual meeting on the nature of the bill. "Government," he said, "is in the hands of the Trade." The publicans had succeeded in erecting a "financial barrier to temperance reform" by making drink "their politics." It was imperative for the Trade to be fought at the polls. Austen Chamberlain, who was a Conservative, substantiated the necessity to press reform. Lloyd George told his Carnarvon constituency that Wales needed the local veto. He was also compelled to address the Commons because
Lloyd George could also not refuse to condemn those responsible Conservatives. He accused Prime Minister Balfour of duplicity in a publican bribery scheme within Balfour's own Manchester constituency. Lloyd George claimed that Manchester police had been accepting illegal payments in exchange for license privileges. A new magistrate ended this scurrilous practice by closing several houses whereupon concerned publicans demanded Balfour grant them compensation. Although Balfour immediately denied the accusation, Lloyd George reproved him charging that the issue was of "public notoriety" throughout the Prime Minister's constituency.

Asquith's position on this bill is important. The re-entry of a Liberal majority in 1906 would keep Asquith and Lloyd George in the same cabinet for over ten years. Asquith, like Lloyd George, was against this Conservative attempt at "freehold" compensation which entitled publicans to rights secured only for property holders. General
Liberal Party sentiment believed a license to be a privilege, not a right guaranteed by insular funding. Asquith, on the contrary, attempted to determine an acceptable "emotional" compensation, in line with Lord Rosebery's maxim for temperance reformers to "take what you can get." Again, as he had done after the Peel Commission, Asquith sought to moderate extreme Liberal Party sentiments.

The ten year interim of Conservative rule put Lloyd George and temperance politically in the minority. Yet the period 1891 to 1906 established the basic political tendencies of Lloyd George in regard to temperance reform. The 1904 Licensing Bill, as well as the Taxation Bill of 1891, allowed Lloyd George to expand his personal support. The 1899 Peel Commission embodied his political goal of local option. Whether local veto was to be used for prohibition or for partial or unrestricted sanction was immaterial to the granting of the right itself. Lloyd George would continue to push for local veto and when local veto legislation failed, he would attempt a state monopoly of the trade as an indirect step towards local option. The continued support of labourers and Nonconformists would aid Lloyd George in his efforts. Unfortunately these two interests and their issues were beginning to seriously divide the Liberal Party. Lloyd George, through political implications, would find this division beyond his capabilities.
Chapter II

The general election of 1906 was a potential watershed for the Liberal Party. The overwhelming Liberal majority was a reaction to ten years of Conservatism. The issues were reform on the traditional matters of free trade, education, land and temperance.

Lloyd George, as most all Liberal candidates, relied heavily on the labour vote. At Huddersfield, he called the Licensing Bill of 1904 to account. The money spent on drink must be diverted towards increasing national prosperity.\textsuperscript{35} He guaranteed that Labour would get their share under a new Liberal majority.\textsuperscript{36}

The Welsh Nonconformists also rallied to the Liberals. They would chant

\textit{the Churchman and the Brewer we will drive them from the land for the Nonconformist children are marching hand in hand.}\textsuperscript{37}

Lloyd George firmly established the Liberal Party notion of drunkenness as the core of human misery. He elaborated his point before an eager Penhyndeudraeth, Wales crowd. The question was asked

\textit{What are some of the direct causes of poverty?... (the) most fertile cause of all (is) a man's own improvident habits, such as drinking and gambling. That is supposed to account for sixty percent of the poverty in the land... Drink not only impoverishes the individual but}
it indirectly contributes to unemployment by diverting earnings. Surely the suppression of this great social pest is not beyond the resources of civilization. There are potent forces in existence which profit hugely by this degradation. re-collect the abject way in which the late Government surrendered to their menaces. It is not at all impossible although I hope it is unlikely that there may be religious organizations in this country which because their pique against the present Government (Liberals) has been roused for other reasons may join the drink monopoly. An alliance of the Christian churches against drink and social injustice would dominate the Legislature. Is a church only interested in infighting? 38

Lloyd George anticipated with great dexterity the effect on Wales if the dreaded "Unholy Trinity" of squire, bishop and brewer remained a threat to public welfare.

By 1906, Lloyd George, along with his political apprentice, Winston Churchill, were ready to carry forward the "crusade" against poverty. 39 Lloyd George was appointed President of the Board of Trade in the new Liberal Government. He and Churchill they were two Liberals isolated in their zeal for comprehensive reform. Invariably they sought high office. Numerous situations would characterize their reform ideas as little more than abstractions without developed methods. The stakes, however, overshadowed their general lack of reform planning as the Liberal Party was still without a substantial reform programme.
Personalities such as Lloyd George and Churchill were men of dubious political allegiances who could flourish within this Liberal Party vacuum. Lloyd George would be the first to reach the pinnacle of success; that is the Prime Ministry. Meanwhile, the two men were closer than any two Liberals in Government.

The great threat to the new Liberal success was the Conservative House of Lords. H. H. Asquith succeeded to the Prime Ministry in 1908 after the death of his predecessor, Campbell-Bannerman. Asquith, with the aid of his newly appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George, attempted to pass a new Licensing Bill. The bill had strong Liberal and popular support—even the King intervened to compel several Conservative Lords to approve the legislation. According to the bill, the total number of "on" licenses would be reduced by one-third (under the Licensing Bill of 1904, nearly twenty-five years would be necessary to achieve the same result). The remaining licenses would be guaranteed for a fourteen-year period. Provisions were also made to allow compensation according to the 1904 bill. Finally, Monmouthshire would be placed under the Sunday Closing Act.

Religious groups especially favored the immediate liquidation of the public houses. Compensation and the licensing period was a minor consideration when taken in the context of priorities. UKA historian, Mark Hayler, said
of the Asquith-Lloyd George bill that "Mr. Lloyd George had thrown down the gauntlet to the...liquor trade." Lloyd George, in support of the bill, addressed numerous church meetings and temperance groups. He stressed the necessity of considering the will of the average drinker and not only the small minority opinions of extreme reformers. There would be no future for reform unless temperance allied with this significant faction of moderate drinkers. He said the issue rested with the churches. They were fighting gigantic trusts without much of a conscience. Lloyd George told a partisan Edinburgh crowd that money spent on alcohol could be used to supply the poor with food, clothing, shelter and job training not to mention that temperance would be the issue to most benefit from woman suffrage. (Meanwhile) the trade threatened to boycott those who voted against it by withholding charitable subscriptions. If Britain were to remain a free country she must overthrow this trade. Lloyd George never failed to inspire potential voters. His appeal to women comes during a period when suffrage was making large gains. The bill failed, however, because of strong Conservative opposition in the House of Lords. This provoked Lloyd George to raise the duties on alcohol. A bad year for the British economy coupled with increased budget demands by the Navy made increased taxation a necessity and not just a method to spite the liquor trade supporters.
Lloyd George among other Liberals anticipated a weaker majority. Lloyd George also started changing the emphasis of his public addresses which helps substantiate Nonconformist discontent. Gone was the boisterous cry for temperance reform. The new budget issues that appealed to Labourers such as poverty, sickness, and pension funding dominated his attention. An old Liberal, Lewis Harcourt, confided to Asquith, "that all Lloyd George's speeches have done us much harm" by alienating the traditional middle class and Nonconformist Liberal supporters.

Before the election, Lloyd George staged an interesting maneuver towards a Coalition government. The Exchequer serreptitiously broached the subject with leading Conservative representatives. Lloyd George circulated two memorandums, among Balfour and a handful of others, advocating several reform measures as the foundation of a "progressive and unprejudiced" cabinet. Nationalization of the liquor trade was one essential ingredient. Apparently, Lloyd George sought to secure a strong Labour supported government in which his place would be secured. Although impressed with the general idea, Balfour was put off by the uncertain details and the idea disintegrated without further development by the Exchequer.

The Liberals retained a diminished majority in the general election. Lloyd George remained a significant but clearly isolated member of the new Asquith cabinet. His
personality did not permit the formation of lasting political allegiances and his London social life was typical of his pariah disposition. Moderate drinking habits gave him a reputation throughout political circles and "those in politics who preferred drink and their clubs...felt the Welshman's behavior let the side down." Lloyd George would occasionally refer to the frequent drunkenness of fellow ministers, Asquith, Churchill and F. E. Smith. In 1926, after his second Coalition prime ministry, however, Lloyd George would defend the sober nature of the Commons against accusations of drunkenness. He apparently did not hold any political contempt for the habits of his cohorts.

There was temperance progress between the general election of 1910 and the Great War. First of all, in 1911, the Parliament Act modified the voting power of the House of Lords, thereby, diminishing this obstacle to Liberal legislation. This led to a confrontation between Asquith and temperance reformers. A temperance deputation reminded the Prime Minister of his pledge to promote legislation after solving the Lords dilemma. In 1912, a national temperance convention was held at Westminster claiming representation of nearly five million persons. The next year, reformers received a bone in the Scottish Temperance Act which was the first legal acceptance of local option and control in the British Isles. Lloyd George expressed
great pleasure. Success was illusory, however, for according to the statutes of the bill, local option was not to become fully effective for seven years.

The Great War of 1914 changed the complexion of British society. On many issues such as temperance, attitudes and methods were permanently affected. Historian A.J.P. Taylor, however, states that in the early part of the war 

even with the...demands of defense becoming daily more pressing, Britain was spending more on alcohol than on all the services of central government combined.

The immediate mobilization of men and resources was soon placed under Asquith's war coalition cabinet. Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State of War assumed virtually uncontested cabinet authority. Internal controversy, however, soon rose over the issue of munition supplies. England previously had no need for large ground forces. The overriding concern for shipbuilding consequently left the army in France with a deficient number of shells. During the first months of 1915, Lord Kitchener continued to handle the problem alone. Lloyd George took the initiative, however, to quell rumors of slack work habits in munitions plants due to excessive drinking. A few historians note that the Chancellor might have acted because his role in the war cabinet was not equal to his ambitions. Nevertheless, on February 22, 1915, Lloyd George circulated a memorandum encouraging the idea of
state purchase of the liquor trade. He then proceeded to deliver a highly controversial speech at Bangor on the adverse war-time effects of drunkenness. Lloyd George confided in his memoirs:

I began to stir up public opinion on the subject of this increasing and menacing evil, with a view to making stronger action possible.

At Bangor, he said:

I hear of workmen...who refuse to work a full week's work for the nation's need. What is the reason? They are a minority. The vast majority belong to a class we can depend upon....What is the reason?...let us be perfectly candid. It is mostly the lure of drink. They refuse to work full time and when they return their strength and efficiency are impaired by the way they have spent their leisure. Drink is doing more damage in the War than all the German submarines put together. We have got great powers to deal with drink and we mean to use them. We shall use them in a spirit of moderation... but we shall use them quite fearlessly...

Lloyd George afterward confided to his friend C.P. Scott:

I believe the nation is perfectly prepared for a little compulsory temperance...a purely war measure all the same there will be permanent...

Lord Kitchener addressed the Commons in support of the Bangor statement. The Admiralty also supported any measure for decreased purchasing hours in port areas.

The Chancellor, on March 29, met with a deputation of the Shipbuilding Employers Federation. The shipbuilders
attributed up to eighty percent of timekeeping and other efficiency problems to the weekend binges of their workers. Lloyd George responded with another volatile speech. He told the shipbuilders

...nothing but root and branch methods will be of the slightest avail in dealing with the evil. We are fighting Germans, Austrians and Drink and so far as I can see the greatest of these deadly foes is Drink. 64

The next day Lloyd George received a memorandum on state purchase prepared for him by Sir William Plender. Plender estimated that two hundred and fifty million pounds would buy out the whole trade, not including liquor distilleries. 65

Asquith had been rather passive in response to the sudden furor raised by Lloyd George. He wrote in his diary

It is characteristic of Lloyd George's versatility of interest and mind that... he is for the moment red hot with a plan, or rather, an idea, for nationalizing the drink trade...His mind apparently oscillates from hour to hour between the two poles of absurdity, cutting off all drink from the working man—which would cause something like a universal strike or buying out the whole liquor trade...and replacing it by a huge State monopoly. 66

Lloyd George continued to meet with deputations, accountants, and Conservative leaders to state purchase. Conservatives said they would accept if purchase was solely a war-time measure. The extent of Conservative support actually went no further than a few Unionist leaders behind Bonar Law.
The "rank and file" Unionists did not favor the proposal although Law continued to aid Lloyd George as best he could. 67

The day of the Plender memorandum, Lloyd George met with King George V. The King's biographer recalled the meeting in graphic detail:

Mr. Lloyd George when in a crusading mood was irresistible... he had bustled into the King's audience room, his little arms swinging with excitement, his eyes flashing flame, his lower lip protruding with scorn for those who drank.... 68

"The King's Pledge" was the product of this meeting. On behalf of the Royal Household and himself, the King pledged abstinence for the remainder of the war. Lord Kitchener subsequently followed suit, by temporarily joining the British Temperance League. This, however, was the full extent of the King's influence. As one member of the Royal Household put it, "Mr. Lloyd George's crusade left His Majesty and his household high and dry." 69 A measure put before the House of Commons to compel M.P.s to abstention was soundly defeated as absurdity. Asquith said of Lloyd George, "a wonderful person, in some ways totally devoid of either perspective or judgment." 70

The London Times received a letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer in early April. It was written in defense of his Bangor speech. A recent Independent Labour Federation meeting brought vitriolic statements from Keir Hardie, an
M.P. of Scotland. Hardie condemned Lloyd George for telling the whole world that the British working class were a bunch of "drunken wasters". In response, Lloyd George reprinted the text of his speech so as to correct the misrepresentation. Lloyd George printed a second letter in The London Times the following December. The socialist journal, New Statesman, had also accused the Chancellor of unjustly calling munitions workers "drunkards and shirkers". Lloyd George accused the New Statesman editor of refusing to print his rebuttal. Once again, he restated his Bangor speech, the "words from which I have never since departed." Clifford Sharp, editor of the journal, wrote to the London Times claiming the Chancellor's letter had been received after presstime.

In early April, Lloyd George made a second proposal to the liquor trade. The Government would prohibit the sale and production of all distilled spirits. A diluted beer, humorously entitled by critics and drinkers as "Lloyd George's beer", would replace the present product on the market. Shorter selling hours would be introduced and compensation would be made to the publicans and companies affected by the changes. Many reformers were against State purchase as it would soil the hands of the Government with this vile trade. Scottish and Irish distillers called the proposals detrimental to their most profitable industry.
Nationalization had not been forgotten. A committee of cabinet and non-cabinet representatives met in April, 1915 to further discuss the purchasing scheme. Asquith had already made a speech claiming that munitions, contrary to the Chancellor's opinion, were not in short supply. When the Prime Minister appeared before the purchase meeting, he asked Lloyd George to abandon his expensive and politically impractical proposal. Lloyd George realized Asquith was correct due to Cabinet animosity against the exorbitant purchasing cost and the lack of public support for the purchasing plan. Lloyd George settled for an important amendment to the revised Defense of the Realm Act. Amendment Three authorized the Government to control the purchase and production of alcohol in any area engaged in war production.

The mercurial rise and fall of the 1915 nationalization scheme in only a three month period, was humorously noted by Lord Beaverbrook. He wrote in his diary that Lloyd George dropped it

with...daring rapidity...light(heartedly)
...as I might pick up a sovereign from the pavement....

Lord Beaverbrook also remarked on the lasting effects upon the Government parties. He wrote

the state purchase scheme was the last big question...in home politics before
The Unionist leader Bonar Law nearly lost the allegiance of his fellow Unionists because of his support for the scheme. Lloyd George failed to inform him that the idea had been dismissed. Upset Unionists, led by Sir George Younger and other liquor trade sympathizers, formed the "first organized expression of backbench opinion" against state purchase. Upset Unionists, led by Sir George Younger and other liquor trade sympathizers, formed the "first organized expression of backbench opinion" against state purchase. Irish M.P.s joined the Unionists against both nationalization and a proposed tax doubling on distilled liquor. The Irish representative, William O'Brien, called down the Government for attempting to undermine the recently passed Home Rule bill. He addressed the tax raise as persecution reminiscent of treatment given the Irish wool trade. John Redmond, the leading Irish representative, vowed the bill would ruin "a great Irish industry". Representative Tim Healy of Cork cited the bill as vengeance wrought by Welsh Nonconformists because church disestablishment had been unsuccessful. Lloyd George was sympathetic as any attempt to provide a solution for the drink difficulty is about the worst...of all perplexing and disagreeable tasks that could fall to...any minister....I am prepared to take politically a pledge never to touch a drink again. Every Government that has ever touched alcohol has burnt its fingers in its lurid flames....

On Labour Day, May 1, Lloyd George presented a White
Paper to the Commons on the effects of alcohol on the war effort. The Report and Statistics of Bad Time Kept in Shipbuilding, Munitions and Transport Areas was compiled from War Department and shipbuilding employer statements. The workers, said Labour leader Arthur Henderson, had never been consulted for the development of the White Paper. Henderson called the document "a contrived conspiracy" loaded with fragmented and inaccurate information. The newspapers immediately took the report at face value condemning workers for their drinking habits.

United backbench opposition, however, limited temperance gains. The three months since Bangor gave Lloyd George only prohibition for distilled spirits under three years old. The Chancellor was far from finished in his efforts. In June, 1916, Lloyd George relinquished his position as Chancellor of the Exchequer to become head of the new Ministry of Munitions. He then secured the Orders in Council specifying the exact areas for control under the new Central Control Board. The Board was to maintain control of consumption and production of alcohol in war production areas. One such area was the town of Carlisle. The Board members, including the chairman, Lord D'Abernon, were to be appointed by the Minister of Munitions. Lord Beaverbrook remarked
...the morals of England...were left to the mercies of Lord D'Abernon and the Local Control Board (CCB)...

The Board started work in July, 1916. It effectively curtailed drunkenness while simultaneously rationalizing the liquor trade within its jurisdiction. To rationalize the trade the Board eliminated the redundant number of public houses. The publican managers left in the areas under Board control were put on salary rather than commission which created a "disinterested" proprietor unconcerned with ruthless and disorderly competition. Government compensation was given to those publicans who lost their houses. Lloyd George, upon his accession to the Prime Ministry in 1916, utilized his war-time authority to further affect the liquor trade. Beer was diluted into his "Lloyd George's beer". Brewery production was cut in one-half by the year 1919, primarily because of the shortage in grain and barley along with rising shipping costs. Distilled liquor was completely abolished by the Prime Minister for the duration of the war.

Nationalization, again became an issue. The food shortage of 1917, the threat of U-Boat attacks and the success of the Board made state purchase a new reality. The Prime Minister was also concerned that after the war, the drink trade would revert back to pre-war improprieties. The Government, by acting now, could at least guarantee local option throughout England.
Lloyd George spoke to a Scottish deputation about state purchase. He considered it a first step towards local option. He said that he personally wanted prohibition, however, state purchase could be used both to allow English localities to make their own decision and to accelerate the option bill in Scotland. The working class and temperance reformers, unlike in 1915, were in favor of this new proposal. Local option was the clear objective not the product of a vague plan. The Prime Minister met with two Welsh deputations, one representing an extreme prohibition group and the other, a moderate local option group. He said to them:

The two proposals were not antagonistic but complementary... state purchase (is)... the best possible way of removing opposition to temperance reform... the people would have the right to stop the sale of liquor in their own localities... sobriety is the object we have in view....

A bill for state purchase was penned by Secretary of War Alfred Milner and prohibitionist M. P. Waldorf Astor. Pressure from Conservatives such as Unionist Sir George Younger, however, compelled the Prime Minister to drop his plan regardless of public support. Lloyd George in his coalition had to succumb to the interests he so despised. His coalition of Liberals and Conservatives had forced upon him new considerations. Perhaps he had thought that a coalition might be more favorable to nationalization and local veto. The Conservatives, unfortunately, had stated from the outset of the Lloyd George
Coalition cabinet that liquor control would be only a wartime measure. The dynamic character of the Prime Minister could not accept this assertion as final.
Chapter III

Reconstruction followed the end of the war. Although re-elected for a successful war effort, Lloyd George and his coalition had problems. The drink question would henceforth pit socialists and Labour against Conservatives. The re-election of the Lloyd George war coalition in 1918 all but ruined the last remnants of a Liberal Party torn by dissen­sion between socialists, Labourites, and the fading Noncon­formists. Lloyd George sought the support of all these interests towards the formation of a new party. He feared a socialist backed Labour Party would monopolize the drink trade thereby prohibiting free enterprise. The Conservatives, on the other hand, might restore the pre-war obesity of the trade that was so detrimental to public health.

The two major successes of the war-time Central Control Board continued far beyond that organization. The Licensing Bill of 1921 established indefinite state control of the Carlisle district. Although the Control Board was abolished, the Government would supervise the area. Shorter purchasing hours throughout all areas formerly controlled by the Board were also maintained by the Government according to the new bill. Distilled liquor also returned to the markets.

Lloyd George continued to fight for local option through­out the rest of his political life. He told a Welsh audience the issue of local veto, always so dear to his own heart,
would remain an integral part of his post-war politics. Temperance was still a major issue at least in Wales. The Baptist Church of Carnarvonshire urged all county churches to exclude drinkers and publicans from their congregations. In England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, along with the presidents of the Temperance Council of the Christian Churches, advocated a nine point reconstruction program as the basis for permanent legislation. The points included Sunday closing, restricted weekday sale hours, fewer "on" and "off" licenses, local veto, club control, minimum purchasing age along with a viable nonalcoholic alternative to the liquor tavern. Lloyd George professed his allegiance to such proposals since his early youth. His recent action against drunkenness and alcohol-related deaths was his proof. Lloyd George wrote to a clergy friend:

The health of the nation...is to...(be) restored...the sacrifice and suffering entailed by...indulgence in alcohol and similar defects in our social fabric can no longer be tolerated.

Throughout the duration of his political career Lloyd George continued to advocate church interference as it was

...their imperative duty to assert the whole of their influence to promote the cause of sobriety by every means in their power.

While at the Versailles Peace Conference, Lloyd George confided some very revealing impressions to his newspaper.
friend, Lord Riddell. The Prime Minister agreed with Lord Riddell's view that temperance was necessary to further the lot of the average man. Lord Riddell continued, saying

"a sober world will be a revolutionary... (and) a critical world in which the people would be able to "demand its rights" since drink would no longer be the great opiate allowing a casual and easy escape from realities."

Lloyd George replied

"I agree. I often wonder if you took a debtor and a creditor account of the advantages and disadvantages to the world of alcoholic drinks, how the balance would come out. On the one side you would have to put a vast amount of squalor, misery and crime but on the other a still greater amount of happiness, contentment, pleasurable anticipation and excitement. On the whole I think I should find the balance in favor of liquor."

That liquor should win out underlines the emphasis Lloyd George placed upon popular approval for any temperance measure. Since his earliest days, Lloyd George knew the necessity of achieving widespread popularity. Whether through his speeches or his political actions that was the one coherent quality of his temperance efforts. Although he often lacked a well-contrived plan, he knew his objective; popular local option.

America had by now embarked upon its own temperance crusade. Prohibition in the United States compelled Lloyd
George to say of the experiment that it will tend to industrial efficiency... our own businessmen will start a campaign in favor of prohibition in self-defense. (The result will be) revolution eventually. A sober nation will not submit to the existing economic system. Whether they can improve upon it I am very doubtful. I am more and more inclined to individualism and freedom. I am coming to think that as a rule the private individual does better than the State.105

Lloyd George thought highly of the initial American effort. He plainly felt that American capitalism was much more favorable than a socialist monopoly. In 1925, Lloyd George would visit America. Upon his return to England he told an audience that

As far as public opinion in America was concerned the beerhouse was a thing of the past. They are the most prosperous people under the sun not because they have gold but because they have not drink.106

He commended the American experiment as potentially useful for the British drink industry. The American experiment, as he continued to call it, provided new information. It was an example of the obligations of Government to experiment with different liquor options, notably local veto. He criticized the Labour Government of McDonald in 1924 for "socializing" the liquor trade rather than utilizing new insight provided through American prohibition, the British War Experience and science. Labour had taken a wartime
measure and turned it into a socialist crusade against free enterprise. He publicly stated that Labour

with regard to temperance...look up what an old Liberal Year-Book said...
(but) there were new facts...the experiment in the war...across the Atlantic...the new scientific view
with regard to the effect of alcohol...(it is) necessary for them to review the whole of the situation...

Baldwin's Conservative Government had also been criticized by the fallen Prime Minister. Excessive licensing taxation had been maintained since the war to facilitate state maintenance of the trade, thereby, diverting money away from the pressing issue of unemployment.

Lloyd George, in 1929, made his last attempt to secure a Liberal majority. He restated his commitment to temperance although it was a far from important political issue. Nonconformism and Welsh nationalist issues were long dead as political forces. The Labour Party had usurped any chance the 1909 budget had given the Liberals. Lloyd George was now a man without a party or practical issue. Excessive drunkenness and convictions thereof had been largely suppressed by his war measures. Light beer along with the Carlisle experiment and shorter licensing hours, have lasted until the present. In 1973, the Government sold out its responsibility for the Carlisle trade. Lloyd George could at least be thankful that he was a catalyst in
fulfilling his 1915 promise to impose permanent changes in the liquor trade. Although he never gained the local veto for all England, he effected changes in drink trafficking and attitudes that have not completely been swept away by time.
Notes


3 Harrison, p. 287.

4 Hamer, p. 25.


7 Rowland, p. 80.


9 Ibid.

10 Rowland, p. 81.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.


32. Rowland, p. 177.
33 Ibid., pp. 177-8.

34 Matthew, p. 239.

35 London Times, 5/8/05, p. 5.

36 Ibid., 5/13/05, p. 12.


38 Guedella, pp. 7-9.


49 Ibid., pp. 150-1.


51 Ibid.


53 Hayler, p. 105.

54 Ibid.

55 David, p. 132.

56 Hayler, p. 105.


58 Rowland, p. 301.


60 Ibid., pp. 284-5.

61 Wilson, p. 122.


63 Wrigley, p. 264.

64 Rowland, p. 301.

65 Lloyd George, p. 289.


69 Ibid.

70 Rowland, pp. 301-2.


72 Ibid., 12/15/15, p. 7.

73 Ibid., 12/16/15, p. 4.


76 Oxford and Asquith, p. 87.

77 Rowland, p. 302.


79 Ibid., p. 68.

80 Stubbs, p. 25.


82 Ibid., p. 14.

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
86 Cole, pp. 200-1.
87 Lloyd George, p. 297.
88 Ibid., p. 295.
89 Beaverbrook, p. 68.
90 The General Managers Report to the Board, Defense of the Realm (Liquor Control) Regulations, Carlisle and District Direct Control Area, 12/31/18.
91 London Times, 3/10/16, p. 5.
92 Rowland, p. 395.
93 London Times, 4/17/17, p. 3.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid., 5/12/17, p. 3.
97 London Times, 1/13/19, p. 7.
98 Ibid., 6/24/21, p. 7.
99 Ibid., 12/5/18, p. 7.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., 12/13/18, p. 12.
102 Ibid., 6/16/21, p. 12.


104 Ibid., pp. 20-1.

105 Ibid., pp. 158-9.

106 London Times, 10/20/25, p. 11.

107 Ibid., 12/31/24, p. 6.


109 Ibid., 10/20/25, p. 11.

Bibliographical Essay

David Lloyd George was an outstanding man, therefore, many sources are available. The London Times provided detailed accounts of many speeches made by Lloyd George. The speeches were either paraphrased or quoted at length. Philip Guedella's Slings and Arrows (New York: Harper and Bros., 1929) is a compilation of edited speeches made by Lloyd George throughout his active career. There is no interpretation only excerpts of the more noteworthy speeches.

The War Memoirs (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1935) is Lloyd George's personal account of his wartime endeavors. His presentation of the drink question is modest but sensitive to the controversies of temperance reform. Kenneth O. Morgan edited the Lloyd George Family Letters 1885-1936 (Cardiff and London: University of Wales Press and Oxford University Press, 1973) which provided small but essential insight. Lord Riddell's account of Versailles and its aftermath Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After 1918-23 (New York: Keyral and Hitchcock Inc., 1934) was a marvelous source on Lloyd George's character and opinions. Dialogues between Lloyd George and others are recorded at length.
There is an abundance of secondary material on Lloyd George. Thomas Jones (Lloyd George, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1951) was at one time Lloyd George's physician. His account is unbiased and fair in its assessments. Peter Rowland (David Lloyd George, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1975) was an invaluable source for the period after 1906. Although he does not provide a complete assessment on the temperance issue, this book is perhaps the best volume on the life of Lloyd George. Donald Creiger (Bounder from Wales, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976) has written a shorter book on Lloyd George's life. This book has a concise interpretation of the role of temperance during the Lloyd George period.

Walter Roch (Mr. Lloyd George and the War, London: Chatto and Windus, 1920) is an account of war coalition politics printed shortly after the war, therefore, it lacks some of the insight granted by time. Chapter eight, however, is of interest for its treatment of the munitions crisis.

Accounts by contemporaries of Lloyd George proved to be invaluable sources. The Earl of Oxford and Asquith (Memoirs and Reflections, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1928) is an invaluable reference for his period as Prime Minister. There are significant passages for April 1915 during the attempt at liquor nationalization. Lord Beaverbrook
(Politicians and the War 1914-16, London: Collins, 1960) has some memorable words to provide about Lloyd George and his cabinet relationships. Edward David has edited the Diary of Charles Hobhouse (Inside Asquith's Cabinet, London: John Murray Co., 1977). Hobhouse was a moderate Liberal who often criticized the more radical Lloyd George and his crony Winston Churchill. He eventually comes to regard Lloyd George in a more favorable light. Trevor Wilson has edited the Diary of C. P. Scott (The Political Diaries of C. P. Scott 1911-28, New York: Cornell University Press, 1970). Scott was one of Lloyd George's few close friends just as Lord Riddell (see above).


The role of sectionalism and temperance in the Liberal Party is well presented by David A. Hamer (Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Roseberry, New York: Oxford University Press, 1972). H. M. Emy (Liberal Radicals and

The role of the Labour Party can be found in George Cole, Labour in Wartime (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1915). This is a good but pro-Labour account of nationalization and the immediate aftermath. A more balanced study has been done by Christopher Wrigley (David Lloyd George and the British Labour Movement, New York: The Harvester Press Ltd., 1976). The growing significance of the Welsh Labour Movement is well done by Kenneth O. Morgan (Wales in British Politics 1868-1922, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1970).

Two books provide insight into the temperance movement. Brian Harrison (Drink and the Victorians, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburg Press, 1971) covers the temperance movement until the death of Victoria. Organizations, politics, solutions, and society as they relate to temperance are very
well done. Mark Hayler, as historian of the United Kingdom Alliance, has produced a positive look at the role of the UKA alongside of a critical analysis of Lloyd George (The Vision of A Century 1853-1953, Great Britain: The UKA, 1953).

On Wales, Kenneth O. Morgan's Wales in British Politics (see above) is an excellent book that narrates the rise and fall of Welsh nationalism and nonconformism as political influences. Don Creiger (see above) is also a very good account of Welsh politics.

that presents a different facet of Edwardian Britain with each chapter. Taylor's article on the economy and Fulford's article on the King can be found here. Alfred F. Havighurst (Twentieth Century England, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966) has the best account of the temperance question among the general readings.