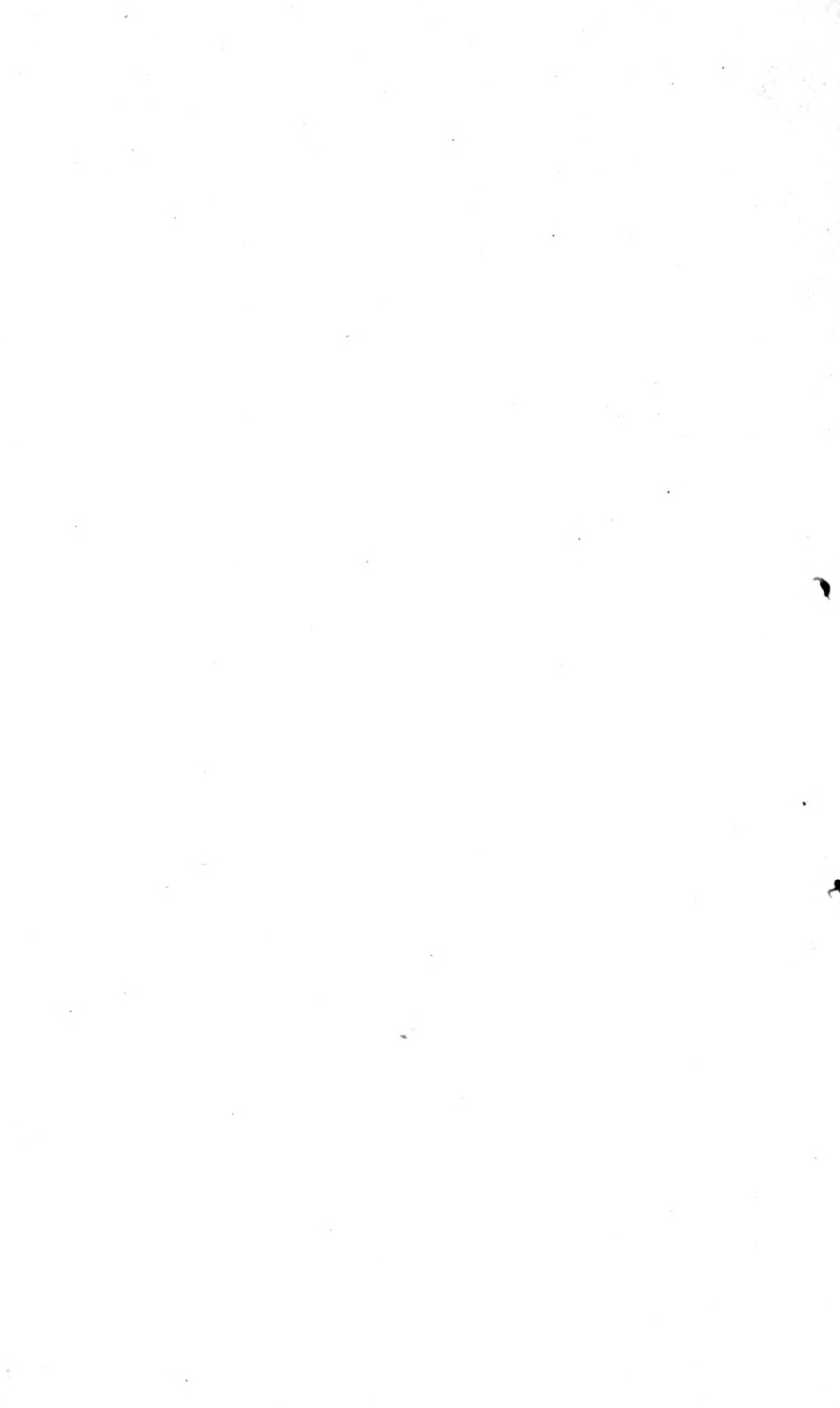




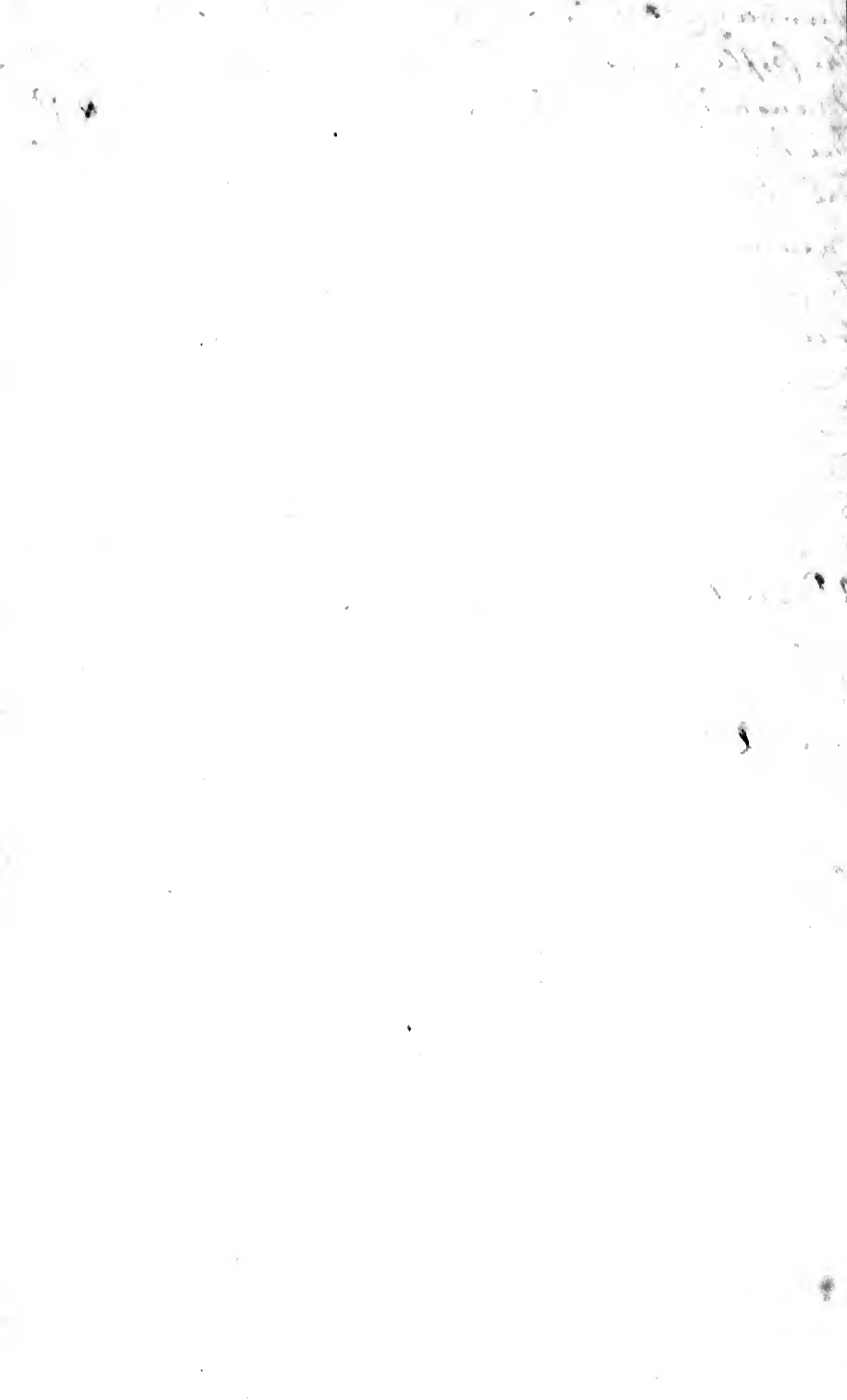


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A SOCIAL EXPERIMENT;

OR,

FIVE YEARS

BEFORE AND AFTER

Sunday Closing IN IRELAND.

A REVIEW & COMPARISON.

BY

T. W. RUSSELL.

Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance,
EUSTACE BUILDINGS, DUBLIN; MARCH, 1884.

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INTRODUCTION.



THE following paper was read by Mr. Russell before a Special Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance, on Monday, the 17th day of March, 1884.

Believing that it covers the entire Sunday Closing controversy, and deals with the facts and figures in a full, clear, and impartial manner, the Committee commend it to the attention of all interested in the Question.

Dublin, March, 1884.

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A SOCIAL EXPERIMENT; OR, FIVE YEARS BEFORE AND AFTER SUNDAY CLOSING IN IRELAND.

By T. W. RUSSELL.

MR. GLADSTONE having promised to name a day for the Second Reading of the Irish Sunday-Closing Bill after the Representation of the People Bill has been read a second time, it may not be out of place for me to summarise the Sunday-Closing case as it now stands. To-day we camp within sight of the battlefield. To-morrow it may be the smoke and din of the actual conflict—hence the necessity for an accurate *resumé* of the entire facts. There is an additional reason why the case for the Bill should now be clearly stated. Heretofore the comparison has been simply between one year and another. Now we are able to take a decennial period, and to contrast relative groups of Sunday-Closing years with others of Sunday trading. The advantage of this must be apparent. The arrests for drunkenness vary every year in each county. At one time they go up a little, only to decline again, and so on. I mention this to illustrate the impossibility of drawing any safe conclusions from the mere contrast of one year with another. But the case is altogether different when we take a series of years—this course enabling us to get at a fair average in every respect.

I.—SUNDAY ARRESTS FOR DRUNKENNESS.

THE Sunday-Closing Act came into operation on the 13th of Oct. 1878—the hours of sale previous being from 2 to 7 p.m. in the country, and from 2 to 9 p.m. in all places with a population exceeding 5,000. Parliamentary Returns, moved for every year since, show the Sunday arrests for $4\frac{1}{2}$ years to have been as follows:—

| 6 Months. | 12 Months. | 12 Months. | 12 Months. | 12 Months. |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Oct. 1878, to April, 1879. | '79-'80 | '80-'81 | '81-'82 | '82-'83 |
| 707 | 1840 | 1922 | 2319 | 2947 |

Making a total of 9,735 arrests for Sunday drunkenness in the $4\frac{1}{2}$ years, under Sunday-Closing, ending April 30th, 1883.

Unfortunately we have only similar Returns for one year of Sunday trading—the year 1877-'78. From it we learn that the Sunday arrests in the year immediately preceding Sunday-Closing numbered 4,555. Multiplying these figures by $4\frac{1}{2}$, we get as a total 20,497, an approximation more or less accurate, for the period of $4\frac{1}{2}$ years prior to the operation of the Act, and showing a reduction of 10,762, or 53 per cent. in the Sunday arrests throughout the Sunday-Closing area. This is the *first and main fact* of the controversy, and there is no possible answer to it.

II.—SUNDAY ARRESTS FOR DRUNKENNESS IN THE EXEMPTED CITIES.

THE Returns already quoted enable us to give the figures for the Exempted Cities in precisely the same way. They stand thus :—

| DUBLIN METROPOLITAN POLICE DISTRICT. | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------|
| 6 Months. Oct., '78, to April, '79 | 12 Months. '79-'80 | 12 Months. '80-'81 | 12 Months. '81-'82 | 12 Months. '82-'83 | TOTAL. |
| 5 hours Sale | 5 hours Sale | 5 hours Sale | 5 hours Sale | 5 hours Sale | |
| 689 | 1274 | 929 | 858 | 575 | 4325 |
| BELFAST. | | | | | |
| 101 | 258 | 272 | 300 | 265 | 1196 |
| CORK. | | | | | |
| 162 | 382 | 385 | 300 | 244 | 1473 |
| LIMERICK. | | | | | |
| 41 | 134 | 93 | 125 | 90 | 483 |
| WATERFORD. | | | | | |
| 36 | 84 | 86 | 64 | 74 | 344 |
| TOTAL | | | | | 7,821. |

These figures represent the number of arrests in the Five Exempted Cities for the $4\frac{1}{2}$ years since the Act came into operation, and under which the closing hour was fixed at 7 instead of 9 p.m.

Now, in the year preceding the Act, during which the closing hour was 9 o'clock in these five cities, the arrests stood thus :—

| | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|-------|
| Dublin | - | - | - | 1936 |
| Belfast | - | - | - | 255 |
| Cork | - | - | - | 357 |
| Limerick | - | - | - | 158 |
| Waterford | - | - | - | 115 |
| Total | | | | 2,821 |

Multiplying these figures also by $4\frac{1}{2}$ we get a total of 12,699 arrests for the same period of $4\frac{1}{2}$ years preceding the Act, showing a reduction in favour of the short time period of 4,878 arrests, or 37 per cent. But of this total reduction, and calculating on the basis of the Returns for '77-'78, the Metropolitan Police District gave 4,387, leaving a reduction of less than 500 arrests to be distributed thus, viz. :—

| | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|-----|
| Cork | - | - | - | 133 |
| Limerick | - | - | - | 222 |
| Waterford | - | - | - | 173 |

Belfast giving an increase of 49.

These figures constitute the second fact in the controversy, proving, as they do, that whilst the shortening of the hours has been exceedingly beneficial, the results outside Dublin—concerning which something will be said further on—have not been nearly equal to those accruing in the Sunday-Closing area.

III.—CONSUMPTION OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS.

TEMPERANCE legislation which does not reduce the consumption of intoxicating liquors cannot be said to have achieved its main purpose. But in this department the Excise figures are entirely with those who maintain the efficacy of the Sunday-Closing Act. Taking a period of 10 years, and comparing the Returns for 5 years before Sunday-Closing with 5 years following, we arrive at the following results :—

| Sunday-Trading Period. | | Sunday-Closing Period. | |
|------------------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------|
| 1874 | - £13,252,872 | 1879 | - £11,536,895 |
| 1875 | - 13,624,920 | 1880 | - 11,376,901 |
| 1876 | - 13,827,823 | 1881 | - 12,335,672 |
| 1877 | - 12,622,958 | 1882 | - 12,998,951 |
| 1878 | - 13,405,329 | 1883 | - 12,904,523 |
| | <hr/> | | <hr/> |
| Total | £66,733,902 | | £61,152,942 |

or a reduction of **£5,580,960** in favour of the Sunday-Closing period.

It is no answer to these figures to say that there has also been a diminished consumption elsewhere. There has been no corresponding decrease in Great Britain; and, in Ireland, I regret to say, there has been no such temperance propagandism amongst the masses of the people as has recently marked every portion of England, Scotland, and Wales. But, whatever may be said, there stands the fact of a decrease of more than FIVE MILLION POUNDS sterling in favour of the second or Sunday-Closing period, and commencing with the first year of the operation of the Act—viz., 1879.

IV.—ARRESTS FOR GENERAL DRUNKENNESS.

FOR Sunday-Closing purposes we might be very well content to base our case upon the Sunday arrests and the Excise Returns. But in order that no point may be omitted, I now proceed to call attention to the gross arrests for drunkenness in Ireland, including every day of the week. For the decennial period 1873 to 1883, and excluding 1878, which was partly a Sunday-Closing year, the arrests stood thus :—

| 1st Period previous to Sunday Closing. | | 2nd Period under Sunday Closing. | |
|--|-----------|----------------------------------|----------|
| 1873 | - 95,623 | 1879 | - 99,021 |
| 1874 | - 97,436 | 1880 | - 88,048 |
| 1875 | - 102,394 | 1881 | - 78,572 |
| 1876 | - 112,253 | 1882 | - 87,497 |
| 1877 | - 110,903 | 1883 | - 89,527 |
| | <hr/> | | <hr/> |
| Total, | 518,609 | | 442,665 |

These figures show a reduction in favour of the second or Sunday-Closing period of 75,944 cases—a marvellous result certainly, but one, subject, as I shall shortly show, to very large deductions on other grounds.

What, then, have we arrived at up to the present? Unquestionably we have reached these conclusions:—

- 1st. A decrease of Sunday arrests in the Sunday-Closing area equal to 53 per cent.
- 2nd. A decrease on a smaller scale in Sunday-arrests in the Five Cities on the Short Time system.
- 3rd. A reduction in the Drink Bill amounting to 5½ millions sterling, comparing the quinquennial period before Sunday Closing with the similar period following it.
- 4th. A very great decrease in the arrests for general drunkenness.

Most people would say, when such admitted results were proven, the case was complete; but it is precisely when all this is admitted that the real struggle between Sunday and Anti-Sunday Closer begins. The publicans—for they are practically the only opponents—do not care to challenge the accuracy of the figures I have quoted. They cannot do so. They may point out, indeed, that, taking 1872 and 1882, and curiously calling these two years, a decennial period, drunken arrests have increased in certain places. This is no test. Arrests, as I have already pointed out, are not stationary any year; they go up and down everywhere. But the publicans are well aware of the utter worthlessness and dishonesty of such a proceeding, and only resort to it in order to blind the public. Their real case against the Sunday-Closing Act is, that although drunken arrests have every-where declined since it came into force, the decrease has been greater in the Exempted Cities where publichouses are open for five hours on Sunday, than in the country, where they are supposed to be totally closed unless to travellers. This is their argument, and we are bound to face it. Of course the conclusion from it is a bold one, for it amounts to nothing less than this—that, whilst under Sunday Closing, drunkenness has been reduced in the country, if you desire to reduce it still further you must open the publichouses for five hours on that day. A startling proposition truly! But it is the publicans' case stripped of all verbiage. Now, what are the facts regarding the Exempted Cities and general every-day drunkenness?

It will be remembered that, comparing the first quinquennial period—'73 to '77—with the second—'79-'83—there was a total decrease in drunken arrests of 75,944. Nobody would, of course, imagine that such a result was entirely due to Sunday-Closing. The figures distributed come out thus:—

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|---|-------------------------|
| Rural Ireland | (First Period) | - | 354,933 |
| Do. do. | (Second Period) | - | 328,409 |
| | Reduction— | | 26,524, or 7½ per cent. |

| DUBLIN. | | |
|-------------|------------|-------------|
| 1st Period. | - | 2nd Period. |
| 84,314 | | 49,773 |
| | CORK. | |
| 17,456 | - | 17,320 |
| | BELFAST. | |
| 38,062 | - | 35,858 |
| | LIMERICK. | |
| 15,525 | - | 5,670 |
| | WATERFORD. | |
| 8,319 | - | 5,635 |

Reduction—34,541, or 41 per cent.

„ 136, or $\frac{3}{4}$ „

„ 2,204, or 5 „

„ 9,855, or 63 „

„ 2,684, or 32 „

Be it remembered that these are not the figures for Sunday, but those for general every-day drunkenness. Apart, however, from this point, the totals are startling in themselves, and launch us on a new enquiry. It will be noted that the great decrease took place in three of the five cities—Dublin, Limerick, and Waterford—Belfast contributing little, and Cork absolutely nothing. What the truth-seeker really has to do in face of figures like these is to enquire whether anything special has occurred in any of these three cities to account for the extraordinary and most gratifying facts. The moment such an investigation commences, the difficulty vanishes. Take Dublin, which practically bulks out three-fourths of the total decrease. What has occurred in the metropolis since 1877 to account for the decline?

- 1st. During the past five years trade in Dublin has been in a most depressed state, and thousands of labouring men have been idle.
- 2nd. The shortening of the hours of sale on Sundays from 9 to 7 p.m. (the closing hour was 11 p.m. up to 1873) has had a most beneficial effect. Even those disposed to excess in drink have now comparatively little time to indulge in it. They get home sober, as the Sunday arrests show, and St. Monday is not now the institution it formerly was.
- 3rd. There has been a remarkable diminution in the number of drink-shops. In 1873 the Police Returns showed a total of 1,586 publicans, beer-dealers, and spirit grocers. In 1880 the number had fallen to 1,284, a reduction of 302, mainly in the worst class of house, whilst over 100 more have been temporarily closed, owing to lack of purchasing power on the part of the people.
- 4th. Since 1877 the Licensing Laws have been much more stringently enforced than they were in previous years. The laxity was such that in that year a deputation of citizens waited upon the Chief Secretary to complain of it. The whole police system has since been changed, and the decisions of the Recorder and Magistrates are now of a much more stringent character.

5th. The Temperance movement has been worked at high pressure since 1876; workmen's clubs and coffee-taverns have been established, artisans' dwellings have been erected, and, generally speaking, much more attention has been paid to Social Reform since that year.

Whilst all this can truly be said of Dublin, nothing like it can be said of the country generally. There the political excitement of the past few years has tended to increase rather than to lessen drinking. There the drink-shops have rather increased than diminished in number. There the licensing code has been but indifferently administered, and unfortunately there has been no temperance propaganda amongst the masses of the people, whilst clubs and coffee-taverns are unknown institutions outside of Dublin, Cork, Belfast, and some portions of Ulster.

The reduction in Limerick and Waterford may doubtless be accounted for by similar local causes.

V.—RELATIVE DRUNKENNESS OF TOWN AND COUNTRY.

But gratifying as the improvement is in the Exempted Cities they have still much lee-way to make up before they reach the standard of sobriety already attained by the other parts of the country. Taking the last quinquennial period with its immense improvement in favour of the towns, the arrests in them still were as 1,632 in the 10,000, whereas in the other parts of the country they were only 736 in the 10,000—a fact which ought to make the publicans of Dublin strive still further towards the goal of perfection.

VI.—DRUNKENNESS ON SUNDAYS AND WEEK-DAYS COMPARED.

Another most significant fact which ought of itself to settle the entire controversy, lies on the surface of all these figures. In the year 1883 the gross arrests for drunkenness in Ireland numbered 89,526. Of this total, Sunday, and including the arrests in the five towns, contributed but 4,195. In other words the six days of the week, which enjoy 15 hours sale of drink, gave 14,000 arrests each. Whereas, Sunday—the idle day, the day when money is more or less available, and a day not kept in the Sabbatarian sense, but which is nevertheless protected in a special manner from the traffic of the publican—gave 4,000! Had every day of the week been as well protected from the liquor traffic the drunken arrests in 1883 should have numbered less than 30,000 instead of 90,000.

VII.—GRADUAL INCREASE IN SUNDAY ARRESTS.

Before closing this *resumé* of the facts of Sunday Closing I desire to point out, what indeed is but too apparent—viz., the increasing laxity in the enforcement of the Act, both by the police and the magistrates. In the first six months after it came into operation, the arrests were 707. The next return for a complete year, 1879, gave 1,840. This was followed by 1880, giving 1,922. Then they crept up in 1881, to 2,319, whilst last year they reached 2,947. These figures show what is going on under the absurd definition of the *bona fide* traveller, prevailing in Ireland, and under which nearly the whole evasions are practised. It is also worthy of remark that nearly 1,000 of the Sunday arrests are in the counties in which the Exempted Cities are situate.

VIII.—CONCLUSION.

So far, then, as statistics are concerned, these are the tabulated results of the experiment. But I am very far from believing that the Act is to be judged by columns of figures only. As the Most Rev. Dr. Logue wisely remarked in his recent letter—these only serve to show the grosser forms of the evil that have been prevented.

What might have been had the Act not been on the Statute Book, is altogether another question. The one thing certain is, that the Sunday Closers have a case against which nothing can stand in Parliament. Passed after a great struggle, the Act was made temporary in its duration—in itself a direct inducement to its opponents to make it unworkable. It has also had to weather the gale of a period of intense political excitement. But to-day, after five years' trial, a large majority of the Irish members still stand by it. The Catholic hierarchy and clergy have afresh renewed their allegiance. The several Protestant communities march in its support as one man. And the only distinctly audible voice against it is that of the publicans of the five large towns, who dread its extension to themselves. A question so supported is ripe for settlement, and this Session ought not to be allowed to finish without seeing this long-pending controversy finally and satisfactorily closed.

