

Uneasy Lies Head That Wears The Prohibition Czar's Crown

By CHARLES P. STEWART
Washington.—Uneasy lies the head that wears the dry czar's crown.

What does it matter to Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Seymour Lowman, who has been wearing it for nearly a couple of years now (and that's a long time for a dry reign), whether he is on the point of being deprived of his crown or having his realm yanked out from under him?

One way will make him just as much an ex-czar as the other.

It is officially denied that Czar Lowman has been given a limited number of days or weeks to abdicate in.

Generally official denials are at a heavy discount but this one has an air of verisimilitude—because President Hoover is known to believe that little can be accomplished by a mere changing of dry czars—that the present system of called prohibition enforcement is wrong fundamentally—that the country can be made dryer without any specifically designated dry czar.

One of the issues upon which Mr. Hoover may almost be said to have campaigned for president

was his plan to re-organize, re-classify and consolidate all the activities of the executive branch of the government.

This plan included the concentration of its prohibition activities in the attorney general's department.

It is a big undertaking and the president probably did not necessarily intend to begin with prohibition enforcement—which is included in it. Indications are that he has since decided it will be best to start with that, start soon and get it out of the way as speedily as possible—inasmuch as it is becoming evident he will not get a minute's peace in the meantime otherwise.

Perhaps ex-Czar Lowman will then be permitted to remain as assistant secretary of the treasury, in charge of customs and the coast guard, but he will have nothing further to do with prohibition.

However, President Hoover's first step must be to ask congress to authorize the proposed re-arrangement.

Congress may balk.

Drys, as well as wets, are divided on the subject. If anything, the wets are more favorable than drys to the presidential program.

What will its effect be?

The drys have their own sort of personnel already pretty well installed in the treasury department—will the justice department be equally manageable? Will it improve on the treasury department's efficiency?—or will it regard the dry law as just one law among many to be enforced and give it no special consideration? Will it shun the spectacular? If so, will that mean that prohibition is accepted at last?—or that it is rapidly in process of being forgotten? On the other hand, will



SEYMOUR LOWMAN

the justice department simply intensify the treasury's ballyhoo?—and who will that benefit?

It is not easy to see how enforcement activities can very well be conducted exclusively by the attorney general anyway.

He can prosecute law violators—but can he catch them?—to prosecute.

The treasury's staff of inland leuths can be turned over to his jurisdiction, yes. But not the coast guard. Not the customs border patrol. These forces must stay under treasury supervision.

How about the labor department's anti-smuggling staff?

There has been considerable recent talk of enlisting the marines' help in resisting the wet invasion.

The secretary of the navy can hardly yield command of the marine corps to the attorney general.

The commerce department is suggested as the proper authority to superintend releases of inland.

It is easy to propose consolidation; maybe not so easy to consolidate.

A glance at prohibition's past may be enlightening.

In pre-Volstead days, as everybody doubtless is aware, the treasury department was interested in intendants solely for purposes of taxation. From having fought moon-shining on a small scale—and a very little smuggling—it inherited the job of dry law enforcement.

David F. Houston was President Wilson's secretary of the treasury then, but prohibition was no such nightmare to him as it became under Secretary Andrew W. Mellon, his successor.

At the outset the "prohibition unit," as it was called, though a treasury subdivision, was a pretty independent institution.

Even the assistant secretary directly in charge of internal revenue was not held very strictly accountable for dry enforcement at that time. Internal Revenue Commissioner Daniel C. Roper, William C. Williams, his successor, and, in turn, David H. Blair, were closer to the ring in—rather unpleasantly so.

Still, the backstop for most trouble in those days was the prohibition commissioner, in direct charge of the "dry unit"—John F. Kramer of Ohio, to begin with.

Kramer, appointed late in 1919, lasted the better part of 20 months.

A Wilson appointee, there was nothing brilliant enough in his record to compel his retention under the Harding administration and Roy A. Haynes, also of Ohio, followed him in June, 1921.

Popular with the Anti-Saloon League, Haynes hung onto his post even after unsatisfactory enforcement conditions had resulted in the re-organization marked by the appointment of Gen. Lincoln C. Andrews, a retired army officer, to the assistant secretaryship of the treasury especially in charge of all dry activities.

With Andrews' advent in April (April 1, by the way) of 1925, for the first time the coast guard entered into the situation.

Haynes, relegated to the rear, though still nominally prohibition commissioner, finally resigned and was succeeded by James E. Jones, who had served under him as assistant.

Upon Jones' ultimate resignation also, Dr. James M. Doran was promoted from his place as head of the bureau's chemical division to the commissionership—not as an administrator, for Andrews had assumed all such duties, but as a technical man and practical prohibitionist.

Doran took office as commissioner in May, 1927, two months before Andrews' retirement in New York state.

Shortly before quitting General Andrews expressed his opinion before a congressional committee that he had stopped less than 5 per cent of the liquor smuggling into the country, that nearly 1,750,000 stills were in operation in the United States and that 2,000,000 persons were engaged in various forms of bootlegging.

Lowman's initial difficulty was his garrulity.

At one time an order was issued forbidding him to talk for

publication, but it failed to keep him quiet for long.

He made embarrassing charges of graft in the dry service.

A statement from him that the treasury is required by law to grant the freedom of American ports to certain tourists arriving from abroad—when no such law exists—greatly fretted his superiors.

Matters were made worse by his perhaps-undiplomatic defense of recent prohibition killings by coast and border guardsmen.

The last straw seems to have been the plans for a dry educational campaign in the public

schools, found simmering in the prohibition bureau—with whom Hoover they may have originated.

Washington's best friends in America has yet to find its first efficient dry law enforcement administrator.

That President Hoover wants to get to the bottom of the system itself, with a view to putting it on an effective working basis, is the general accepted theory in the capital.

He will not do it without vigorous opposition in congress, how-

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