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Prohibition In Maine: 1923 Address of Percival P. Baxter, Governor of Maine, at the State Convention of Maine Woman's Christian Temperance Union

Percival P. Baxter

Office of Governor Percival P. Baxter

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Prohibition In Maine 1923

ADDRESS OF
PERCIVAL P. BAXTER

Governor of Maine

AT THE
STATE CONVENTION
OF

Maine Woman's
Christian Temperance Union
PITTSFIELD

OCTOBER 3, 1923



STATE CAPITOL
AUGUSTA

MADAME PRESIDENT AND LADIES:

This State is honored by the presence of the National President of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and it affords me a great deal of pleasure to welcome Miss Gordon to Maine. A copy of Miss Gordon's address to the National Convention, "The Marching Mothers of the Crusade," was forwarded to me from Columbus, and I read every word of it with deep interest. The gathering that you have just held in Ohio must have inspired you all, for certainly you have reason to be proud of the accomplishments of the past 50 years.

PIONEER WORK

Your organization is one that has "carried on" earnestly and with entire consistency for half a century. It is difficult to picture or remember the conditions that existed in this country, as well as in foreign countries, fifty years ago. What personal and moral courage was required of that little band of prayerful women who in 1873 started out on their crusade to overcome the liquor traffic! The story of those women who began their work in the very worst spots of some of our great cities, is remarkable. They never allowed themselves to be discouraged, and perhaps the best way to summarize their accomplishments is to imagine what present day conditions would have been had it not been for the W. C. T. U.

The pioneer work in temperance has been done, and it now remains for all of us to help carry it forward to completion. This may require several years more, for our people must be educated to a sense of their individual responsibilities, and must be made to understand that the laws of this country are to be strictly and impartially enforced. In both these respects the next five, or ten years at the most, will witness a great change, not only in America but the world over.

CLEAN LIVING AND CLEAR THINKING.

The cause which you stand for is one that all good citizens should endorse; the cause of *clean living* and *clear thinking*. Without these fundamentals there can be no real progress. We are passing through critical times. The forces of Evil are marshaled against us and it may be too hopeful for us to say they are fighting in their last ditch, but I believe they are very close to that extremity. If the thoughtful, self-respecting, law-abiding people of this country will stand together, the successful outcome of this cause is assured.

TWO COURSES FOR A GOVERNOR.

There are two courses open to a Governor in regard to his attitude on public matters. He either can follow the line of least resistance and allow things to shape themselves, or he can, when he feels it necessary, go against the current and do his best to correct such evils as come to his attention. He may remain silent and refrain from telling the citizens of his State what is going on, and what he thinks about public matters, or he may speak out openly and fearlessly and take the public into his confidence. As far as I am concerned, although it is not always a comfortable one, I deliberately have chosen the latter course, notwithstanding the fact that some of those who would be my advisers are constantly telling me not to "stir things up," and to "leave things alone." Since I have been Governor I have not hesitated to speak plainly, for I believe it is the Chief Executive's duty to do everything in his power to inform and interest citizens in governmental affairs.

HANCOCK COUNTY.

Recently I made an address at Bar Harbor and spoke about enforcement in Hancock County. The conditions in that section of the State for a long period have disturbed me. Late last winter, at least six months ago, I called Sheriff Wescott to my office in Augusta and had a conference with him. He admitted he had not taken any special personal interest in enforcement. I expressed my deep concern over this question, and the Sheriff assured me he immediately would take hold of the liquor question, and that I would have no further cause for complaint. We shook hands as a pledge of good faith between man to man, and he returned home. That was six months ago and as far as he has been concerned conditions have not improved. Until the Federal authorities intervened the situation was unchanged, and the notorious bootlegger Hurlihy and his associates felt perfectly safe to ridicule the Governor and his attempts to have the prohibition laws enforced. Investigations have been made by our Attorney-General's Department, upon order from me, and the matter is now being given due consideration. The Sheriff of Hancock County will be given an opportunity to resign. If he does not do so he will be summoned before the Governor and Council on the charge of inefficiency and neglect of duty, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of this State, and his removal will be asked for. I have acted deliberately and not hastily in this matter, and have been unusually patient. The Governor of this State intends to do everything in his power to have our laws respected, obeyed and enforced.

MAINE SHERIFFS

I have high regard for the Sheriffs of this State who, as a rule, are upright, law-abiding men. They face a difficult situation and I have few criticisms to make of them. In fact, my relations with most of these officers are cordial and based on mutual confidence. Throughout my administration whenever occasion has offered I have spoken encouragingly to them and of them, and on the whole I do not believe that any State in the Union has more dependable and upright officers than has Maine. I wish that every Sheriff was doing his best to enforce our prohibitory laws and that I could speak approvingly of them without even a single exception.

The majority of our counties are in excellent condition in so far as enforcement is concerned. There are some where conditions are far from satisfactory and need to be improved; there are others where enforcement always will be difficult on account of their bordering upon a foreign country. Allowance must be made for these circumstances. I want the people of the State to know my opinion of Maine's Sheriffs and their deputies. Newspapers are inclined to be sensational, and they often misinterpret what a Governor says. The Sheriffs and their deputies certainly will average as high in good citizenship as any other group of men within our State.

EIGHTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE AND LIQUOR.

In my recent Bar Harbor speech before the Maine Federation of Women's Clubs I made reference to conditions that existed in Augusta during the 81st Legislative Session, and my frankness aroused some unfriendly comment. Certain newspapers deliberately inferred that I was criticising all the members of the Legislature, and accused them all of indulging in liquor. Of course such was not the case. In the 81st Legislature there was the usual number of high-minded, law-abiding men who were a credit to the State, and who took their legislative work seriously. The fact that some of these men held different opinions from my own in no way lessens my respect for them, for honest differences of opinion always must be recognized.

My ideal of a Legislator is a man who has the interest of the public at heart; who is uninfluenced by unworthy or selfish motives, or by the pleas of special groups or interests; and who is scrupulous in his personal obedience to law. Of all public officials, the Legislators who make laws should obey them and should be wholly above suspicion. Many of the members of the last Legislature lived up to these requirements. It is necessary, however, occasionally to shock the complacency of our citizens and to tell them disagreeable truths. Anyone who came to Augusta last winter and stayed for a considerable

period learned of liquor conditions that never should have been permitted, and my speaking of this should serve as a warning against a recurrence of a disgraceful state of affairs.

ENFORCEMENT IN MAINE.

Enforcement conditions in Maine are constantly improving. The work that the Federal authorities are doing is helpful, and although I wish we, ourselves, could handle our own affairs, I welcome this assistance from the outside, hoping that the time will not be far distant when we shall be able to get along without it. On every hand I receive encouraging reports. The Highway enforcement officers who patrol our roads, tell me that there is less rum-running than a year ago; that conditions around our numerous way-side dance halls are cleaner; that there is not so much liquor consumed at these places, and that fewer men now offer it for sale under cover of darkness. The manufacture of home-brew is on the wane, for people will not bother with these nasty concoctions. For a time it was considered "smart" to make home-brew and many people delighted in telling their friends about it. The novelty has passed and conditions are more normal. The conductors on the railroad trains, especially the late night trains, tell me it is seldom they have a drunken man as a passenger. In former years the smoking cars on night trains were dirty places, crowded with men under the influence of liquor, and conductors were obliged constantly to be on guard, often calling for help to keep the peace. In the Maine woods there is very little liquor consumed, and our lumber camps are rapidly becoming as quiet and orderly as the best regulated communities. This is due not only to enforcement officers, but also to the wise management of some of our leading timber companies. Within a week the recently appointed New England Federal Enforcement Officer called upon me. He has had wide experience in other states and was making a tour of Maine. He was greatly pleased at conditions here, and when I told him of some of our troubles, he said that Maine was to all intents and purposes, DRY, and remarked, "You ought to see what we face in other states."

THE NEED OF THE DAY.

What we need above all else is an awakened public conscience. Every citizen should be glad and ready to co-operate with enforcement officers and should be on guard lest he himself, in the slightest degree, transgresses our enforcement laws. It is a "good citizen's" duty to do this. Public sentiment must be strengthened both by the press and the pulpit. The report of United States Attorney-General Daugherty shows that the weakest spot in our armor is in "high places." The

Department of Justice gives this report high praise and says, "The facts set forth reveal one of the most tragic epochs in American history relative to law enforcement. The report shows that the department of justice has been called upon to prosecute a member of the judiciary, prominent members of the American bar, high officials of the federal and state governments, multi-millionaires, scions of the nation's aristocracy, and the sordid story of assassination, bribery and corruption found its way into the very sanctums wherein the inviolability of the law was presumed to have been held sacred."

I have had some experience along these lines, and have known of cases where men who had held responsible public positions actually have warned boot-leggers that they were being watched by enforcement officers. When such a state of affairs as this exists, it shows that the moral sense of some people in the community needs to be strengthened. Can we expect the foreigners who come to our shores to obey our laws when many of our own people openly flaunt them?

One of the principal newspapers in criticising me for having exposed liquor conditions at Augusta last winter would have it appear that the brightest men were those who indulged in liquor. This paper admits that liquor was freely used and says such always has been the case in Legislatures and that it cannot be avoided. There is nothing new in this reasoning. We all remember how often it used to be said of a man who had ruined his life by drink, that he was one of the "brightest" men that ever was, and some would have it appear that almost every drunkard was a genius. It is true that some men who have over-indulged in liquor have been brilliant men, but the question can properly be asked, how much more brilliant might they have been had they refrained from weakening their bodies and their minds by the use of alcohol? We must drive liquor out of the home and the club, and out of politics and the legislature. The bootleggers' patrons are as a rule well-to-do, well-dressed citizens who brazenly defy the law. We all can recall the days not long ago, when in some places in the State whiskey and beer were important factors in elections. Great advances, however, have been made in the purity of our elections, but bootleggers still flourish on the patronage of the prosperous.

MUNICIPAL COURTS AND JURIES.

Our Municipal Courts are the ones into which the liquor cases in the first instance come. These courts, as a rule, are living up to high ideals and are imposing jail sentences in accordance with our statutes. I have not hesitated to make my own judicial appointments, and where, for one reason or another, I felt there should be a change it has been made, even though my doing so has occasioned consternation in certain

ranks. If there is a weak spot in our administration of justice occasionally it is found in those juries that, disregarding the instructions of the Judge, and ignoring the evidence presented to them, discharge persons who clearly are guilty of liquor offenses. In certain cases it has been necessary for a Judge of our Supreme Court to discharge juries, and to severely reprimand them because they wilfully disregarded the judge's charge and the evidence.

NEW LEGISLATION.

The 1923 Legislature passed a number of laws that are proving helpful in enforcement. As the years go by it is necessary to make changes to cure defects that only are discovered in actual practice.

"WHISPERINGS."

There are persons in every community who by "whisperings" seek to undermine the character and reputation, not only of private citizens, but especially of public officials. Those who indulge in this practice are prompted by unworthy motives, for if they wished to be helpful in remedying evils they would speak out openly and not be afraid to show themselves. There are three matters that come in the "whispering" class that I want to speak frankly to you about.

THE FIRST "WHISPERING," HALLOWELL SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

It has been reported to me that when the "proper" time comes, from a political point of view, certain evil conditions at the Hallowell School for Girls will be disclosed and that the present State Administration will be entirely discredited by these revelations. Throughout my administration I have concealed nothing, and if today there is anything wrong in State affairs I shall be the first one to speak of it. The members of the Governor's Council have been to the institution referred to and inspected it carefully. I, myself, have done so, and have gone from one end of it to the other. This institution is a credit to the State, and I wish every woman here would go to Hallowell and look it over. It is true that for some years past this institution has needed more attention than has been given it, but that was before the present State administration. The Councilors and myself have responded to every appeal and have done everything that the Trustees have asked of us. New bath-rooms, new hot water systems and sanitary arrangements have been installed by direction of the Council and myself. We have not hesitated to take from our emergency fund the money needed for this work. Not an item has been neglected.

Up to the time of the present administration the institution

in question had but one nurse. By order of the present Governor and Council we now have three nurses. There was a time, some years ago, when the institution had a resident doctor, but when I came into office a local doctor was being employed. Some months ago we authorized the employment of a resident physician and although that doctor left last week we now are looking for, and soon will obtain another. For the first time in the history of the State, our Department of Health has taken hold of the matter vigorously, and Dr. Coombs, who has charge of our special venereal disease work, for several months has been devoting himself to this school and now is giving his entire time to clearing up conditions there.

In years gone by when a girl entered the institution, one physical examination was made, and this was not followed up. It is today. We now know just what the real conditions are. The present records show a larger number of afflicted than before, but this is due to our present thoroughly scientific methods and records, and because we face the situation more frankly and openly than ever has been done before.

INFIRMARY.

The last Legislature appropriated \$20,000 for an infirmary and I pocket-vetoed the bill. This money, however, is in the State Treasury, is available if the emergency warrants, and the Governor and Council will not hesitate to use it if there is need. This infirmary could not be built and equipped much within a year, and has nothing to do with conditions that exist at Hallowell at the present time. To now build an infirmary would be to "lock the door after the horse has been stolen."

The State School for Girls is doing good work, and nothing is concealed from the public. Careful investigation will show that the present administration has done much more for the institution than ever has been done for it before. We have nothing to be ashamed of. Most of the girls from the Hallowell School go out into the community and lead normal, self-respecting lives. If this were not the case, the institution would be a failure. Of all the wards of the State none need to be cared for as carefully and as sympathetically as the girls at Hallowell and the women at Skowhegan. These unfortunates often are the victims of man's passions. The man escapes, while the woman pays. If anyone today is mediaeval enough to believe in double standards of morals, one for men and another for women, a trip to Skowhegan and Hallowell will suffice to convince any decent person that men, equally with women, should pay the penalty of their weaknesses.

If there has been any fault in the way the institution has been managed, it certainly is not that of the Governor and Council. There is a board of trustees appointed to care for the institution and I believe they intend to do their best to give

these girls a fair start in life. I welcome any investigation anybody cares to make. If there is any unwholesome growth, any cancer in our State departments or institutions, I want it promptly removed so that it will not spread and affect the whole body.

THE GOVERNOR'S RELIGION, ANOTHER "WHISPERING."

Another "whispering" story that you all have heard is that the present Governor is a Roman Catholic. This story has been spread in an underhanded way all over the State, for the purpose of stirring up bitter religious differences, and affecting political situations. If I belonged to the church referred to, no doubt I should be proud of it, and gladly would stand here and frankly tell you so. As a matter of fact I was born and brought up in the Congregational Church, have attended it all my life and am loyal to it today and always will be so. It is my church. Being a Congregationalist, I am not a Roman Catholic, nor a Methodist, nor anything else but a Congregationalist. That has been the church of my ancestors from early colonial times, and I yield to no one in attachment to it.

It is unfortunate and cruel that anyone should be so vicious and evil-minded as to make deliberate misstatements for the sole purpose of undermining a fellow-citizen who occupies the highest office in the gift of the people. In this case it is especially cutting to have these false reports started and circulated largely by certain bitter personal enemies who attend my own church in Portland. Individuals who will stoop so low as to knowingly mislead their fellow-citizens, will stop at nothing.

In this free country of ours there should be no religious animosities; each group should be allowed to worship God according to the dictates of conscience. Any man who lives up to the principles of his church, be it Catholic, Protestant, or Hebrew, is a good citizen and never need be ashamed of the Church to which he belongs. I have many warm friends in the Roman Church, and respect and admire them. They are loyal, law-abiding citizens, whom I am proud to know and associate with. I recognize no distinctions of race or creed, either in my public or private life. The "whispering" that I refer to has become so widespread, is so untrue and so many absurd changes have been rung upon it, that I take this occasion to publicly deny them one and all, and to condemn those who are responsible for them. Few public officials escape; but untruths, though unpleasant, must be borne patiently and with fortitude.

A TRIP TO KATAHDIN THE THIRD "WHISPERING."

Another "whispering" that just has come to my attention was started in Portland a few days ago. It began to be "whis-

pered" about that the Governor was not as consistent a total abstainer as he pretends to be, and that when the "proper" time arrived this would be spread broadcast through underground channels. A friend of many years standing, well known in the State, with whom I took a vacation trip, makes the statement that he once saw me take a "drink of whiskey." I remember the incident to which he must refer. Three years ago last August (1920), I made the ascent of Mt. Katahdin. Our party tramped from 30 to 35 miles over the roughest trails I ever saw before we reached the base of the mountain. The next day we made the ascent, leaving camp about 4 o'clock, A.M., and returning about sunset. It was the hottest day of the summer and was the hardest day's work of my life, for we took the longest and hardest route. Only a portion of the party, myself included, had the courage and strength to keep on and complete the journey. On returning to camp I was so exhausted that I could neither eat nor sleep. Feverish, drenched with perspiration, and utterly played out, I lay down in my sleeping bag, thirty miles from civilization. Fearing that I was developing a fever, I took a dose of quinine and whiskey and spent a miserable night. I was fearful that I was in for a real sickness, and, as a matter of fact, on my return to Portland I was for three months under the care of a doctor. That is the story of my "transgression," and the cost thereof is seen in the willingness of a friend to distort what of itself was a harmless incident, in order that it might appear that the Governor does not live up to his alleged convictions. Instead of having this incident "whispered about" for the coming months and having the story grow with every repetition, I speak frankly so that this, along with the other stories, may be known to all who read the daily papers.

MY VISITS TO STATE INSTITUTIONS.

I have spoken about the Hallowell School. Since I became Governor I have taken a special interest in all of our State institutions and personally have visited every one of them except the Normal School at Castine and the Boys' School at South Portland. Both of these I have visited in years previous. It is quite an undertaking to go through all our State institutions, hospitals, sanitoriums, normal schools, the University, farms, experiment stations, etc., etc. I have examined as many dormitories, kitchens, ice-boxes, cellars and preserve and linen closets as has any other person in the State, but I have enjoyed doing this and know that good comes of it. Our State institutions are well managed. Of course improvements can always be made, and I wish the State today had \$1,000,000 to spend in improving and extending the State's work. We, however, have no reason to be ashamed of what we have, and what we are doing.

Our institutional trustees and managers are interested in

their work and are rendering a public service. If other citizens of the State would take more of an interest in these establishments it would encourage those in charge, and would mean much for the inmates. As I have remarked, the Skowhegan Reformatory and Hallowell School present the most difficult problems. At Skowhegan we are enlarging the central building. Two years ago the local water supply gave out and we brought the town water to the property, for the sanitary arrangements were not what they should be. Due to the present drought the women there are obliged to carry their drinking water, but all arrangements are properly taken care of, and that institution also is in reasonably good condition.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND PARENTS.

What I have said about our citizens taking an interest in our State institutions applies with equal force to our public schools. Many mothers and fathers send their children to school and they seem to forget, or lose interest in them. Parents seldom become acquainted with the teachers or the superintendents, and almost never invite them to their homes. If matters do not go just as they should, the parents are the first ones to criticise. I wish every mother and father in the State sometime during the school year would take interest enough in the schools to inspect them and make suggestions. The public school is the basic institution and there is no one in the State who believes in it more than does the present Governor. Having gone to the public schools myself, from the lowest grade through the high school, I feel qualified to speak of them, and last winter did not hesitate to express my views that public money should not be spent on any private or sectarian schools. The State and the municipalities offer an education to every child, and require that every child shall be given a certain training. The doors of the public school are open to all, and if there are those who do not care to avail themselves of this great privilege, they certainly should not ask the State to help support schools that are not strictly under State control.

A FALSE PRINCIPLE.

I read a statement in a daily paper a few days ago to the effect that if the State does not help support private schools it should not have anything to say about their curriculum. This reasoning is false, because the State itself is the guardian of the welfare of *all* children, and has the right to insist that every child shall receive a certain minimum education. The State says to the parent: "You *must* give your child an education and the State prescribes that certain fundamentals shall be complied with." If this education is given in private schools, at least the minimum standards should apply. I would like to see every child in Maine going to the public schools and

getting that training in citizenship and democracy that comes only from contact with boys and girls drawn from every walk in life.

THE FORCES OF EVIL.

The fight against Evil is not yet won and probably never entirely will be. But the fact that the women of this country now have the ballot means more for law enforcement than any of us can appreciate. It has been well said that "the 19th Amendment to the Federal Constitution is the strongest supporter of the 18th Amendment." This country is being flooded with propaganda for "Personal Liberty," for "Light Beer and Wines," and for all the other false pleas of the liquor interests. Scarcely a day passes without some of this worthless material coming to my office. Some groups of selfish men are spending huge sums of money in a desperate effort to revive a lost cause. The liquor interests that center in New York and Washington do not overlook anything that will help them, and they seek to tear down any public official who has the courage to stand against them. In my opinion these interests today have their representatives here in Maine, and that source is responsible for much of the criticism that is being "whispered" about against the present State Administration. To get a correct understanding of the desperation of one's enemies and of the depths to which they will go, I repeat what a prominent citizen of the State said of me a short time ago. "I wish to God we could find something against the private life of the Governor and then we would be able to control him." That savors of blackmail and discloses what one's enemies would like to do. The liquor interests would be overjoyed to have the State of Maine betray its time-honored principles, for if they can make headway here, they would be vastly encouraged. I, however, am glad to stand against them, and they know they never will receive any comfort from me. The State of Maine ever will remain loyal to the principles advocated by its distinguished son, General Neal Dow, and if the liquor propagandists to whom I have referred could but come to my office and see the prominent position I have accorded the portrait of the "Father of Prohibition," they would be convinced that they are wasting their time and money in Maine.

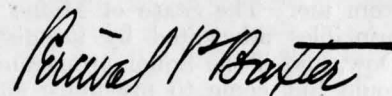
EDUCATE THE CHILDREN.

The W. C. T. U. is about to launch a campaign of education both with the adults and the children. I am especially interested in the latter. They are the ones who should be taught law enforcement and law obedience. The present generation is growing up without a knowledge of liquor. Most of them do not know what a saloon or bar-room is, and after the "old stagers"

have passed along, a new generation will come upon the stage of life and all this turmoil and agitation will cease. Every good seed that now is planted in the child's heart will bear fruit. It is hardly worth while to bother much with those grown-ups whose ways are set, and who too often take pride in their many weaknesses. I would rather start one child right than to waste my time in fruitless efforts to reform several adults. Everything that the W. C. T. U. can do to encourage the various causes that help the boys and girls means much for future generations. The Y. M. C. A., Y. W. C. A., the Boys' Conferences held in various sections of the State, the Boy and Girl Scouts, County Clubs, Father and Son Associations—all these are contributing towards better citizenship. I look forward to the future with hope, and again pledge my allegiance to the cause in which you all are so deeply interested.

In the course of a few days I plan to attend a conference in Washington upon invitation of President Coolidge. At that time the enforcement situation throughout the country will be discussed. This conference no doubt will prove of great benefit in strengthening public sentiment, and in bringing home to our citizens each individual's solemn duty to strictly obey our prohibitory laws, and to support and encourage those whose duty it is to enforce them.

President Coolidge is a great moral leader. He can be depended upon to take a firm stand on enforcement. With the background of sound New England traditions, with a training in statecraft that cannot be surpassed, with character and unusual ability, and what is of the greatest importance, with a wife who is a tower of strength and in entire accord with him, President Coolidge is destined to lead this country in the paths of righteousness. It will afford me an inspiration to be in Washington with our President, and you may count upon me to co-operate with, and support him in every way.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Percival P. Baxter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending from the end.

Governor of Maine.

