

WETS WORKING FOR STRENGTH IN ALL STATES

Believe Ultimate Fate of Prohibition Is Up to Commonwealths.

By Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance
WASHINGTON, Jan. 24.—Anticipating settlement of the prohibition problem by states rather than congress, prominent wet leaders have launched a movement for election of legislatures that will repeal state enforcement acts, it was learned today.

The campaign to restrict major enforcement activities to the federal government is based on reports that President Hoover and the law enforcement commission eventually will recommend that the federal undertake the major share of the work.

In view of the commission's recent report and utterances of Chairman Wickersham, many predict it will recommend that the federal authorities confine their efforts to enforcement of the constitutional provisions against manufacture and sale on a large scale, importation, exportation and transportation.

In effect, this plan would make the existing dry agencies responsible for closing the borders and coast line against smuggling, state borders against interstate shipment and arrest of bootleggers operating on a big scale. Policing of cities and towns and rural districts under this program would be left to local authorities, and in some respects it would be a local option mystery.

Buck Passing
"The states are going to keep this problem on the federal doorstep," asserted former Senator Wadsworth of New York, who is a director of the association against the eighteenth amendment. "They will throw it right back to the central government."

Wadsworth, whose strong views led to rumors he might run for Governor in New York as a wet candidate, said he would continue to work for repeal within the party. The great objective, in his opinion, is to elect legislatures which will not permit the states to undertake dry law enforcement on the scale required by the proposed plan.

States which have no enforcement act are New York, Maryland, Wisconsin, Montana and Nevada. Massachusetts will take a referendum on repeal of the measure next fall, and Wadsworth predicted that the Bay state as well as many others soon would register their sentiment against prohibition. "I find opposition growing stronger all the time," he said.

Know Congress Is Dry
Influential wets like the New Yorker know from their experience that congress is overwhelmingly dry, and that bills for repeal or modification will get nowhere. Though the noisy and exciting debates keep the question in the headlines and the people's minds,

the wets in both houses look for an adverse vote if either proposal reaches a showdown. So men like Wadsworth, as well as other directors of the organized opposition to the dry laws, are centering their fight in the various state capitals. Various signs are taken as indicating that the Wickersham body eventually will try to throw more responsibility on the forty-eight commonwealths. The chairman's letter to Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt at the Governors' conference last summer carried a formal submission of such a plan. It is the accepted view of drys and the administration. The commission's report and Attorney-General Mitchell's statement pointed toward a desire for greater co-operation, as did the suggestion that local police be clothed with more authority to make arrests for violation of dry laws.



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