

1877

Petition for Home Protection: Issued January 8, 1877, by the Bangor Chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union

Mary Crosby

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The Petition for Home Protection,

ISSUED BY THE W. N. C. T. U.

The careful attention of temperance women is invited to the considerations urged in the following letter :

6, FIFTH STREET, BANGOR, January 8, 1877.

MRS. W. G. SARGENT, PRES'T ME. W. C. T. U.

DEAR MADAM—The Petitions to Congress, prepared by the Committee of the W. N. C. T. U., which you sent to our Union, with accompanying note, were duly received December 26th, and laid before the society at their next meeting. They received there a thoughtful consideration and discussion, and when you remember that the Petition had been, for more than a month, open to our observation and reflection in the *Union* newspaper, you will acquit us of undue haste in reaching the conclusion to which our Union finally came, without a dissenting vote, and which they have instructed me to communicate to you, with their reasons for it, viz: that they cannot sign those petitions, nor offer them to the public for signatures.

In attempting to lay before you the objections of the society, as one member after another expressed herself upon the subject, I may seem to be uttering some slight inconsistencies. Please remember that no *one* member made *all* the objections, though the drift of opinion was of rare unanimity.

This petition is as futile as that for Total Prohibition could be, for the Rum Power will never consent to so far put itself into the hands of women as to permit a general law requiring Woman's request for its opportunity.

Believing, as we do, that the Liquor-traffic is "a crime against the social order and the laws of God," we feel that we should be sinning against our light and faithless to our high privileges, did we so attempt to countenance the Government in its legalization. As we women of Maine cannot petition for this or any other form of License in our own State, so we cannot ask it for the future States to which we send our sons and brothers by scores, nor for the capital whose honor and purity are ever vitally ours to guard.

This petition does not concern the States, in which the women outnumber the men. By signing it, we consent, that in any community where, perchance, ignorance or fraud, force or appetite, shall win the requisite number of signatures, the Government shall forthwith legalize the open dram-shop. Is there no possibility of this in the frontier communities, where total abstinence from dram-drinking is a rare height of self-control? It may be thought the danger is small, but *not once* would the legalization be *right*, nor is it *right* that we consent to the legalization. And the very town where reckless appetite would invite the curse, is the one which the Government should protect from its own vices, and render a fitting home for better citizens.

Such a law, if enacted, would be a mockery to the striving Temperance sentiment of the Territories, where women are the small minority of the population, and would be a stupid neglect of opportunity, and a failure in the duty which the Government owes, even for its own sake, to the hard-struggling pioneers of civilization who wage a conflict with giant forces of nature,—the duty of removing from their path that prime hindrance to virtue, strength, and civilization, the pioneer rum-shop, which outruns church and home, and whose evil outcomes are to-day the blackest stains upon our Nation's shield.

If enacted, the law asked for would throw upon woman a burden of responsibility and of combat, such as it would be cowardly and cruel in the extreme to impose upon her, defenceless as she stands without the ballot. It falls upon her to bear the brunt of this most bitter fight, with naked hands,—with the only weapon that reaches to the enemy's stature, utterly denied her.

The intimation that the temptations of the Liquor-traffic ought to be allowed to be the excuse for crime, is revolting to the moral sense.

Finally, and to sum up, this Petition wholly misrepresents us, in our principles, our faith, our hopes, our prayers, and to sign and send it out would be unworthy of our position as Maine women, would strike a blow to the hearts of our friends in all parts of the world, and would encourage the enemy as we cannot consent to do.

In this enforced dissent from the Petition of the National Union, we shrink most sincerely from even *seeming* to rebuke, with any self-complacency, the dear and noble women over whose mistake, as it seems to us, in uttering it, we so deeply grieve. We see in it only the inevitable fruit of that practical ignorance of right laws, and a right principle of dealing with our national sin, in which, by no wish of their own, they have lived and been trained. Believing in their single-mindedness, honoring their patience and unselfish devotion, grateful for their efficient labors in *Our Cause*, and loving them as dear sisters bound to us by most tender ties of fellowship, yet we cannot fail to see, as more experienced eyes than ours will see, that there is an added humiliation in this petition, in that woman boasts of conscientiousness, and then offers to compound a wrong.

Mrs. Sargent, I believe that our hearts are more deeply drawn to those women, because we are forced to differ with them here. For these two weeks I have found it impossible to write you this letter, tho' under instructions to do so. And now may God's blessing go with it.

We would not be idle in the vineyard, nor silent before our rulers, when we can add one tone to the prayers for the Protection of all our Homes. Our Union has prepared the enclosed Petition, with the hope that you will approve it for circulation in this State instead of the other, and with the belief that its substance will command an assent—even an enthusiasm—which will be a powerful help to our sisters in all the other States. If adopted and presented at the approaching Convention, I believe a diligent canvass in the other towns, such as we stand ready to make in Bangor, will give us a glorious roll of signatures to send to you by the 20th of *February*.

If you will give me the order, I can get one thousand struck off for about three dollars.
We hope to hear from you upon this subject, very soon.

Truly Yours,

MARY CROSBY, *Cor. Sec'y W. C. T. U. of Bangor.*

The following PETITION FOR HOME PROTECTION by Prohibition, was enclosed :

To the Honorable Members of the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled :

WHEREAS, The best government, the highest national prosperity, and the happiest people result where Legal Right is one with Moral Right; and

WHEREAS, The Traffic in Intoxicating Drinks is a sin in itself, and its legalization is a national crime; and

WHEREAS, The conservation of Home is essential to the highest welfare and happiness of our people, and to the permanence of all that is good in our civilization, and is a worthy object of the most watchful solicitude of our law-makers; and

WHEREAS, The Liquor Traffic is the intolerable curse of thousands of homes throughout our land, the fatal destroyer of thousands more, and is Home's most mighty and cruel enemy; and

WHEREAS, Congress has power to protect from this curse the present and future homes of millions of men and women in the Territories, and to purify from this chief corrupter the Capital, which is the center of all our social life, the fountain of our national legislation, and the home and seat of our nation's government; and

WHEREAS, The men who are laying the foundations of future States emphatically need that their stalwart arms be not unnerved, nor their clear brains clouded, and the wives and mothers who so faithfully share in the labors, the perils and the privations of frontier life, need to be protected from the desolation and ruin of the homes upon which alone can a noble civilization be built;

THEREFORE, We, the undersigned, citizens of Maine, who know the priceless blessing of our own Prohibitory Law, and can point with grateful pride to the facts and figures which shine like stars in our State record, respectfully petition, for the Protection of Home, that the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks in the District of Columbia and the Territories, be forever prohibited by Law.