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Tillman on the Dispensary

The Senator's Address at Sandy Flat Saturday--Opposes County Dispensaries and Outlines his Plan to Purify the State Dispensary.

Senator Tillman made his first speech of the campaign last Saturday at Sandy Flat, Greenville county. It is estimated that 4000 persons were present. The subject of the Senator's address was the Dispensary. He spoke as follows:

There is but one important issue involved in this campaign, so far as State affairs go, and as for my own candidacy it rests on the record which I have made since I entered public life sixteen years ago and the intimate knowledge which the people of the State have of my character, personality and qualifications. I am willing to leave it there without discussion or presentation. The fight is State dispensary vs county dispensary, for no one expects the prohibition candidates, however worthy and well qualified they may be, to receive very much support. With all their efforts (and they have been many and long continued) the newspapers which have always fought the dispensary have not been able to drum up a candidate for Governor who advocates local option straight as against dispensary and prohibition, and only in Charleston does that idea have any men offering for office under it. The local option offered the people is between prohibition and county dispensary, and the whole fight is to destroy the State dispensary first, with no other purpose than to then obtain the privilege of reopening the old bar rooms under the guise of liquor stores, "selling under constitutional limitations." The real fight is for the control of the Legislature, because the Governor cannot make or change the laws, and can only try to enforce them. His only influence over legislation would be in the use of the veto power. But it is all important to get a strong and good man for Governor. The times distinctly demand one.

SAYS COUNTY DISPENSARIES WON'T DO.

In any event some counties will stand by prohibition with its blind tigers and heavy jug trade by express. Other counties will vote for county dispensaries and the cities where the principal newspapers are published will have the fight on the issue of State dispensary or county dispensary, with the ultimate purpose of having the county dispensaries turned into licensed bar rooms if the county dispensaries are abolished. The scheme is to restore the sale of liquor to private individuals rather than let it remain in the hands of State officials. Those who clam-

or for county dispensaries instead of one State dispensary must demonstrate how it is easier to prevent corruption among the thirty or forty county boards than to stop it in one State board. I have great faith in the good common sense of the people, and do not believe they can be persuaded to destroy the State dispensary, and leave each county to purchase and sell its own liquor. Yet the State and News and Courier, which have always hated the dispensary

"Worse than the devil ha's holy water," are advocating candidates who favor county dispensaries. The only possible good reason that can be advanced on this line is that the prohibition counties under the Constitution receive a part of the profits which arise from the sale of liquor in the other counties. This is unjust, as everyone must acknowledge, but it can be remedied very easily by having the State dispensary make no profits other than a few thousand dollars above its running expenses, thus leaving the counties and the towns to divide the profits between them. This can be easily done and when we consider the expense of buying liquor in retail quantities and paying local freight on it instead of buying carload lots and paying through freights the county dispensary cannot stand the comparison. But this is not the greatest objection.

The leakage or stealage in bottling of liquor at each county dispensary would be immense, and I know of no way that it could be prevented, nor do I know any by which it would be possible to prevent the whiskey being watered, bottles refilled, relabeled and other schemes of making money dishonestly, if the system were adopted. It is not possible to prevent it and I do not think any sensible man who considers the question will seriously contend that it is. Even if one half of the counties in the State should adopt the prohibition-blind-tiger jug trade programme it would be better, more economical, and there would be less possibility of corruption and speculation in the purchase and handling of liquor in the other dispensary counties, if the buying, bottling and shipping should be done at one central depot, instead of in each county.

REFERENCE TO CHARLESTON.

It must not be forgotten, because it was the understanding (and a bargain was made) during the fight in the Legislature last winter against the State dispensary, that the ultimate purpose is to have Charleston wholesale liquor dealers supply the county dispensaries, as well as the jug trade by express in dry counties, and while this would be better than to have this liquor shipped in from North Carolina and Georgia, as it now is, because it would keep the money at home, I do not believe that the people of the

State are now willing, or will ever be willing, to see the State dispensary destroyed, with the inevitable result that liquor selling will gradually go back to the old system of private control. I would be glad to have Charleston prosper, but it is not the loss of the liquor trade that has hurt Charleston. Other things are to blame.

The issue between private control and control by State officials must hinge at last on the question of whether or not the people of South Carolina shall determine that we cannot find honest men enough to carry on the dispensary system and devise laws to make those who are dishonest afraid. I say we can. I do not believe that every man who handles whiskey must become a thief. I believe that the people only need to see and know that the dispensary system can be reformed and cleansed of corruption to make them stand by it.

I will proceed to give the plan which appears to me after a great deal of thought and consideration of suggestions from very many sources to be the best. We will begin on the counties.

HOW TO CURE THE DISPENSARY

County dispensers should be elected in the Democratic primary, the same as other officers. The county board should be composed of the mayor of the town in which a dispensary is located, the supervisor of the county, who is the business agent of the county, and one man appointed by the Governor. The county dispenser should be removable by the Governor for cause. The State board of control ought to be elected by the Legislature, but its duty should be confined to general direction and supervision of the business, the same as the Penitentiary and Hospital for the Insane are run. It should not purchase any whiskey or anything else required in the business. Everything required, including the whiskey, should be bought under annual contracts made as follows: After the state commissioner has advertised in the manner prescribed by law (and this ought to be very clear and specific, leaving nothing to the discretion of any one, and going fully into details) the bids should be opened in public by three men selected just before the date fixed by the Governor and the contract made with the lowest bidder by the year for the supplies to be ordered out by the commissioner as needed. These three men are to serve only once, and annually there shall be three new men chosen to make the contracts. The bidders will not know who will make the awards and, therefore, cannot enter into collusion in advance, and even should the Governor, which is inconceivable, be willing to select a board which would act corruptly, the specifications of the bidding made with minuteness and the publicity would prevent any graft.

No whiskey or liquor should

be purchased except from Government bonded ware houses. In the case of wines and beer the brewers should alone furnish the second direct in the breweries, and the small quantity of the other used could be hedged about in the advertisement so as to insure honesty and the purest and best article. For the information of those who are not posted, I will say that the Government bonded ware houses are under the control of the United States internal revenue officials entirely and whiskey deposited in them comes directly from the still, and the owner is not permitted to manipulate it or handle it in any way until the tax is paid and it is removed. We thus get a guarantee of absolute purity without a chemical analysis and such liquors are as much staple articles of commerce as corn, wheat or bacon. It is the blended and rectified whiskeys that are adulterated and where the cheating comes in. The blending and mixing could be done in the State dispensary, where there would be no incentive to increase profits by adulterations, besides the law would provide severe penalties for that kind of thing.

The county dispensers, being elected by the people, will be anxious to please the people as they will be beaten at the polls if they do not do their duty. The county board chosen as indicated will be responsible to the people also, with every incentive to give a good administration. The whiskey purchased in that way will be as pure and as good as can be obtained under any possible conditions, and there is absolutely no way in which corruption can creep in, if there is the least effort on the part of the people and the Governor to prevent it.

SLAPS AT THE GOVERNORS

The trouble with the dispensary now is that our Governors have neglected their duties and have not kept supervision over the workings of the local dispensers and the State board. Excuse may be found for this by saying the Legislature put the dispensary beyond the Governor's control. This is true in a way and it was a very great mistake, yet the Governor's oath of office requires him to "see that the laws are executed in mercy." And with the power to appoint constables at his discretion and detectives also when needed, it cannot be denied that the demoralization and corruption which have been so much in evidence would have been prevented by the Governors using trusted agents to keep supervision over the dispensary system, and see whether the law was being carried out. I did this, but my successors seem to have thought it unnecessary or too much labor. I not only watched the dispensers, but I watched the constables too through a detective who reported to me alone. The necessity for the more rigid enforcement of all law makes

the coming election for Governor important. Things have been run too loosely and too little regard paid to enforcing the law. I criticize no one, but simply give the people the facts as I see them, and, of course, they alone can apply the remedy. We should elect the Governor who will do this and do it fearlessly and zealously, but there is still small opportunity for graft in scheme outlined, provided the Legislative committee which superintends the other State institutions and the grand juries of the various counties pay attention to their duties. No government has ever been devised that would run itself and every government is an index of the intelligence, public spirit and patriotism of its people. If the people are ignorant and indifferent, and cease to watch and look after their affairs, the government they give themselves is inevitably bad and they can blame no one but themselves.

RAPS THE LEGISLATURE.

The conditions in the dispensary now are directly traceable to the blundering and neglect of the Legislature. That body placed the State dispensary in the hands of three politicians, elected without consideration to fitness, experience or character, threw no restrictions whatever around the administration, left the door wide open, limited the salary to \$400 and now we see the result. I have always said and believed it was designedly done to destroy it. Politics and not fitness have most always controlled the Legislative elections, but no amount of salary alone would cure the evil of which we complain.

The original board was composed of the Governor, Attorney General and Comptroller General, three of our highest State officials elected by the people, but the vital mistake was in not making strict rules and regulations for the purchase of whiskey. The enemies of the dispensary declare that it cannot be purified. This cry is indicative that those who thus contend practically confess that they have lost all faith in the honesty of man or of the ability of men to give themselves just and honest government. I for one do not believe that all of the honest men are dead.

PEOPLE ARE RIGHTLY DISGUSTED.

The people are disgusted and they have a right to be. For one crime which they should not forgive is the failure of the last Legislature to change the law so as to prevent any further stealing and to restore the dispensary system to its original purpose, that of controlling whiskey and minimizing the evils inseparable from its sale and use. The enemies of the dispensary were bent on killing it, and the combination of political and other influences in the House having failed in

(Concluded on Page Eight.)