



THOMAS H. BECK
Editorial Director

Collier's

THE NATIONAL WEEKLY

WILLIAM L. CHENERY, Editor



CHARLES COLEBAUGH
Managing Editor

An Open Letter

Dear Sir:

Won't you clear up the confusion which still beclouds your prohibition report? So much of mystery surrounds your findings and your recommendations that your fellow citizens are unable to glean from your work that light and guidance which had been so confidently expected.

Your distinguished fellow citizen, Thomas Alva Edison, was quoted in the daily press as saying extravagantly that the prohibition report amounted to exactly nothing. Mr. Edison must have been speaking as a mathematician. Your "Yeses" and "Noes" do seem to cancel each other so that little remains, but actually there is more to your report than meets the hurried glance. You and your eminent associates evidently learned more during the nineteen months you devoted to the subject than you clearly admitted in your published statements.

Won't you answer plainly a few plain questions so that your fellow citizens may have the benefit of the experience you have gained as a public agent? Here are some of the things many would like to know:

First, how did you persuade a majority consisting of five men and one woman, each of whom filed an individual report recommending the revision of the Eighteenth Amendment, to join you in opposing the repeal of that amendment and in saying nothing jointly concerning its revision?

Why, specifically, did Colonel Henry W. Anderson say with you on page 145 that the Commission is opposed to the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment and say on his own behalf on page 173, "I am compelled to find that the Eighteenth Amendment and the National Prohibition Act will not be observed and cannot be enforced"?

What led Newton D. Baker to say on page 145 that the Commission is opposed to the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment and on page 197, "In my opinion the Eighteenth Amendment should be repealed and the whole question of policy and enforcement with regard to intoxicating liquors remitted to the states"?

Mr. Baker cannot at one and the same time both favor and oppose repeal.

How did it happen that President Ada L. Comstock of Radcliffe College joined you in silence concerning revision of the Eighteenth Amendment and yet in her separate report recommended its immediate change and revision?

to the Honorable

GEORGE W. WICKERSHAM

Chairman, National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, Washington, D. C.

How was Frank J. Loesch reconciled to opposing repeal on page 145 while saying on page 265, "I have come to the conclusion that effective national enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment in its present form is unattainable; therefore, steps should be taken immediately to revise the amendment"?

How did Kenneth Mackintosh come to recommend revision on page 269 while joining with you in upholding the amendment on page 145?

How did it happen that Dean Roscoe Pound of Harvard permitted himself to be quoted as opposing Constitutional changes on page 145 while on page 280 he urged the revision of the amendment?

How, in plain words, were a solid majority of your organization induced to deny as a commission what they asserted as individuals?

Why were the misleading conclusions and recommendations issued to the press four hours before the report which qualified them was released?

Why did you permit your first statement

to appear to uphold the Eighteenth Amendment while actually a majority of your members strongly recommended change in the Constitution and in the law?

Your fellow citizens realize the difficulties which you faced in dealing with a question so vast in its relationships and so obscured by partisanship and passion. The unwillingness of politicians and of elected persons to speak frankly upon a matter so controversial was in fact the occasion for inviting you and your colleagues to make a prolonged and costly inquiry into the subject. You were entrusted with this grave responsibility because your courage and your intelligence were respected.

You were not asked to make a report based upon political expediency. Congress and the President must deal with politics.

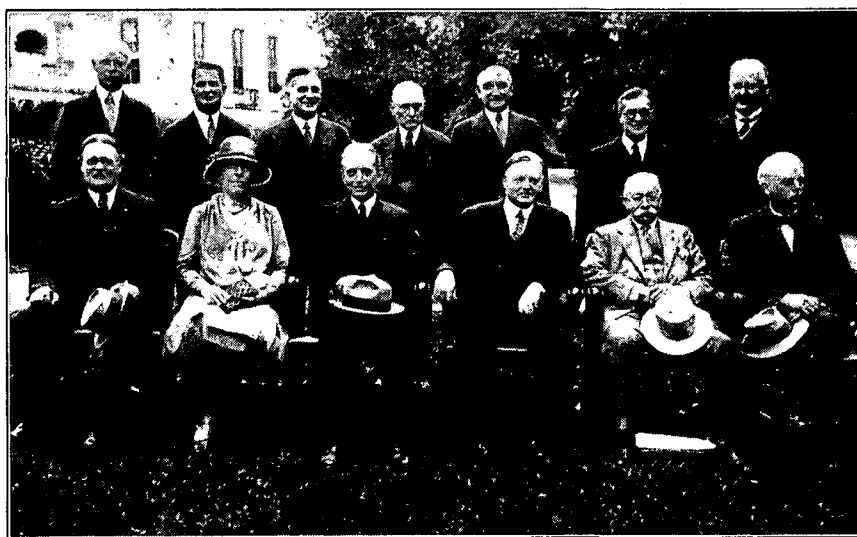
You were instructed by law to make "a thorough inquiry into the problem of the enforcement of prohibition under the provisions of the Eighteenth Amendment." Large sums of public money were put at your disposal. You were expected to report what you found.

Not one of your commission found satisfactory conditions. A minority of you asked individually that more time be given to prove the possibility of enforcing the Eighteenth Amendment. A clear majority reported as individuals their beliefs that the law as now constituted was neither enforced nor enforceable. Why was it necessary for you as a commission to obscure the judgment at which individually you arrived?

You very well realize, Mr. Chairman, the gravity of the evils which afflict this Republic because of the corruption and contempt for law bred by the nullification of the Eighteenth Amendment. Will you not deal frankly with the American people and rise to the opportunity put before you by President Hoover at your first meeting, May 28, 1929, when he said:

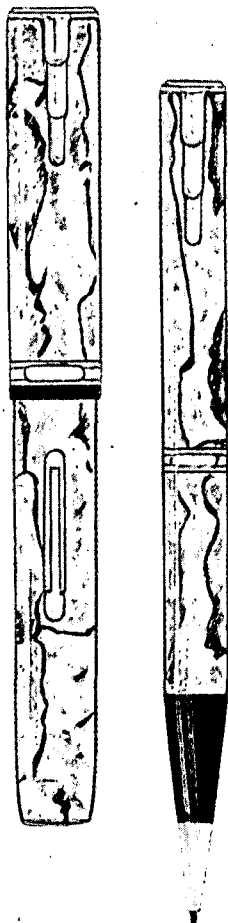
"It is my hope that the Commission shall secure an accurate determination of fact and cause, following them with constructive, courageous conclusions which will bring public understanding and command public support of its solutions."

Respectfully yours,



The President and the Wickersham Commission. Seated, left to right, are Roscoe Pound, Ada L. Comstock, Attorney-General Wm. D. Mitchell, President Hoover, George W. Wickersham and Wm. S. Kenyon. Standing: Kenneth R. Mackintosh, Monte M. Lemann, Paul J. McCormick, Wm. I. Grubb, Frank J. Loesch, Newton D. Baker and Henry W. Anderson

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EDITOR



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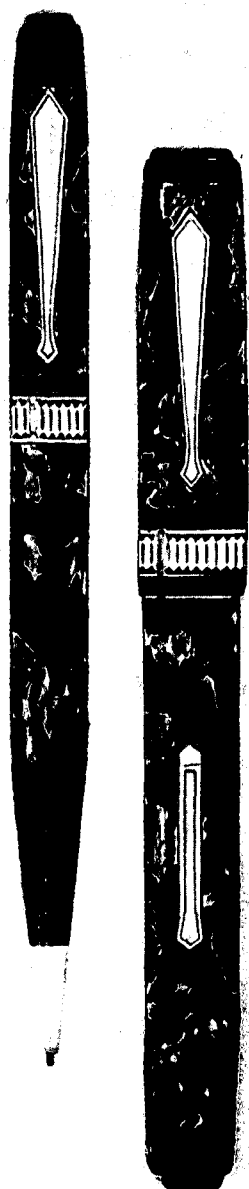
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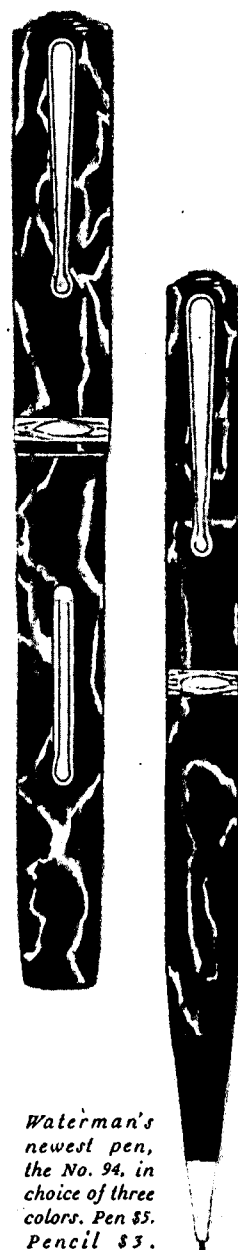
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