

To His Excellency

**The Governor
and the General Assembly
of Maryland**

In response to your request for recommendations in regard to regulation by law of the manufacture and sale of Intoxicating Beverages, we recommend the least possible restriction and lowest possible tax.

We endorse the teachings of Henry George on this subject to which reference is hereby given and excerpts annexed.

All of which is most respectfully submitted.

SPENCER HEATH,
Elkridge, Howard County.

CHARLES GAMBRILL BALDWIN,
Baltimore, Md.

November 28th, 1933.

TO DESTROY THE "RUM POWER"

*Excerpts taken from an article
by Henry George under this title.*

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"That the abolition of all taxes on the manufacture and sale of liquor would increase the consumption of liquor is doubtless true. It would increase its consumption in the arts and for domestic purposes; but that it would increase its consumption as a beverage is not so clear. For there are certain exceptions to the general rule that consumption is inverse to cost. Where a depraved appetite is the cause of consumption, no increase of cost that we have found practicable will reduce consumption, and where ostentation prompts consumption, decrease of cost is apt to lessen it. If invention were to reduce the cost of diamonds to a cent or two a pound, their consumption in the arts would much increase, but their consumption for personal adornment would cease. Where sturgeon are scarce and costly, their meat is esteemed a delicacy and placed before guests; where they are very plenty and cheap, they are thrown out of the nets or fed to the pigs.

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"Now, with liquor so cheap as it would be if there were no tax or restriction on its manufacture and sale, the treating habit would certainly be largely weakened. If whisky were as cheap as water, it would entirely die out. Who thinks of treating another to water, or feels the refusal of another to empty a glass of water into his stomach a slight; or imagines that because one man offers a glass of water to each of a party that each one of the party must in his turn offer a glass of water to all the others?

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"In short, I believe that examination will show that the sweeping away of all taxes and restrictions would not only destroy the "rum power" in our politics, but would much decrease intemperance.

"And this view has the support of one of the keenest observers. Adam Smith, who treats this matter at some length in Chapter 3, Book IV, of *The Wealth of Nations*, says:

"If we consult experience, the cheapness of wine seems to be a cause, not of drunkenness, but of sobriety. The inhabitants of the wine countries are in general the soberest people in Europe.

"People are seldom guilty of excess in what is their daily fare. Nobody affects the character of liberality and good fellowship by being profuse of a liquor which is cheap as small beer.

"When a French regiment comes from some of the northern provinces of France, where wine is somewhat dear, to be quartered in the southern where it is very cheap, the soldiers, I have frequently heard it observed, are at first debauched by the cheapness and novelty of good wine; but after a few months' residence, the greater part of them become as sober as the rest of the inhabitants. Were the duties upon foreign wines, and the excise upon malt, beer, and ale to be taken away all at once, it might, in some manner, occasion in Great Britain a pretty general and temporary drunkenness among the middle and inferior ranks of people, which would probably be soon followed by a permanent and almost universal sobriety."

"Almost universal sobriety," wrote Adam Smith in *Kierkaldy*, somewhere in the early seventies of the eighteenth century. Writing as the wonderful nineteenth century nears its final decade and in the great metropolis of a mighty nation then unborn, I can say no more, if as much. The temperance question does not stand alone. It is related—nay, it is but a phase of the great social question. By abolishing liquor taxes and licenses we may drive the "rum power" out of politics, and somewhat, I think, lessen intemperance. Thus we may get rid of an obstacle to the improvement of social conditions and increase the effective force that demands improvement. But without the improvement of social conditions we cannot hope to abolish intemperance. Intemperance today springs mainly from that unjust distribution of wealth, which gives to some less and to others more than they have fairly earned. Among the masses it is fed by hard and monotonous toil, or the still more straining and demoralizing search for leave to toil; by overtaxed muscles and overstrained nerves, and under nurtured bodies; by the poverty which makes men afraid to marry and sets little children at work, and crowds families into rooms of tenement houses; which stints the nobler and brings out the baser qualities; and in full tide of the highest civilization the world has yet seen, robs life of poetry and glory, of beauty and joy. Among the classes it finds its victims in those from whom the obligation to exertion has been artificially lifted; who are born to enjoy the results of labor without doing any labor, and in whom the lack of stimulus to healthy exertion causes moral obesity, and consumption without the need of productive work breeds satiety. Intemperance is abnormal. It is the vice of those who are starved and those who are gorged.

"Free trade in liquor would tend to reduce it, but could not abolish it. But free trade in everything would. I do not mean a sneaking, half-hearted, and half-witted 'tariff reform,' but that absolute, thorough free trade which would not only abolish the custom house and the excise, but would do away with every tax on the products of labor and every restriction on the exertion of labor, and would leave everyone free to do whatever did not infringe the ten commandments."