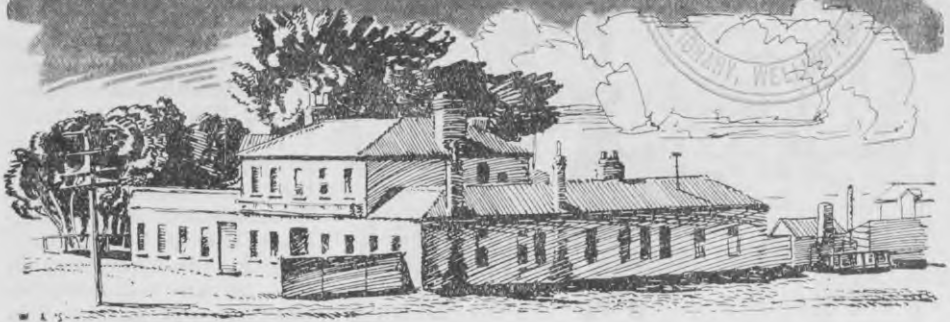


INVERCARGILL'S LICENSING TRUST



A KORERO Report

IN 1906 the last handle was pulled from the pumps in Invercargill pubs.

Some residents still have as souvenirs the little pewter measures used to fill the last glasses of whisky pushed across the counter. From that date until last November the town was legally "dry." Not in fact, of course. You could take the bus to the "White House" at Wallacetown five miles out on the road to Riverton and call for a shandy. You could bring back a dozen bottles if you didn't mind signing for them. The packed parking area at Wallacetown of a Saturday afternoon showed that Invercargillites didn't mind the distance. Just on the other side of the Waihopai River, the western limit of the no-license area, a small brewery did a roaring trade in small kegs and jars. But the old hotels became places to eat and sleep—boarding-houses dependent for their profits on accommodation only. Some closed down, some carried on, but the standards were not those of other cities where the liquor trade supplements the accommodation account.

Until 1928 no organized effort was made before the polls for the restoration of licensed premises in Invercargill. In that year, after some campaigning for restoration amongst the voters, the vote was 400 short of the required three-fifths majority. It was never more than 700 votes away at subsequent polls. Last November restoration had 46 votes to spare, and now prohibition can never

return to Invercargill. It was servicemen and servicewomen (80 per cent. of the Service vote favoured a change) who carried the day at the last poll. The result of that extra weight which tipped the scales in favour of restoration will assuredly be something different.

Invercargill is off to a fresh start in the liquor business. At first there was some argument about how she was going to start and when and where. One thing was certain. If the desert was to be legally watered, the people didn't want a flood. They did want a change from the system of irrigation which had ruled in the old days and which still rules in other parts of the country.

Some were in favour of municipal control, and pointed to the precedent in Renmark, South Australia, which has one of the best hotels in the country at a tariff of only 14s. a day. Profits are distributed for local educational, cultural, and charitable purposes.

Some pointed out that the voters had simply authorized the return of the old order; that they could do no more under the law; that they had no reform in mind when they went to the polls.

Two petitions went forward to Parliament. One supported by almost four thousand signatures, asked for municipal control, the other, with half as many petitioners, demanded the familiar Licensing Committee with applications from private individuals.