

# TIME FOR SOBRIETY



**T**HE recent decision of Invercargill to re-license has once again focussed attention upon the position of the licensing trade in N.Z. It is interesting to compare the situation with that of Europe and parts of the British Empire.

N.Z. is the only country which combines a liquor referendum with her general Parliamentary elections. Figures show a growing inclination towards State Control, which might indicate a desire on the part of the people towards an intelligent approach to the whole question of the sale of alcoholic liquor in the country. Licencing laws, throughout the British Empire, and particularly in N.Z., contain much that is absurd, uneconomic, and in some cases, definitely anti-social.

## LEGAL HOURS.

The hours of the legal sale of drink are, for the most part, either inconvenient or undesirable. In normal peace time the Public Account benefits to the extent of something like L2,000,000 per annum in duty from alcohol and it does seem a short sighted policy to stop at the mere collection of the tax and ignore almost entirely the comfort or convenience of the public.

This article is not intended to advocate either the control or consumption of liquor, but it is suggested that this valuable source of revenue should be made as «painless» as possible—if such a term might be used.

## COURT CONVICTIONS.

1937	1938	1939	1940	1941
6258	7049	7661	6904	5100

This shows an annual average of 6594 convictions for drunkenness in New Zealand, while in the war years the absence overseas of a large part of the male population must be taken into account when examining these statistics. The total male population over 21 years of age, as at 1st April, 1942—including the Maori race—was 489,638.

Broadly speaking this shows drunkenness convictions to be one to every 74 men legally entitled to drink alcoholic liquor. A formidable figure! And it must be remembered that these are figures for *prosecutions* only. The incidence of persistent drunkenness never reaching the prosecution stage can only be imagined.

## CLOCK DRINKING.

There must be a reason for this position. It has been argued—perhaps rightly—that a basis for this complaint lies in the existing hours permitted for the sale of liquor. «Drinking against the clock» has long been recognised as an evil. This might be the underlying factor in this regrettable situation.

England, from whose laws New Zealand takes her lead, has as legal hours, 11 am till 3 pm and from 5 pm to 10 pm or 11 pm. These vary slightly—an hour one

