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Afraid of Prohibition Boomerang.

Democratic Donkey Forced to Play Part of Modern Sindbad, Carrying the "Old Man of the Mountain" in Form of Bryan and His Policies. —Cartoon in The National Tribune.

POLITICIANS of all parties are having the scare of their life over the question of prohibition. Not much is being printed on this subject but a virtual panic prevails in the political camps. Senators and members even from old prohibition states express their alarm and say that public sentiment back home seems to be in revolt. Nearly everyone is mad about something and the temptation is to take their spite out on the "dry" laws.

The labor unions have always been strongly in favor of drink and President Gompers says: "I believe bolshevism has gained by the dry laws. It certainly began with prohibition in Russia. The apostles of bolshevism are seizing prohibition as a mighty weapon to force into their ranks the foreign-born peoples of this country who in their home lands have been used to beer and light wines."

A number of the states, including some that had already ratified the 18th amendment, are now taking the stand that it will not do to enforce prohibition so strictly as the federal law called the Volstead law provides. That law says that any beverage that has over one-half per cent of alcohol is intoxicating and as such is prohibited.

Rhode Island has taken the lead in opposing the federal government by adopting a measure permitting the sale of 2.75 per cent beer. The Rhode Island case and others have just been argued before the supreme court and that body is expediting the cases so as to reach a final decision as soon as possible.

Elihu Root and other lawyers argued the paradox that the 18th amendment, though already in the constitution, is unconstitutional; that it is "not a democratic but a demagogic proposition" and that the federal government has no power to lay down the law so drastically to the states on such subjects. Gov. Milliken of Maine announces a list of 26 states that are working in alliance with the federal government to defend the amendment.

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The 18th amendment gives to the states "concurrent" powers over the question as to what is to be considered an intoxicating drink. A number of states are proceeding to adopt "concurrent" legislation along this line. New Jersey has passed a law legalizing 3½ per cent beer. Gov. Edwards signed the bill with great exultation, declaring that he was doing his best to carry out his campaign promise to "make New Jersey as wet as the Atlantic ocean."

He is a Democrat and his sponsorship of the "wet" issue has brought him forward as a leading aspirant for the presidential nomination. In a speech to the Tammany club in New York, the powerful old Democratic organization, he denounced the dry act as "the biggest fool bill ever passed" and was hailed as "the next president."

At another Democratic love-feast he declared that the issue of "state rights and personal liberty" would have to be made the paramount issue in the coming campaign. Terrible wrongs had been heaped upon 110,000,000 free Americans in the name of "democracy", he said, and he urged that it was time for a change. The Edwards boom is being pushed in Chicago and other big "wet" centers, and it is declared that the first question to be put to each candidate will be: "Are you wet, or dry?"

Bryan is working with might and main against Edwards and the whole "wet" aggregation. He denounces the "wet" Democrats as "spurious representatives of the party" and says that if the party should "descend to the level of the wet platform" it would slip and have a fall that would be fatal. Edwards comes back and accuses Bryan of being a paid agent of the "dry" forces and of arguing merely like a lawyer in order to earn his fee. Bryan, he says, would "harmonize the Democratic party by sending it to the morgue."

Bryan retorts to this that Edwards not only by his candidacy "commits an offense against the Democratic party but insults the conscience and sense of decency of the whole country." Edwards says that if Bryan is going to keep on acting and talking that way, he should "quit the Democratic party and join the Prohibitionists."

Ex-Senator Martine of N. J. endorses the Edwards boom and says that "any party that will stand for prohibition now will dig its own grave." Martine ought to know something about "graves", for he was buried in a political grave several years ago, for advocating radical policies. However, his return to the scene indicates that many political leaders who were supposed to be dead and buried may now be expected to bob up again with the new turn of the political wheel of chance.

The most significant action so far was that of the New York state Democrats who at their recent convention declared themselves "unalterably opposed to prohibition by federal amendment." National prohibition, they declared, "is an unreasonable interference with the rights of the states as guaranteed by the constitution."

Bryan in commenting on this action declared it to be "a repetition of the

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Dred Scott decision." This was the decision made by the supreme court in 1857 which declared that "negroes are so inferior that they have no rights which the white man is bound to respect." The upholders of slavery heralded that decision as giving a new lease of life to slavery, but it was one of the very things that helped to arouse public sentiment against it and finally bring about its abolition.

There was recently a little "whisky war" in upper Michigan which occupied the newspapers for some days. It was pictured as an insurrection against the federal government, but it proved to be a fiasco.

Many towns which have long voted "dry", however, have lately gone "wet". Hightoned Brookline, Mass., for instance, after being "dry" for 34 years, went on record in favor of license. A bill in favor of 2.75 beer was favorably reported in the Massachusetts legislature. W. S. Vare, one of the Republican "bosses" of Philadelphia, is out on a platform for five per cent beer. The upheaval is not confined to either party but is affecting both. If it continues it may force the "dry" elements of both parties to fuse and make a fight against the "wet" elements of both.

It was supposed that the prohibition question was all settled by the adoption of the 18th amendment, just as peace was secured by the armistice of Nov. 11, 1918. But in both cases there was still a lot to be done before the victory could be considered clinched.

Even in congress we may expect to see the question constantly coming up. The other day it came up when it was proposed to repeal the Volstead law. The repeal was rejected by a vote of 254 to 85. This shows that the solons still know which side their political bread is oleoed on, or think they do; but the result revealed a gain of four votes for the "wets".

While it took a two-thirds vote of congress to authorize the prohibition amendment and approval by three-fourths of the states to ratify it, it would take only a bare majority of congress any time to repeal the enforcement law or lay down a new basis as to what an intoxicant is. The "wets" will no doubt watch their chance and try to steal a march on the "drys"—which means that the act will be constantly under fire.

Senator Warren of Wyo., chairman of the appropriations committee, told the senate that it would probably cost the country $50,000,000 a year for some years to enforce the "dry" amendment. Several senators expressed disgust at this outlay. Senator King, of Utah, Dem., declared it "a scandal anl outrage," and he said he was afraid the government was attempting something which was "beyond the jurisdiction of the United States." Senator Warren declared that the whole movement to make the nation "dry" was laudable and urged that all right-thinking people should uphold the reform.

Congress was also shocked when it heard from the shipping board that it would be impossible for the government to continue running steamers on a "dry" basis and compete with for-

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eign ships which are "wet". It is said that this is one reason why the government is getting rid of so many vessels.

There has been bitter complaint against the druggists for charging outrageous prices for whisky used in cases of "flu" and other sickness. The internal revenue bureau has ruled that both the doctor prescribing liquor as medicine and the druggist filling the prescription must have a permit. Also a doctor may, on permit, secure six quarts of liquor a year to have in his own possession for emergency purposes. Hospitals and similar institutions may also be provided with necessary supplies in the same way.

The government promises to punish those who profiteer in liquors for such purposes. Crews of foreign vessels in our ports are allowed to secure on shore their customary allowances of drink. On the other hand it is decided that the foreign diplomats at Washington are not entitled to stock up with any more drinkables, even though they are in most ways privileged characters.