

Bishop Du Vernet and Liquor Licences

In an Open Letter to The News, the Bishop Points Out How Politics in Municipal Affairs plays into Hands of Provincial License System.

To the Citizens of Prince Rupert:
In all civilized countries by common consent it is deemed necessary for the welfare of the community to throw round the liquor trade certain restrictions. The licence system is no exception to this rule.

There are restrictions as to the number of licences to be issued. There are restrictions as to the days on which liquor can be sold. There are restrictions even as to the hours of the day when liquor can be sold.

These restrictions are all made for the benefit of the community at large, and one would think that all right minded people would heartily unite in seeing that these restrictions are rigidly enforced. The licence-holders themselves, knowing that they have been granted a most profitable monopoly under certain restrictions which aim at lessening the curse of excessive drinking, should be the very first to see that the law is observed, but until the element of private gain is eliminated from the liquor trade there must be a constant fight between those who have the best interest of the community at heart and those who are looking out only for their own pockets. The trouble is that while the better class hotel-keepers would gladly do their part to get rid of the objectionable features of the liquor trade there are always a certain number of people who, through political influence, or business threats, or other considerations, manage to secure licences with no other intention than to get all the money they can out of the trade regardless of the lives they blight and the homes they wreck. The better class who are not in the business are brought into competition with these human parasites and at once feel the uselessness of restrictions which are not being rigidly enforced in every case.

People have no conception of the tremendous power the motive of private gain exerts in the liquor business. This is the inherent weakness of our present licence system. We should blame not so much the men as the system. First of all this power has to exert itself in political and municipal affairs. Liquor licences have to be procured through influence and when procured they have to be retained. Our system mixes up provincial and municipal matters. The provincial government appoints the three licence commissioners, but one is the mayor ex-officio, and another must be an alderman, so that the municipal voters have a voice indirectly in the case of two.

The same holds true in regard to the police commissioners, who chiefly determine whether the restrictions of the licence Act shall be observed or not. It is necessary, therefore for the liquor trade to bring influence to bear in two directions—political and municipal. Where is this influence to begin? First with the individual voter, then with the candidate seeking election. Already, I am informed, scores of names have been added to the voters' list through the energetic work of the liquor party. They are wide awake because of the money interest at stake, while citizens who are concerned in the community as a whole seem to be asleep.

Next there is the influence brought to bear upon candidates. The liquor party stands together as one

man for their own betterment, while citizens who otherwise would wish to stand together for the betterment of the community are divided. They allow party politics to determine to a great extent their choice of a candidate. The consequence is that while the candidate who will promise secretly to use his influence for the support of the liquor interests is assured of a solid vote, the candidate who is fearless enough to announce his intention that he will insist upon a vigorous enforcement of the laws intended for the benefit of the people cannot count upon the undivided vote of the better class of citizens. This is something which should be rectified, and it can only be rectified by the creation of a better public spirit.

In a community where there are so many coming and going, and so few men with families having sons and daughters to be protected or ruined, it is exceedingly difficult to create a sound and healthy public spirit. One thing that is needed is proper leadership. The advocate of extreme measures cannot expect a large following. We cannot leap with one bound from the conditions of a pioneer town into a state of perfection. The work of uplifting the community must be done gradually. Here a little and there a little, but if we are to keep our city from drifting into corruption all right minded citizens must learn to stand firmly together for what is clearly in the best interests of the community as a whole.

Respectable hotel-keepers doing a legitimate business in accordance with the wise restrictions of the Liquor Act are worthy of esteem. Among such I have those I count as friends. But an organized combine animated solely by the desire for increased profits, regardless of the consequences to the community, with paid agents, paid canvassers, paid newspaper-writers, paid platform speakers, paid lawyers, etc., working consistently and persistently, beginning with the voters' list, for one supreme object—to control our city aldermen, to influence our provincial members, and to dictate to our cabinet ministers for the promotion of the interests of "The Trade"—this is nothing short of a national menace and every loyal citizen who loves his country should do his utmost, both by his vote and influence, to break the power of the liquor trade in provincial and municipal politics.

F. H. DU VERNET,
Bishop of Caledonia.

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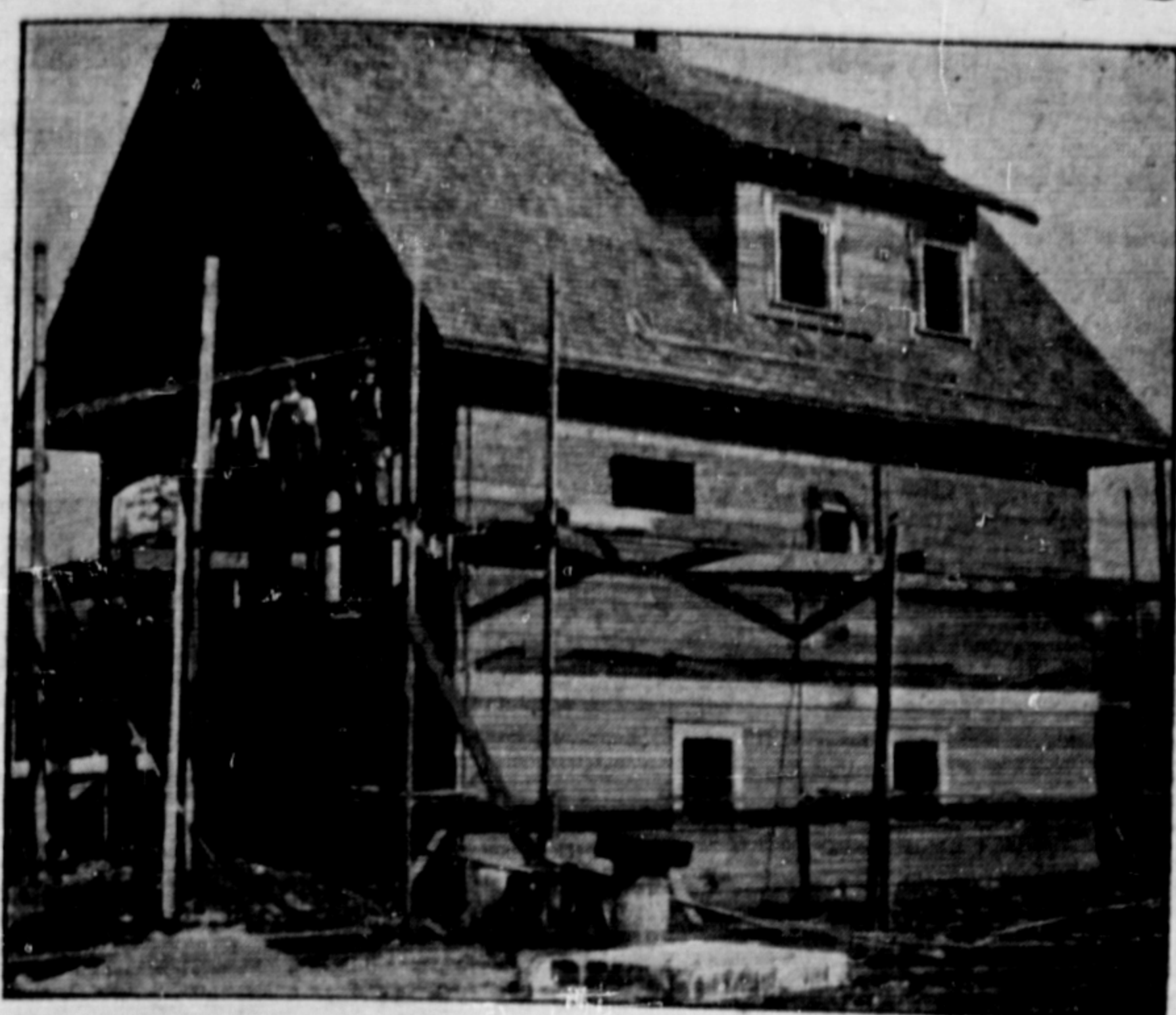
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... ITEMS OF ... SPORT!

"Knockout" Brown, who has not appeared in the ring since his fight with Matt Wells, met Joe Bedell at New York last week and had the better of eight rounds in a ten-round bout. Only by clinching and holding did Bedell last through the ten rounds. There were no knock-downs.

Another fighter has entered the ranks of the come-backs. Joe Choynski, who was about the toughest man in the ring for his size ten years ago, is out with a challenge to any middleweight in the world. Joe, who has been making Pittsburgh his home for the past six months, wants to get back in the game again after an absence of five years.

The veteran scrapper, whom many heavyweights claim was the hardest

hitting miller in the game a decade ago, is anxious to show the people that he can still travel some. While his deft has been hurled at every middleweight in the country, Buck Crouse, the local boy, is the one it is especially meant for.

Choynski refereed the Crouse-Berger bout at Duquesne Garden and saw Buck slam the former southsider to sleep in four rounds. Joe believes he can take Buck's measure and wants a bout as soon as one can be arranged. He acknowledges that that northsider is one of the classiest scrappers in the country today; nevertheless he feels that he can beat him in a six-round battle. Joe has been in training ever since he came to this city, as his duties as boxing instructor at the Pittsburgh Athletic Club holds him to the job daily.

Choynski, it will be remembered, is the only man who ever knocked out Jack Johnson. It took him just three rounds to polish off the present champion ten years ago down in Galveston. However, "Lil" Arthur wasn't quite as classy as he is today.

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