

# ATTITUDE OF PUBLIC IN GENERAL IS NOT AGAINST PROHIBITION LAW

Vast majority Of People Look With Jest On Use Of Liquor;  
Plenty Of It Used By All Types

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**Taken as a whole, the public attitude toward the use of liquor and intoxicants in general in Johnson City and vicinity,** is one of indifference. Although few will come out openly and say, some large percent do not want the prohibition laws enforced.

Keep in mind, these statements are in reference in the citizenship at large, and do not include the officers, who are doing all they can in their handicapped position; nor does it refer to the confessed bootlegger, who of course don't want the law enforced – or repealed either, for he's got too good a thing in his business.

**Constant evidence appearing that liquor is plentiful in Johnson City and the surrounding territory; it is interesting to note the attitude of the law-abiding people.** If reduced to the last analysis and embraced in the terse statement “those who are not actively favoring and aiding in prohibition enforcement are against it, then the vast majority of the men and women making up the citizenship of the city are against prohibition.

Only in the rarest sort of instance has any citizen ever taken it upon himself to report a case of violation of the liquor laws, then go into court and aid the prosecution; and for every one who has taken that course, there have been ninety-nine to yell “fanatic!” **Stories, recently told of a preacher who conducted a raid and a woman who went into the mountains with an axe and destroyed a still, were so rare as to be sensational.**

## Commonplace

Drunkenness is commonplace and minor in this section. In extreme cases, the drinker is lodged in jail, gets sober, is fined nominally of course for the technical reason, controlling the courts, that the actual damage, injury or disorder he may have caused is inconsequential so far as anyone else is concerned, and the only province of the court is to inflict a nominal fine according to the statute. Then the drinker goes on back to his work as usual – no one has anything to say against him; he is protected by his friends, and

his social and business standing is unimpaired. These cases form only a small percent of the liquor drinking. For every person taken to jail drunk, scores have taken a drink – maybe several – and are not taken to jail. They are not legally “drunk.” Few drink alone – practically none. Men and women drink in groups – drink as a rule moderately. Their friends know it; the public knows it – their friends and acquaintances who drink with them and those who drink with someone else – as well as those who do not drink at all.

And next day they go on about their business as usual – losing none of their social, civic or business standing – and further, losing none of their religious standing.

Conversation, polite – impolite – and otherwise, is universally favorable to liquor. Those who drink openly will say so, and argue against the prohibition laws. Those who drink moderately will use liquor as the subject for clever jests and wit. Many, who do not drink at all, join in the joking discussion of liquor, with their witticisms and relating of humorous incidents connected with intoxicants – and to the majority, any incident connected with intoxicants is funny.

### **Reverse English**

Then, going on down the line – up the line they would probably prefer to have it – there is the militant teetotaler, who uses every opportunity to fight two ways – in favor of the strict enforcement of prohibition and against the known traffic. Some of these are known to be absolutely sincere – even if most of them work at the job only with voluble eloquence before an audience, and enjoy the personal publicity thereof while others get paid for their arguments, and still others – O’ yes, there are some, who want “just a wee nip” to brace them up for their prohibition eloquence, or enjoy a sip of mother’s homemade wine as an appetizer.

### **Enforcement**

But that may be taking in incidents too far away from home. Judicial evidence recently given in this district runs this way: “You’d be surprised,” says a local judge, how many prominent, wealthy, successful businessmen and high church men, will sneak around and yank the coat-tail of the judge, when some fellow has been found guilty of violating the prohibition laws, and whisper that “he’s a pretty good fellow – got a big family, steady worker, and don’t often get into trouble of this kind; can’t you let him off light – or suspend the sentence, or something! ‘Not only that, but such prominent men often come up and pay the fine of the convicted one – and you’d be surprised

again to see a list of the names of men who signed the bonds of men charged with drunkenness, transporting liquor, and making it.” And then he named a long string of them in the social and church registers of Johnson City.

Why not – they may argue. Isn’t it Christian-like to help a fellow back when he has fallen. Sure.

“Well,” the judge might soliloquize, “what’s to be done?” And what he did – and properly – was to mete out justice according to law – tempered with mercy!

A young man recently starting to a big social function was asked why he was so late being on his way. He replied: “I haven’t got my liquor yet!”

“Why of course they drink at the parties and dances,” said a popular young woman moving in the best society in the city. “That’s just part of the party, and it would be dead without it. No, the women don’t drink much – very rarely get beyond going – but men frequently pass out, and when they get so they can’t navigate, somebody puts them in a car and takes him home – maybe some of the other boys, or maybe his sister, or his wife, will play chauffeur and get him home – and the party goes on.

“No,” she continued, “don’t get the idea that everybody gets drunk; they don’t do that – just take enough to feel good. Now, there are smaller crowds usually meeting in the house of some young people, with their own little gang – who stage the drinking parties in their home, and go as far as they like. Why of course nobody thinks there is anything improper about it – nothing wrong, of course not – just a part of the game. It’s so general and commonplace that nobody even thinks it’s smart (bad) to take a drink. And then they go on about their business, and nobody thinks anything of it anymore.”

Lots of young couples – and old ones too – never take a drink. Lots of people who attend dances and parties don’t drink.

And always keep in mind that it’s just as difficult to get in Johnson City as in other cities in this part of the south.

It’s purely a manner of public sentiment – public opinion – public attitude. Frankly, it’s not against liquor. Why don’t some narrow-minded bigot jump up and holler “what’s the matter with the officers – why don’t they stop it!”

**Answer: the law won’t let them, and according to the books, the people are the law.** Because the breath smells of liquor doesn’t mean an

officer can make an arrest. Just for that, he can't. He cannot enter the home or private premises without a specific warrant secured upon an affidavit specifically describing the person or thing to be sought – **and by the time he does that, all members of the hullabaloo party are quietly sitting around the fire reading yesterday's newspaper and playing the ukulele.**

**But who cares? Almost nobody.**