METHODISTS AND THE CAMPAIGNS FOR SIX O'CLOCK HOTEL CLOSING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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The question of alcohol was a particularly important one for Methodists in the first half of the twentieth century. In New South Wales (NSW), Methodists took an active lead in promoting the cause of temperance in the referendum campaigns over hotel closing hours in 1916, 1947 and 1954, and in the prohibition referendum of 1928. The extent of Methodist activity in these campaigns belied their actual presence in NSW. Only 10% of the state's population identified as Methodist in 1901, a figure that fell to just 8% by 1954.[1] Yet in spite of their small numbers, Methodists' concerns about alcohol were adopted by much of the wider community. In part, this adoption occurred because ideals associated with temperance - self-denial, discipline and austerity - were values that made sense during a time of war and depression. As the post-war era gathered momentum, such values gave way to the ideals of personal freedom and leisure.

A study of Methodist involvement in attempts to restrict alcohol in the community provides revealing insights into how Methodists understood the problem of alcohol in the early twentieth century, both at a local and international level. Not only is it broadly indicative of the Methodist impetus to lead individuals and society towards a 'better' future, it also shows the internal conflict this would ultimately cause between older and younger Methodists by the twentieth century, as the former tried to hold fast to their long-standing ideals and the latter attempted to be relevant to the modern post-war community.

That Methodists in particular should want to restrict alcohol in the first half of the twentieth century was an outcome of a much longer history, reflecting a period of destabilising rapid social change in Western societies and the development of Methodist doctrine in response. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, concerns over the consumption of spirits had grown across the

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[1] Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1901 and 1954.

English-speaking world. Such concern was particularly acute in immigrant and settler societies such as Australia and the United States, where traditional forms of social control, such as church and extended family, were less present. Consumption of spirits in the Australian colonies was four times that of Britain;[2] alcohol intake was also high in the United States, where 7.1 gallons (27 litres) of pure alcohol was consumed per person annually (1830).[3]

Prior to the 1830s, the Methodist approach to alcohol had been one of moderation, rather than abstention. Although Wesley had raised the question of alcohol consumption and Christian behaviour in the mid-eighteenth century, his concerns had focussed on the imbibing of spirits and the importance of moderation. Wesley advised Methodists not to take spirits at all, unless there was a medical reason for doing so, and that they take care not to allow themselves to become drunk. He himself did not oppose the drinking of alcohol *per se*, and was known to drink wine on occasion. He also recommended wine for sacramental use.[4]

The early nineteenth century saw a shift from earlier Methodist attitudes which advocated refraining from spirits and indulging only in moderate drinking, to a new understanding that alcohol in any form was a social evil that needed to be avoided absolutely. This was prompted by the upheavals of the industrial revolution throughout the West, which had brought thousands of workers from the countryside into the factories of cities. Public drunkenness, a visible aspect of industrial life, was blamed as the cause of other visible vices in the industrial cities - poverty, violence, mental illness and neglect. The solution to these problems was believed to be individual will power, based on the belief that drunkenness was a sin and on the nineteenth century liberalist idea that individuals had the power to improve themselves. A raft of international temperance organisations were brought to Australia by American and British temperance campaigners, such as the Order of Rechabites (1847), the Sons of Temperance (1864) and the Order of Good Templars (1872).[5] Local groups included the Tasmanian Temperance Society (1833), the NSW Temperance Society (1834), the Melbourne Total

[2] J. S. Blocker, D. M. Fahey and I. R. Tyrrell (eds) *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: A Global Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2003), 75.
[3] Jennifer L. Woodruff Tait, *The Poisoned Chalice: Eucharistic Grape Juice and Commonsense Realism in Victorian Methodism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 9.
[4] Jennifer L. Woodruff Tait, *The Poisoned Chalice*, 11.
[5] Australian foundation dates given.

Abstinence Society (1842) and the Moreton Bay Temperance Society (1849). Temperance organisations asked members to sign a personal pledge that they would abstain from alcohol. Some, such as the Order of Rechabites were in the style of Friendly Societies, offering insurance and saving schemes to members who had taken the pledge; others, such as the Order of Good Templars, were fraternal organisations with regalia and rituals that included the pledge. Prominent Methodists, such as John Fegan, Isabella Dalgarno, George Clark, Thomas Crouch and James Russell were well represented in the upper echelons of these organisations.[6]

Methodists were attracted to temperance organisations out of their reverence for the Methodist doctrines of sanctification and Christian perfection. Sanctification was understood as actively entering entering into an experience of 'personal holiness' as an outcome of Christian faith. Abstinence and mastery of the self was an attempt to approach a state of holiness with regards to alcohol. Christian perfection was an active seeking to change one's life for the better, (albeit with a realisation that the absolutely 'perfect' state would never be achieved). Working for temperance was a way Methodists could try to rid the world of an evil that stood in the way of their own (and others') sanctification.[7]

Appealing to the morals of the individual as a solution to drunkenness was coming under question by the end of the nineteenth century. New understandings as to the causes of public drunkenness were emerging. One of these was provided by socialism. Friedrich Engels' *Conditions of the Working Class in England* (1845) had argued that it was the introduction of machinery and the crowding of workers into filthy, impoverished cities that had led to widespread drunkenness, rather than a failure of people's individual morals and willpower.[8] Christian socialism, a movement that emerged briefly in the 1840s in Britain and resurfaced again in the 1880s, took a similar line.[9]

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[6] See for example entries for Isabella Dalgarno, George Clark, Thomas Crouch and James Russell in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.
[7] Ian Tyrell, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 52.
[8] Friedrich Engels, *Conditions of the Working Class in England*, (1845). This text was translated into English and published in New York (1887) and London (1891).
[9] Edward Norman, *The Victorian Christian Socialists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 146; Phillip Backstrom, *Christian Socialism and Cooperation in Victorian England* (London: Croom Helm, 1974), 212; Jean H. Baker, *Sisters: The Lives of America's Suffragists* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 137-182.

Meanwhile, the medical profession was also offering alternative insights. The NSW Inquiry into Intemperance (1854) found that while drunkenness began as a sin, it inevitably became a disease against which the individual had no defence. [10]

A further issue surrounding the question of drunkenness was raised by the nineteenth century women's movement. Women bore the brunt of alcoholism, with habitually inebriated husbands and fathers spending their wages on drink and subjecting women and children to outbursts of drunken violence. Alcoholism and drunkenness therefore, was an outcome of social change over which the individual had no control; a disease against which the individual was helpless; and left women and children at the mercy of those enthralled in its grip. In conjunction with their campaign for suffrage, nineteenth century women's organisations fought for legislation to protect women from abuse and exploitation by men. From their perspective, laws to restrict the availability of alcohol would protect women and children from poverty and abuse.

The late nineteenth century saw an outpouring of legislation for social and moral improvement throughout the English-speaking world. Public education, health regulations, labour reform and women's suffrage were testament to the period's belief in progress and its desire to make a better, kinder society and to protect individuals from the worst excesses of industrial society.[11] With the perception that individuals were unable to gain control over alcohol, it seemed logical to introduce legislation to minimise the availability of alcohol.

By the end of the century, newer temperance societies were focussing their efforts on political reform to protect individuals. In Australia, the NSW Temperance Alliance (1878), the Victorian Temperance Alliance (1882) and the South Australian Temperance Alliance (1883) were formed in rapid succession. International connections played a role too, with American Christian feminists travelling to Australia to encourage the establishment of an

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[10] Suzanne Davies, 'The Search for a Certain Cure: Doctors, Drunkards and Victoria's Committee of Inquiry 1901,' *Provenance: The Journal of the Public Record Office*, 10 (2011) accessed 4/04/12, http://prov.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/The-search-for-a-certain-cure.pdf; Stephen Garton, 'Once a Drunkard, Always a Drunkard: Social Reform and the Problem of Habitual Drunkenness in Australia, 1880-1914,' *Labour History* 53 (1987): 53ff.

[11] Audrey Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia: A Gift or a Struggle* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1992); Katherine Henry, *Liberalism and the Culture of Security: Nineteenth Century Rhetoric of Reform* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011).

Australian branch of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (1882).[12] These organisations were just some of the temperance groups that formed and began to promote social reforms to restrict individuals' access to alcohol.[13] Reformist legislation therefore, aimed not to punish individuals for drunkenness, but to protect 'the weak' from the lure of alcohol. In response to increased agitation to restrict access to liquor, the liquor trade mobilised, forming the United Licensed Victuallers Association (ULVA) in 1873.

Again, Methodist individuals were prominent in these new temperance organisations, among the founders and leaders of the Australian branch of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the Adelaide branch of the WCTU and the NSW, Queensland and Tasmanian Temperance Alliances.[14] At the same time, Methodists also remained active and held leadership roles in the older 'personal pledge'-style of temperance organisations, such as the Order of Rechabites and the Order of Good Templars.[15]

While the involvement of Methodists in the newer temperance groups reflected the influence of the wider social reform movement of the late nineteenth century, the continued Methodist representation in the earlier type of temperance organisations and the persistent belief in the ability of the individual to overcome the lure of alcohol through willpower and a yearning for Christian perfection represented another late nineteenth century phenomenon: revivalism. The revivalist movement of the late nineteenth century placed particular emphasis on a link between salvation and temperance, with temperance evangelists such as English-born Methodist Matthew Burnett and American Methodist evangelists Richard Booth and William Noble calling for individuals

[12] Ian Tyrell, *Woman's World / Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective 1800-1930* (University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

[13] Judith Raftery, "God's Gift or Demon Drink? Churches and Alcohol in South Australia between the Two World Wars", *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 15 (1988): 16; Keith Dunstan, *Wowsers: Being an Account of the Prudery exhibited by certain outstanding men and women in such matters as Drinking, Smoking, Prostitution, Censorship, and Gambling* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1968), 98.

[14] See for example entries for John Holding, Elizabeth Nicholls, Eupehmia Bowes, Sara Nolan, William Rutledge and Edwin Derrington in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

[15] See for example entries for John Fegan, Thomas Jessep, William Jungwirth and Josiah Thomas in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*

to turn away from sin and drink and convert to Christianity.[16] The relationship between revivalism, temperance and Methodism is an interesting one. The successful work of American Methodist missionaries throughout the Asia-Pacific and the growing revivalist movement in America itself inspired the leaders of the American WCTU, itself led mainly by Methodists, to spread the work of the WCTU around the world.[17]

By the turn of the century, some small gains had been achieved by temperance agitators. In Australia, all of the colonies had introduced Sunday closing of hotels and all, except Western Australia, had adopted the introduction of local option - that is, legislation that allowed local residents to vote for or against the granting of extra hotel licenses in their town or suburb.

The First World War would bring the drink question into sharp focus. Initially, there were concerns in Britain about the increased consumption of alcohol by munitions workers, especially by women workers, whose rates of pay as munitions workers far exceeded what they had been able to earn as pre-war domestic servants or office workers.[18] In October 1915, British Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George, began implementing various regulations, including reduced opening hours of hotels, in an attempt to curtail drinking. For Lloyd George, drink was a greater foe than Germany and Austria combined. Many agreed, with prohibition enacted in Canada (1915) and six o'clock closing introduced in March 1916 in South Australia.

Guilt and an effort to show solidarity with those at the front was another war-related factor in the push to restrict alcohol. Faced with the terrible death toll and the broken bodies and minds of those returned early from war, alcohol became a symbol of unnecessary frivolity and uncaring pleasure. Austerity and self-denial were called for as the only appropriate response to the deprivations and miseries suffered by those at the front. Prompted by Lloyd George to set an example for the nation, King George V announced in April 1915 that he would neither drink nor serve alcohol until the war was ended.

The British example, concern to show their compassion for the men at the front, decades of temperance education and agitation for

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[16] Robert Evans, *Evangelism and Revivals in Australia 1880-1914,* vol 1 (Hazelbrook: Research in Evangelical Revivals, 2005); J. S. Blocker, D. M. Fahey and I. R. Tyrrell, *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History,* 76.

[17] Ian Tyrell, *Reforming the World*, 75.

[18] Angela Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (London: University of California Press, 1994), 124-6.

reform by the churches and by temperance organisations, brought increasing pressure for NSW to follow suit and introduce a referendum on hotel closing hours. The final catalyst however, was the Liverpool/Casula Riot. On 14 February 1916, five thousand troops from the Liverpool and Casula army training camps began rioting through the streets of Liverpool. They overran local pubs, looted shops, vandalised buildings and commandeered the Liverpool train station. The mob, which had grown to some 15,000, started boarding trains to Sydney, where they continued their rampage of damage and looting. The riot was finally brought to an ignominious end when police opened fire on the drunken soldiers at Central Station, killing one soldier and wounding six others.

From the trainee soldiers' perspective, the riot had resulted from a decision taken at the end of 1915 to place more restrictions on leave and to institute longer training hours.[19] Indeed, a Royal Commission into conditions at the Liverpool camp, published just months before the riot, had found that the strict discipline, hardship and grueling training demands placed on new recruits were serious problems that needed to be addressed.[20] The report's recommendations were not implemented and instead, the training regimen was extended.

The Royal Commission had also mentioned excessive alcohol consumption as a problem, recommending severe restrictions be placed on the availability of alcohol. Indeed, only a month before, *The Methodist* had reported that four thousand troops stationed at the Liverpool camp had signed a petition for six o'clock closing of local liquor bars in an attempt to curb the availability of alcohol. Doctors readily agreed with the Report's proposal, but military leaders were less enthusiastic, contending that restrictions on alcohol would be detrimental to their recruitment efforts.[21]

From the perspective of the Methodist Church, alcohol, rather than harsh training schedules, was 'the chief cause' of the 1916 riot.[22] *The Methodist* bolstered their opinion arguing that both the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Daily Telegraph* had also cited drink as the

[19] Kevin Baker, *Mutiny, Terrorism, Riots and Murder: A History of Sedition in Australia and New Zealand* (Dural: Rosenberg Publishing, 2006), 72.
[20] *Report of proceedings and minutes of evidence of Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Administration of the Liverpool Camp* (1915).
[21] Tony Cuneen, 'The Law at War (1916): A Social History of the New South Wales Legal Profession in 1916,' unpublished paper (accessed 02/04/12), http://www.forbessociety.org.au/.
[22] *The Methodist*, 19 February, 1916, 8.

cause of the riot. For their part, the *Herald* had actually reported that the riot was a response to the new training regimen, but was nonetheless largely unsympathetic to the soldiers' cause, contending that the rioters were unpatriotic, lazy and with many aged between 17 and 19 years of age, probably too young.[23] *The Methodist*'s purpose however, was to prove to its readership that the call to restrict the sale of alcohol was not just a Methodist cause, but was also a cause for the knowledgeable, the respectable and the workers.

Two months after the Liverpool/Casula riot, the NSW state government decided to implement a referendum for the earlier closing of hotels, as a wartime measure. Voters were to be given a choice of six closing time options: either six, seven, eight, nine, ten or eleven o'clock closing.[24] *The Methodist* was unimpressed, declaring that the decision to call a referendum, rather than simply implementing an earlier closing law was a shirking of political duty, a barely disguised attempt to escape the retribution of the liquor industry come election time. In fact, the NSW parliament had attempted to introduce ten o'clock closing for hotels, with the proposed Bill later amended to nine o'clock closing, however this Bill was defeated in December 1915.[25]

Notwithstanding their disdain for a referendum, Methodist leaders, in line with other temperance campaigners, actively encouraged their congregations to vote for the six o'clock option. The choice of the six o'clock preference was an obvious one for the temperance cause. Not only did it make the temperance vote more effective by concentrating on one option, it also reflected their concern to minimise the negative effects of excessive drinking. Furthermore, the earlier closing hour would bring hotels into line with the recently passed legislation to restrict the trading hours of other businesses in the interests of workers and family life.[26] How-to-vote posters were prominently displayed in Methodist churches and church halls, while articles in *The Methodist* included how-to-vote instructions, the benefits seen from the introduction of six o'clock closing in South Australia and appeals to vote for six o'clock closing in order to show support for the war effort.[27]

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[23] *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 February, 1916, 9.
[24] *Liquor Referendum Act* (NSW), Act No. 10, 1916.
[25] *Liquor Amendment Bill*, 1915.
[26] *Factories and Shops Act* (NSW), Act No. 39, 1912.
[27] *The Methodist*, 10 May 1916, 11; 10 June 1916, 6; 22 April, 1916, 9; 8 April 1916, 1; 25 March 1916, 1, 9, 10

The referendum result was a positive one for temperance campaigners, with 62% of voters choosing six o'clock closing and only 1% opting for eleven o'clock. *The Methodist* was pleased to note that the outcome of the referendum had shown churches and the general public to be working together 'in hearty and active cooperation'.[28] Although six o'clock closing was originally seen as a war-time measure, it was effectively declared the permanent closing time by the Liquor Amendment Acts of 1919 and 1923. Six o'clock closing in NSW would continue until 1954.

Australian Methodists were greatly encouraged by the introduction of the Volstead Act (1919) in the United States to prohibit the sale and manufacture of alcohol. Successful campaigning by groups such as the Anti-Saloon League and the Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals had fought for the curtailing of the German-based brewing industry in the interests of the nation's morals and health. Australian Methodists seemed relatively unconcerned by the criminal activity that ensued in the United States following passage of the Volstead Act. They were also unperturbed by the rise of a black market in Australia, following the introduction and continuation of six o'clock closing. Those willing to flout the law and serve alcohol after six made a fortune running sly grog shops that catered for all walks of life, from businessmen and politicians to the criminal underclass. In response, legislation was passed by the NSW government in 1927 to allow the sale of alcohol in clubs and restaurants with meals after six o'clock, in the hope that this would curb the profits of the sly grog shops. [29]

Many Methodists refused to see the connection between trade restriction and crime, arguing that prohibition was a sound economic strategy for Australia. Speaking at the Methodist School Hall in Queanbeyan, H. C. Stitt, leader of the NSW Temperance Alliance, contended that prohibition in the United States had turned saloons, breweries and hospitals for inebriates into thriving places of manufacturing and education. Prohibition, he declared, increased productivity and was the answer to unemployment. [30]

A referendum on the prohibition issue in 1928 would ultimately fail, with 71% of the population voting against prohibition. In part,

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[28] *The Methodist*, 17 June, 1916, 7

[29] *Liquor Amendment Act* (NSW), Act No. 36, 1927

[30] *Queanbeyan-Canberra Advocate*, 22 April, 1926; see also *The Methodist Church of Australasia, New South Wales Annual Conference Minutes,* 1920; *Examiner*, 14 April 1919, 3; *The Argus* 13 October 1919, 7

this failure was due to divisions amongst prohibition campaigners over the clause that the liquor trade be compensated should prohibition be enacted. It also reflected a concern voiced by the press and among NSW voters that the expansion of organised crime, associated with prohibition in the United States, was not desirable. How was NSW to police its state borders? Furthermore, how could men in rural areas, many of whom ostensibly, had served in the Great War, be expected to support prohibition?[31] Unlike in the 1916 referendum, the press was firmly behind the liquor trade on the question of prohibition. Nevertheless, in the wake of the referendum's failure, and in spite of the serious issues raised by anti-prohibitionists, the Methodist Conference of NSW would continue to call for prohibition during the inter-war years as a solution to the drink problem.[32] This enabled the ULVA and others who opposed the Church's attitudes to alcohol to draw an association between the churches, prohibition and unreasonableness.

By the end of the Second World War there were renewed calls for the reform of the state's drinking laws. In 1946 the Liquor Amendment Act made provision for increasing the number of licensed clubs that could serve alcohol with meals to 414, abolished local option and called for a referendum on the state's early closing laws. The new referendum, to be held in 1947, asked citizens whether hotels should close at 6, 9 or 10 pm.[33]

For its part, the liquor trade campaigned on the issues of fairness and reason. They contended that it was unfair for hotels to have restrictions on the serving of alcohol when clubs did not.[34] Following the 1947 Full Court's decision that clubs could serve alcohol to their patrons at all times of the day, the liquor trade was quick to point out the class divide between access to alcohol, such that while patrons of wealthy clubs could drink at any time, working-class pub-goers had to abide by six o'clock closing. They pointed out that the six o'clock closing rule for hotels had resulted in the decidedly uncivilised 'six o'clock swill,' whereby hotel patrons

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[31] The Liquor Trades Defence Union of NSW, *The Liquor Issue: a series of articles reprinted from The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney: H. C. Martyn & Son, 1928).
[32] *The Methodist Church of Australasia, New South Wales Annual Conference Minutes*, 1920-1946; J. D. Bollen, 'Clark, George Daniel (1848–1933),' *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.
[33] S. Redshaw, *Changes in the Liquor Law, NSW*, Law Book Company of Australasia, Sydney, 1946; C. O. Smithers, J. L. Smithers and K. Smithers, *Liquor (Amendment) Act 1946 and Regulations Thereunder*, ULVA, Sydney, 1947.
[34] *ULVA Review*, 20 January, 1947, 1.

bought as much alcohol as possible in the last hour before six o'clock.[35] The liquor trade also argued that the churches and other 'opponents of the trade' were being unreasonable and would again attempt to impose prohibition on the state if given any encouragement by a six o'clock success at the polls.[36]

The Methodist approach to the 1947 campaign was similar to their campaigns of 1916 and 1928. They argued that alcohol consumption was associated with poverty, moral decay and individuals turning to crime, inimical to the building of a morally progressive society. There was also an appeal to the need to protect women and children who were at the mercy of drunken husbands and fathers.[37] This time, unlike in 1916, the press was generally supportive of the liquor trade's position. *The Sydney Morning Herald* was scathingly dismissive of the Church's continued preference for six o'clock closing, maintaining that it was woefully short-sighted: 'If the Churches, for what seem to them good reasons, are supporting six o'clock closing, so are the sly-grog dealers and others with a vested interest in the present hours.'[38]

The *Herald* went on to raise the issue of the undignified swill, resulting, as they saw it, from the small window of opportunity for working men to have a beer after work. They contended that the only reason to continue six o'clock closing was because there was a need for more 'civilised bar service' and better hotel facilities, supposing that a vote for six o'clock would send a message to the liquor industry to improve their services. The *Herald* concluded its report with the observation that longer hotel hours overseas had resulted in more 'civilised drinking.'

The calls for wartime austerity and the concerns of health professionals - factors in the pro-temperance arguments for the 1916 referendum - were absent from the 1947 campaign. Furthermore, alcohol consumption had risen markedly in the two years immediately after the war, from 37,000,000 gallons in 1945 to almost 60,000,000 gallons by 1947,[39] even though there were beer

[35] Social Amenities League (advertisement), *The Catholic Weekly*, 18 July 1946, 14; Asher Joel Advertising, *A Survey of, and Report upon, the Hotel Industry of New South Wales* (Asher Joel Advertising, Sydney, 1957), 170.
[36] *ULVA Review*, 20 January, 1947, 1; Liquor Trades Council of NSW (advertisement), *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 February 1946, 7
[37] See for example *The Methodist*, 15 February 1947, 2; *The Methodist Church of Australasia, New South Wales Annual Conference Minutes*, 1946, 207.
[38] *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 February 1947, 2
[39] *New South Wales Statistical Register*, 1951-1952, 522

shortages in the years immediately following the war. Yet in spite of this, and of the liquor trade's appeal to fairness, the support of the press for the later closing hour, the failure of the prohibition referendum in 1928 and the awareness of the link between criminal activity and restricted opening hours, the six o'clock option was successful at the liquor referendum of 1947. Over 62% of voters favoured six - the same return for six o clock as in 1916. How was it then that the six o'clock option won?

Although the arguments presented in favour of six o'clock closing by the Methodist Church and others had been part of the late nineteenth century social reformist agenda, they nonetheless had resonance in the early post-war period. The call for a morally reformed society must have seemed particularly pertinent in the post-war age. The horrors unleashed during the Second World War - the terrible loss of life, the devastation in Europe, the threat posed to Australia by Japan, the birth of the atomic age, the emerging news about the Holocaust and the atrocities committed at Japanese prisoner of war camps - all took a psychological toll on Australian society, affecting civilians as well as those in the armed services.[40] The 'Populate or Perish' slogan and the resultant immigration program launched in 1945 was as much an expression of fear for the future as it was a mechanism for economic growth. Although trials of the war and concerns for the post-war world were not directly raised by the churches or the liquor trade in connection with the 1947 referendum, they cannot have failed to influence the vote to some extent, with post-war uncertainty prompting caution and conservatism. The plight of women and children struck a chord too, as wives struggled to cope with traumatised husbands returned from war service. Alcoholism and resultant violence were difficult issues for many families of returned service personnel.[41] Furthermore, wartime restrictions had banned women from drinking at bars, confining them to the 'Ladies' Lounge.' Following the war, restrictions on women's access to bars was lifted, but a culture of single-sex drinking had been created. As wives and mothers, most women did not have the personal freedom to frequent the Ladies' Lounge between five and six, and not all pubs had a lounge anyway.

[40] Joy Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia, and Grief in Post-war Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 36-63.
[41] Joy Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath*, 134-138; Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996).

This helped to relegate drinking hours at hotels as a male issue, diametrically opposed to women's interests. [42]

At the same time, the arguments of the liquor trade were not compelling. With Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA) clubs catering to returned servicemen of both wars, the only winners of later hotel closing times were working-class men who had not been in the armed services. The swill was certainly a blight on Australian society, but it could also be explained as a stereotypical example of uncouth working-class behaviour, rather than a direct consequence of shorter drinking hours. It was also a phenomenon that dated from the 1940s, as a consequence of wartime deprivations, where supplies frequently ran low due to the Control of Liquor Order (1942) which cut alcohol production, leading to scenes of crowding, jostling and rushed drinking at hotels among soldiers on leave.[43] The 'swill' had not been in evidence prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, and many probably believed it would abate in time.[44] As for the liquor trade's fear that continued earlier closing times would mean a return to the prohibition question, the sound defeat of the prohibition referendum in 1928 made this argument seem rather specious.

The success of the six o'clock closing result in 1947 was not so much due to a well organised campaign by Methodists and other Christian leaders, but was more likely a reflection of the failure of the liquor trade's campaign combined with a set of circumstances that enabled six o'clock advocates to succeed in spite of themselves. There were some in the Methodist Church who were acutely aware of this, and had realised that the absolutist and restrictive reforms of the past were becoming increasingly less viable. Furthermore, given the growth of crime provoked by limited trading hours, some Methodists began to wonder out loud if there might not be another way. Within the Australasian Methodist Conference's Public Questions Committee (renamed the Social and Ethical Questions Committee in 1948),[45] Methodists were positing the idea of

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[42] Tanja Luckins, 'Pigs, Hogs and Aussie Blokes: The Emergence of the Term 'Six O'clock Swill'," *History Australia* 4 (1), (2007): 8.6-8.7; Diane Kirkby, *Barmaids: A History of Women's Work in Pubs* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 179-184; Diane Kirkby, '"Beer Glorious Beer": Gender Politics and Australian Popular Culture,' *Journal of Cultural History* 37 (2003): 244-256.

[43] Luckins, 'Pigs, Hogs and Aussie Blokes,' 8.6.

[44] Luckins, 'Pigs, Hogs and Aussie Blokes,' 8.6-8.7; Diane Kirkby, *Barmaids*, 167.

[45] The name change of this group is indicative of the shift in thinking away from specific social reforms towards broader social solutions.

nationalisation of the liquor trade as a possible solution, thereby cutting out the liquor trade's efforts to expand its profits at the expense of increased drinking in the community. Many Methodists were influenced by the broad aims of Labor's plans for post-war reconstruction - to build a society based on democratic socialism. Such a society was built on advocated state ownership and intervention in order to avoid the worst excesses of capitalism, thus securing a future free from economic depression and war.[46] At the federal Methodist conference of 1945, a Public Questions Committee (PQC) report made the following observation: 'Discussion revealed that the matter of the public ownership of the liquor traffic was a line question in some States, and that on the whole the older temperance leaders were opposed to it, and that support for it came mainly from those who were younger.'[47] For younger Methodists, the problem was the liquor trade itself and its profit motive. Individuals needed protection from exploitative capitalism, rather than mere alcohol.[48] This line of argument would become prominent in the 1954 referendum.

It was not only Methodists who were concerned about the liquor trade's profiteering. The 1954 referendum was prompted by a Royal Commission into Liquor Laws in NSW (1951-1954), headed by Justice A. V. Maxwell. The Commission was charged with investigating the liquor trade's financial interests in the ownership and control of hotels. It also sought to discover whether current licensing laws were effective; whether further club licences were desirable and if so, whether local option should be reintroduced; and whether meals and accommodation provided by hotels was adequate.

The Commission interviewed over four hundred witnesses, including liquor trade representatives, temperance advocates, publicans, police officers and members of various government bodies. The main representative for the temperance position at the Royal Commission was Oscar Piggott, Methodist, and General-Secretary of the NSW Temperance Alliance. The liquor trade had hired six King's Councils to represent their interests to the Commission. Piggott declined any legal support, a decision Maxwell

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[46] Samantha Frappell, 'Building Jerusalem: Post-war Reconstruction and the Churches in NSW,' PhD dissertation, University of Sydney, 1996.
[47] Public Questions Committee, *Minutes of the 14th General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia*, 1945, 260
[48] Social and Ethical Questions Committee, *Minutes of the 15th General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia*, 1948, 86

strongly counselled against.[49] Piggott called a number of witnesses to speak for the return of local option and the retention of six o'clock closing. Many of these witnesses had been involved with the temperance cause for over forty years and had participated in the six o'clock closing campaign of 1916. Their arguments hinged on the social reformist agenda of the late nineteenth century - that individuals needed protection from alcohol, the source of poverty, crime and family breakdown.[50] Piggott told the Commission that he would gladly shut down all hotels and liquor outlets if he could, such was his concern at the social devastation caused by alcohol.[51]

A lack of legal support, combined with the emergence of divergent views regarding the temperance question within the Methodist Church, and within the Christian community at large, made Piggott's position relatively easy to counter. A report was tabled at the Commission that had been written by a committee within the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church, known as the Social Questions Committee (SQC). The report called for low-alcohol beer, nationalisation of the liquor trade and more comfortable hotel facilities, in view of the SQC's belief that alcohol was a necessity in the community.[52] This report echoed the views of the Methodist SEQC and similar groups within the Presbyterian Church.[53] Piggott claimed the SQC's report was not representative of the churches, and that his own views were mainstream.[54]

Maxwell handed down his report in March 1954. The report was scathing where publicans were concerned. Maxwell cited evidence of poor conditions for patrons in hotels and the selfish motives of publicans for retaining early closing times rather than pay bar staff for the extra hours, at the expense of patrons. Police corruption was blamed for the continued operation of the sly grog trade. While Maxwell did not go so far as specifically to recommend an extension of hotel hours, he opined that later hotel closing would help combat the sly grog trade.[55] 'I am satisfied…that there are evils associated

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[49] *Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Laws in New South Wales*, 1954, vol 2, 1523.
[50] *Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Laws*, 1523-56; Here 'crime' does not refer to bootlegging(!)
[51] *Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Laws*, vol 3, 1980.
[52] *Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Laws,* vol 3, 1977
[53] SEQC, *Minutes of the 15th General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia*, 1948, 86; *The New South Wales Presbyterian*, 12 February 1947, 4.
[54] *Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Laws*, vol 3, 1977
[55]*Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Laws*, vol 1.

with six o'clock closing which ought not to be tolerated in a civilised community.'[56]

Unsurprisingly, the Methodist Church was deeply disappointed with Maxwell's Report. Supporters of Oscar Piggott's position were unhappy with the Report's condemnation of six o'clock closing.[57] Members of the SEQC were also dissatisfied, decrying the Report's failure to tackle the 'increasing power of the liquor interests.'[58] They did not see advocacy of six o'clock as an attack on publicans profiteering and the sly grog trade, but as an opportunity for the liquor trade to extend its profits. Methodists' worst fears were confirmed. As a result of the Maxwell Report's findings, the NSW state government called for yet another referendum on hotel closing hours.

This time, the ten o'clock option won by a margin of 0.5%, just 9,792 votes. Despite the close result, the vote did indicate a significant shift in community attitudes, with a swing of 12% in favour of the later hour. The *Sydney Morning Herald* had predicted a majority for ten o'clock as the likely outcome, based on a number of factors, including the influence of the migrant vote (given that most migrants had come from countries where longer hotel hours was the norm), the appeal of new beer gardens and improved facilities for women, and the influence of the Maxwell Report.[59]

Methodists believed that the loss of the 1954 referendum was due to extensive spending on advertising by the liquor trade.[60] Indeed, the liquor trade had come up with some creative ways to get their message across, including making a film about the evils of the swill and employing a sky-writer to write 'VOTE 10' in the sky on the day of the election.[61] Methodists and other advocates of the six o'clock position relied on more traditional methods - leaflets, 'how-to-vote' cards, radio commentary on church radio stations, sermons, public meetings and newspaper articles and advertisements and articles in church newspapers. In this they were generally 'preaching to the converted.' One attempt to reach beyond this sphere was the

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[56] *Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Laws*, vol 1, 87.
[57] *The Methodist*, 6 March 1954, 7.
[58] SEQC, *Minutes of the 17th General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia*, 1954, 140; 'The Liquor Commission Report' (special supplement), *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 February 1954, 16.
[59] *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 November 1954, 2.
[60] *The Methodist*, 6 March 1954, 6; Gar Dillon, *A Delusion of Australian Culture: A Brief History of the Clash with Alcohol in New South Wales 1788-1983*, (Sydney: NSW Temperance Alliance, 1984), 148.
[61] Keith Dunstan, *Boozers and Wowsers*, 124.

Methodist radio drama *The Devil's Advocate* which aired on the Macquarie Radio Network in June 1954. The program was part of a Methodist evangelistic venture called *Mission to the Nation*, led by Alan Walker. Walker, a member of the SEQC, had commissioned a series of radio programs, including *The Devil's Advocate*, in an attempt to get a Christian view of contemporary issues of social justice into the public arena. *The Devil's Advocate* was heavily critical of the liquor trade's profiteering, so much so that the Macquarie Radio Network considered censoring the program after liquor trade representatives protested. With the exception of *The Devil's Advocate* however, the amount spent by the churches on the six o'clock cause was limited. Unlike the liquor trade, the churches had many other concerns on which to devote their funds.

That said, the accuracy of the Methodist claim that an extensive advertising campaign run by the liquor trades was successful in shifting the vote is difficult to ascertain. According to Australian Gallup Polls conducted in 1954, the preference for ten o'clock closing climbed from 36% in July (slightly less than the 1947 referendum result) to 50% by November.[62] Certainly, this represents a relatively quick turnaround in the vote, but it is difficult to conclude that this shift in public opinion was solely due to the amount of money spent on advertising. Cost alone is no indicator of a successful advertising campaign. Rather, the issues targeted by the liquor trade in the lead up to the referendum may have had more resonance by the mid-1950s than they had in 1947.

Just as in 1947, the issue of the swill was prominent in the liquor trade's campaign in 1954.[63] The swill had persisted beyond the war and its immediate aftermath. The ULVA argued that the failure of the swill to abate in the post-war era was due to early closing.[64] The issue of the swill was a real sticking point for temperance advocates. In 1952, Francis Wilson, former research secretary of the Temperance Alliance, had told the Maxwell Commission that the 'alleged overcrowding' was not as bad as some made out. In fact, in his opinion, the swill was nothing more than ULVA propaganda. Maxwell was unimpressed, declaring that he had seen the swill with his own eyes and he could think of nothing more disgusting.[65]

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[62] *Australian Gallup Polls*, July-November 1954.
[63] ULVA Review, 23 September 1954, 35.
[64] ULVA Review, 23 September 1954, 35; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 November 1954, 2.
[65] *Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Laws in New South Wales*, 1954, vol 2, 1531-4.

Simply ignoring the swill however, did not make it go away. Two years later, the Social Service Department of the NSW Methodist Conference decided to set up a committee to investigate the reasons for the swill. Reverend Ray Watson, a member of the Department, proposed that the Methodist Church should interview doctors, psychologists and lawyers to investigate the six o'clock swill. He opined that the Church had failed to analyse these issues in the past. He hoped the outcome of the Department's research would make a positive contribution to the liquor question.[66] The reality of the swill and its persistence into the 1950s was wholly accepted by the Maxwell Report, by the press and finally, by some sections of the Methodist Church. That the swill was undesirable and a cause for reform tapped into other concerns, such as the presence of women in hotels and the increasing importance of leisure in post-war culture.

Maxwell proposed the presence of women as the solution to the swill and to uncivilised drinking in general. He had made a point of noting the 'unedifying spectacle' of women waiting outside the hotel while their husbands drank in the bar. Maxwell envisaged a culture where people of both sexes could enjoy a civilised drink before attending an evening show.[67] The liquor industry was not slow to understand the importance of this issue. Sixteen new hotels were constructed in NSW in 1954. The new hotels had been specifically designed with female drinkers in mind, with smaller bar areas and an increase in the size of lounges and beer gardens. Architects C. C. Ruwald claimed that these changes had been made to accommodate women, since 'more women are drinking in hotels than ever before.'[68] While difficulties with traumatised war-veteran husbands continued beyond the 1940s, later hotel closing times offered women the opportunity to accompany their husbands and to make use of more comfortable hotel facilities in the evenings.

Tied closely to the question of civilised drinking was the question of leisure. Leisure time and how to spend it was not directly addressed by either side of the referendum question. It was, nonetheless, an emerging issue in 1950s Australia. The introduction of the Annual Holidays Act (1944) and the 44 hour week (1945) by

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[66] Social Service Department, *Minutes of the 17th General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia*, 1954, 141

[67] Diane Kirkby, 'Maxwell's Silver Hammer: Licensing Laws, Liquor Trading and the Maxwell Royal Commission in NSW 1951-1954,' *ANZLH-ejournal*, 2005; Diane Kirkby, *Barmaids*, 179-184.

[68] *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 May 1954, 13.

the McKell government gave citizens a new consciousness of leisure.[69] In this situation, the hotel was becoming less the domain of men after work, and increasingly the place where mixed leisurely socialising could occur in beer gardens and lounges.

The churches did not miss this link between the concept of post-war leisure and the demise of six o'clock. Indeed, the NSW Temperance Alliance was convinced that 'increased salaries and reduced hours of work' were responsible for the success of the ten o'clock vote.[70] For its part, the Methodist Church was quick to accuse NSW voters of moral apathy for the success of ten o'clock.[71] The film *10pm! The Breaking of the (Night) Drought: NSW* produced by Cinesound in 1955 is also revealing of the importance of leisure.[72] The film celebrates the success of the ten o'clock campaign. There are scenes of men and women dancing, drinking in beer gardens and enjoying a 'civilised drink.' There is also the observation that 1 February 1955 (the day the new laws took effect) was 'BE Day' (meaning, 'Beer in the Evening'). This association with the end of the Second World War (VE and VJ days) was not just pointing to the end of a political war with 'temperance wowsers,' but also to the end of a wartime mentality of restriction and frugality, towards a future of peace, prosperity and leisure.

Methodists' calls for temperance grew less in the wake of the 1954 referendum. Methodists were unable to find sustained support for temperance in a society drifting away from the older restrictive lifestyle imposed by social change, war and depression. Some were confused and angered by the change, but others, such as the SEQC, had seen the connection between individual drinking, freedom and leisure in post-war society. However, SEQC attempts to defend the right to drink and to limit the trade at the same time seemed contradictory in a society where longer drinking hours were seen as a catalyst for a new sociable leisure option, to be enjoyed by women as well as men. Ironically, it was a Christian organisation with a twelve step program that encouraged individuals to deal with their own problems with alcohol that would prove popular in the post-war

[69] Richard White, *On Holidays: A History of Getting Away in Australia* (North Melbourne: Pluto Press Australia, 2005), 121-127.
[70] NSW Temperance Alliance, *No Compromise, No Quarter: Manifesto* (Sydney: NSW Temperance Alliance, 1955), n.p.
[71] *The Methodist*, 20 November 1954, 3.
[72] *10pm! The Breaking of the (Night) Drought: NSW* (1955), Cinesound production.

period.[73] As early as 1948, it had been embraced by Methodists as a way forward to continue combating the social evil of alcohol.[74]

[73] Alcoholics Anonymous arrived in Australia in 1945. The first Central Service Office was set up in Sydney in 1952.
[74] Don Wright and Eric Clancy, *The Methodists: A History of Methodism in New South Wales* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin: 1993), 182.