

THE CONTROL OF THE  
DRINK TRADE

# THE CONTROL OF THE DRINK TRADE

A CONTRIBUTION TO  
NATIONAL EFFICIENCY  
1915-1917

BY  
HENRY CARTER

WITH A PREFACE BY  
LORD D'ABERNON

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TO THE MEMORY OF  
**RICHARD CROSS**  
*A MEMBER OF THE CENTRAL CONTROL BOARD*  
*(LIQUOR TRAFFIC)*  
FROM THE APPOINTMENT OF THE BOARD  
JUNE, 1915  
UNTIL HIS DEATH  
AUGUST 11, 1916

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"All hearts grew warmer in the presence  
Of one who, seeking not his own,  
Gave freely for the love of giving,  
Nor reaped for self the harvest sown."

WHITTIER.

## PREFACE

DRINK Control is admittedly a problem of vital importance to our industrial future and to our national efficiency. But it is more than that. Throughout the world Drink Control is recognised as one of the most arduous questions which have hitherto baffled statesmanship. This has been notoriously so in Great Britain, where, up to 1914, despite great enthusiasm and sincerity of purpose on the part of reformers, aided by the support of able statesmen, progress was precarious and disappointing.

These considerations lend particular interest to the experience gained in this country during the War, as the measures taken have been followed by a progressive decline of alcoholic excess so rapid that it appears difficult to account for it on any other hypothesis than that it is in large part the result of the regulations applied.

The object of Mr. Carter's book is to set forth in detail what these regulations have been; what the immediate purpose of each was; under what conditions they have been put in force; and what results have accrued. It is clearly desirable to discuss the matter in some detail, as although the particular administration which has created and hitherto applied the regulations in force comes to an end within a year following the declaration of peace, Parliament will have to take cognisance of the methods of administration employed, and will surely find advantage in the experience gained.

Disinterested students of the problem will agree that the return to pre-war conditions of Licensing and Drink Control cannot be contemplated with equanimity. It would certainly mean an increase of drunkenness, involving the sacrifice of many lives, the ruin of many homes, and a reversion to conditions conducive to crime and ill-health. It becomes

therefore urgent to examine what guidance as to future treatment is afforded by recent experience.

The whole problem has been profoundly modified since the commencement of the War. It used to be stated that men could not be made sober by Act of Parliament, and the corollary was suggested that it was waste of time to legislate or to regulate for the purpose of achieving the impossible. This view cannot now be sustained. Recent measures have proved an effective remedy for much that was undesirable and detrimental to national efficiency. There may be—there probably will be—a wide difference of opinion as to whether the gain to efficiency is too dearly purchased by the necessary restrictions and the self-imposed discipline. That is a fair matter for discussion. But no one can now contend with any appearance of reason that measures cannot be devised which will achieve an approach to general sobriety and temperance. Such action may be unpopular; it will surely be effective.

To go back to the recent history of the Drink Question. Up to July 1914 there was little ground for optimism. In spite of minor improvements effected, in spite of increased taxation, notwithstanding progress in public education, the aggregate number of convictions for drunkenness and the amount of alcohol consumed annually, showed an upward tendency in the years immediately preceding the War. Military regulations and restrictive orders by the Licensing Justices were imposed during the first months of the War; and these, together with voluntary arrangements made by the "Trade" for early closing and the non-serving of women in the morning, brought about a considerable measure of improvement. But in the spring of 1915 the amount of excessive drinking and drunkenness was still such as to necessitate further drastic action.

The Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic) was established in June 1915. After local inquiry in many districts, particularly in transport and munition areas, the Board decided upon a comprehensive policy, the general lines of which, with minor alterations, have been maintained.

The principal measures taken may be classified under four heads :—

- (1) Curtailment, on physiological lines, of the hours of sale of alcohol.

- (2) Facilities for non-alcoholic refreshment, notably by the establishment of Canteens for munition and transport workers.
- (3) Prohibition of the sale of spirituous liquors of excessive strength.
- (4) Prohibition of incentives to excessive consumption, such as Treating, Credit, and canvassing for liquor orders.

It is difficult to isolate the effect of these measures from other causes of improvement, but the change, reflected not only in the fall of convictions for drunkenness, but also in the decrease of the amount of disease and mortality due to alcoholic excess, has been so great, that the action of some new force, not previously brought into play, is clearly indicated.

The reader will perhaps ask whether the methods employed differ from previous attempts in this and other countries, and if so, what constitutes their novelty and divergence from precedent. The answer is, I believe, easy. They constitute the first attempt to deal with the Drink Traffic solely on lines of national efficiency, any other aspect of the problem having been barred by the terms of reference. The Board, therefore, from the first regarded efficiency as the sole object of their endeavours. Another feature of novelty has been the endeavour to bring practice into line with the principles of physiology by allotting hours for the sale of alcohol in accordance with the principles of hygiene, and discouraging practices which, from the medical aspect, appeared detrimental to efficiency.

It should be remembered that the Food Controller's Order reducing the output of beer and the issue of spirits from bond did not come into legal operation until April 1, 1917. This reduction of the quantity of liquor available for consumption—a temporary measure designed to meet the special situation created by the submarine menace—was not an act resolved upon as a part of a policy of Temperance Reform, and was entirely independent of the Central Control Board. Mr. Carter has limited his review to the period from the outbreak of war to the end of March 1917—that is to say, before this new factor had affected the situation.

Some considerable part of the reduction in drunkenness as regards men might *prima facie* be attributed to the absence

of soldiers in the army. But this factor has not operated in the case of women, and convictions for drunkenness on the part of women have decreased in nearly the same proportion as convictions for drunkenness on the part of men. On the other hand, factors making for an increase in the returns of drunkenness have come into play. The population of munition areas, and of industrial areas generally, has increased, while employment, both of men and of women, has been good, and wages have risen to a level never before reached.

Past experience of drunkenness statistics indicates the normal close parallelism between high wages and excessive drinking. The figures for 1895-1908, as Mr. Carter shows, are significant on this point. But this parallelism has now been replaced by extreme divergence. Although the earnings of large sections of the population have very materially increased, and unemployment in both sexes has practically ceased to exist, convictions for drunkenness in 1915, 1916 and 1917 have fallen at a pace without parallel. In England and Wales there were nearly 190,000 cases in 1913. In 1916 there were considerably less than 90,000. Thus a reduction has been effected of over 100,000 convictions for drunkenness per annum. Current returns indicate that 1917 must show a further large reduction on 1916. All available information as to disease and mortality connected with alcoholism points to the conclusion that a profound change in the drinking habits of large classes of the population has been initiated.

Under these circumstances I imagine that no large section of the community would desire during demobilisation the abolition of the present restrictions of the Central Control Board, considered apart from the Food Controller's restriction of output. Strong measures of regulation will probably be more necessary during that period than at any previous moment. After demobilisation the question is more open. It will have to be decided by public opinion and by Parliament.

Mr. Carter's book has the advantage of representing the facts as they are to-day and not as they were four years ago. The following pages are in no sense an official pronouncement, nor are they to be regarded as endorsed by the Board or any of its members. The Author alone is responsible for the views expressed. But I may be permitted to bear witness to

the breadth of view which characterises Mr. Carter's outlook. It is largely through the possession of this quality that he has been able to render such practical service to the increase of national efficiency, through the advance of sobriety, during the last two years.

The reader of these pages must judge for himself how far the obstacles which barred progress before the War have now been overcome. He must further judge whether the emergency measures taken, if effective temporarily, as they undoubtedly have been, are suitable for permanent adoption, or could serve as models upon which future regulations could be based. What is important is to ascertain why progress was so slow prior to the War, and why such considerable results have been obtained since; to consider how far the results achieved are desirable; and, if they are deemed desirable, to consolidate the ground gained by carrying the process of improvement further on more permanent lines, if possible by general agreement.

No scheme for the future regulation of the liquor traffic will be satisfactory to public opinion at large which does not maintain the present level of temperance and ensure that the nation does not relapse to the level of alcoholic excess which prevailed before the War. It is my conviction that it should be possible to fulfil these conditions without injury to any legitimate interest and without unduly curtailing reasonable enjoyment. Whatever the system adopted is, there must be no return to pre-war conditions in so far as they were injurious to national efficiency, and have been proved to be remediable.

D'ABERNON.

*Esher,*  
November 1917.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to describe the action of the State respecting the Drink Question in the Great War, alike in legislation and administration. The period explored is from the autumn of 1914 to the spring of 1917; *i. e.* from the outbreak of war to the time when, in order to safeguard food supplies, the output of liquor was curtailed by the Order of the Food Controller. Chiefly, the book is concerned with the work of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic), since the Board was created in the summer of 1915 to control the Drink Trade in the national interest throughout the war-emergency period.

The Drink Question has agitated public opinion throughout the War. The natural order of discussion is therefore historical.

An introductory chapter throws the subject on the screen. In Part I the "Conditions before Control" are depicted. The second and third chapters tell how the drink difficulty took shape before the public mind, explain the earliest methods employed to cope with it, and chronicle the events which led to action by the State. The problem which confronted the Control Board is outlined in the fourth chapter.

Part II, the main section of the book, is devoted to an account in detail of the methods of State Control and their results. The fifth chapter describes the way in which the Board began their work; the sixth and seventh review the restrictive and constructive activities of the Board. The Industrial Canteen Movement, and the State Purchase undertaking at Gretna and Carlisle, are then portrayed.

Part III is an estimate of the influence of the Board's work in diminishing drunkenness and the disease and mortality attributable to alcoholic indulgence; in increasing the efficiency

of the national war-services ; and in the concomitant advancement of the general welfare. In the final chapter the drink problem is discussed in its relation to the future of national life.

I have sought throughout to write without prejudice, under the strong conviction that the public interest can only be served by a plain and honest statement, a narrative of fact.

It is right that I should say expressly that the Board are in no way or degree responsible for the book. I have received the generous help of colleagues and personal friends, and of members of the extremely capable staff of the Board. In acknowledging with gratitude their ready and valuable assistance, I desire at the same time to make it clear that the sole and full responsibility for the volume rests with the writer. For this reason I have refrained from mentioning by name those to whom my debt is great, lest an official or corporate authority should seem to be implied.

I have ventured to dedicate the book to one who left his mark on the Board's work, as in many other spheres of labour for the common good. The memory of Richard Cross still quickens those who felt the spur of his keen sense of public right, and sought to share in his unwearying service of the public cause.

HENRY CARTER.

*Harrow,*  
*November 1917.*

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