

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

BAPTIST JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS



The American Baptist Convention
The Southern Baptist Convention
The National Baptist Convention of America
The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.
The North American Baptist General Conference
The Baptist General Conference of America



428 16th Street, N.W., Washington 9, D.C. ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ C. EMANUEL CARLSON, Ph.D., Executive Director

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TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO INTERSTATE AND FOREIGN COMMERCE COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Hearings were held May 19th through May 24th on the Bryson Bill (H. R. 1227), the purpose of which is to prohibit liquor advertising in interstate commerce. The following testimony was presented by this office:

My name is C. Emanuel Carlson. I am the Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, which agency consists of authorized representatives from six Baptist conventions with total membership in excess of eighteen million. Included in the Joint Committee are delegations from the American Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptist Convention, the National Baptist Convention of America, the National Baptist Convention of U.S.A., Inc., the North American Baptist General Conference, and the Baptist General Conference of America.

The traditional and well known Baptist emphasis on personal spiritual commitment and personal responsibility for Christian living have resulted in an age long and abiding animosity between Baptists and the liquor industry. Time and again the several groups and associations have spelled out this relationship in clear resolutions. These actions are so well known that I need not delay you with them.

Our several conventions and associations have also spelled out an equally united opposition to the advertising freedom that the industry now enjoys and abuses. These resolutions are probably already on file with this Committee, and are most certainly well known.

Official statements, however, may fail to adequately interpret the distress which is being experienced daily by millions of people all over America, out of many church fellowships. A kind of psychological pressure fills the air. From the billboards, from the newspaper and magazine columns, from radio and from television we are hounded by the voice of the brewer and of his distributors until we are almost made to believe that we are wrong to even want to lead sober lives. That

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voice, it seems, would have us think or at least feel that we are out of gear with the universe unless we yield full and generous place to this leading enemy of all that is competent and noble.

I offer my testimony as an ordinary layman, as an educator with twenty-six years of experience in working with young people, observing the impacts and results of various types of influence. I offer my testimony also as a father who has just completed watching his own children grow to maturity in the midst of the social milieu that is present day America. Out of my studies and out of my observations, I speak with candid conviction, convictions that are most purely shared down deep in the thinking of the majority of the American people, and, I believe, shared by most of the members of this Committee, namely, that the advertising power of the liquor industry ought to be broken. Whether in private life or in public life we feel the enslaving influence of the voice of liquor, H. R. 1227 would go a long way toward restoring our freedom. Let me offer two simple reactions to that ever present brewer's voice.

I submit to you, honorable congressmen, that that voice is effective.

Frequently we are asked to believe that there is no need for concern, for liquor advertising is merely competitive and does not influence the total consumption of alcohol. That position, I feel, is an insult to a normal intelligence. In order to accept that kind of consolation we would have to be ignorant

- a) of the volumes of psychological data regarding the power of suggestion on human attitudes and patterns of behavior;
- b) of the volumes of economic data regarding advertising as related to the principles and theory of economics;
- c) of the many facts recently established by research in the field of group dynamics;
- d) of personal observations regarding the day by day significance of influence;
- e) of the facts regarding the appalling increase during recent years of the percentage of the adult population who use alcoholic beverages, mildly and heavily.

No, that voice is effective. It is a competent voice, frequently one of the nation's best sold out to the nation's worst cause. It does its work on youth and adults. The brewer's hundreds of millions of dollars spent annually are not wasted money.

But I must say also, that that voice is as irresponsible as it is effective, as irresponsible as is the person soaked in the product itself. It scatters its seeds of thought and leaves others to try to clean the field of weeds. It poisons the fresh springs of water and leaves others to try to rescue the lives. It blights the lives and leaves others to try to rescue the souls.

We must not deceive ourselves, we do live in a moral universe. If free enterprise does not have a place for moral responsibility then it is no longer freedom, for freedom that is not set in law is license only. If the liquor industry were asked to pick up its legitimate obligations it would have to pay a rapidly expanding cost to cover

- a) the additional expense for maintaining law and order;
- b) the additional costs of sickness, hospitalization, lost time, and lost effectiveness;
- c) the additional costs of "accidents" of all kinds;
- d) the additional public welfare costs of broken homes.

When all of this and much more is paid in cash, there would still be the costs of human suffering, of shattered ideals, and of frustrated aspirations not measureable in money.

That voice is irresponsible in the face of it all. It stings, it poisons, it swallows its filthy gain and it goes on its way. Do we stand helplessly by fearful of its convincing power? If so, it is high time for Americans who have convictions in these matters to get acquainted so we can act together toward regaining our freedom, the freedom to live lives in terms of our own ideals, and to nurture our children in these ideals. Surely, right is still stronger than wrong.

It is not regimentation we ask. We merely ask that the services of our Government be available for the protection of those personal rights which make America strong in preference to those business rights that make America weak. We are asking that our human resources be recognized as more important than the additional dollars sought by the liquor industry.

Accordingly, we respectfully petition this Committee to report favorably H. R. 1227, the Bryson Bill, for a recorded vote of the full House of Representatives.

PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL ENCOURAGEMENT NEEDED

It is startling to realize that suddenly, and without much choice in the matter, the United States Government has been compelled to grapple with the problems of world leadership.

Those who studied the Sunday School lesson from I Kings 11 dealing with the decay and division of the Hebrew kingdom are aware of the relationship between the moral and spiritual discernment of strength of the rulers on the one hand and political stability on the other. Much has been said of "Solomon's wisdom" but that was the "wisdom" which ruined the kingdom. It lacked the spiritual and moral foundations needed. More than brains is needed to rule well.

Few persons are subjected to more pressures representing selfish interests than are our own men in government. Few people in our nation

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hold posts exposed to more temptations to be shrewd at the expense of moral convictions than the men whom we have selected to legislate and administer our affairs of government. They need our prayers for divine strength and guidance. They also need spiritual encouragement and nurture. When they act in humble spiritual devotion to God and to the needs of man in preference to political purposes they deserve our praise and expressions of appreciation.

TOO MUCH AND TOO LITTLE

The Friends Committee on National Legislation recently offered testimony before the House Committee on Agriculture regarding food surpluses in which their distinctive spiritual note was struck in these paragraphs.

"America's capacity to produce an abundance of foodstuffs and agricultural products should be looked upon as a God-given opportunity, not as a blight or a curse or a tragedy. 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him', was one way that Jesus offered to reconcile man to man. 'Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?' queried our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount.

"America has offered arms to England, France, Western Germany, Italy, Turkey, Greece, Pakistan, Indo-China, Formosa, Japan and how many other countries. Why not share with the rest of the world butter instead of bombs, wheat instead of warships, cottonseed oil instead of cannon, milk instead of munitions, fats instead of flamethrowers, life instead of death?"

As of April 21, 1954, the Commodity Credit Corporation reported current stocks as follows:

<u>Commodity</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
Butter	358,745,000 lb.
Cheese	381,925,000 lb.
Dried Milk	458,813,000 lb.
Corn	413,370,000 bu.
Wheat	414,482,000 bu.
Cottonseed Oil (refined)	869,020,000 lb.

Alongside of this picture of stockpiles Assistant Secretary of Agriculture John Davis recently gave a vivid portrayal of human need, in foreign lands and even in America. Piles of food can be very near starving people but they can not get together because of the limitations of our human minds and our human motives, entangled in our human institutions.

How seriously have we tried to be Christian, and to solve these problems on the basis of God-given motives? Is it not true that we have solved more difficult problems in the interests of destruction?