

STATE OF MINNESOTA

Executive Department

Saint Paul

April 16, 1949

Honorable John A. Hartle
Speaker of the House
State Capitol
Saint Paul, Minnesota

Sir:

I am returning to you herewith, without my approval, House File No. 658.

I cannot approve of a measure such as this. It would set aside the general county option law for a group of villages in Otter Tail County, having a population of not less than 125 inhabitants, and allow the people in any one of these municipalities to determine whether a municipal liquor store is to be established in that municipality, instead of having the decision on the question of authorizing municipal liquor stores made on a vote of the people of the county, as the general county option law provides.

The principle long has been established in Minnesota that the county is the proper unit for exercise of the option extended citizens to determine what type of liquor control they wish to have used.

Laws have been passed on only two occasions allowing the people living in a municipality to decide for themselves alone on a basis of local option whether to establish municipal liquor stores. One was a bill passed some ten years ago which extended local option to municipalities of 600 or more population in Otter Tail County. Five villages or fourth class cities in this county have exercised this option and established municipal "on-sale" and "off-sale" stores.

Despite the action taken in passing this special law, I cannot agree that it is good policy to set aside provisions of the county option law now applying to the villages in Otter Tail County having between 125 and 600 population and let them establish municipal stores without a vote of the people of the county.

I vetoed a bill two years ago, Senate File No. 319, known as the "Polk County Liquor Bill", embracing the same principle, and I cannot in good conscience give my approval to the present measure. In my veto message on the Polk County Bill, I said:

“Effect of such a proposal would be to set aside or nullify the county option law and, by making the municipality the option unit, deny to the people outside the municipality the right to vote in the election. The people who live in a given municipality are not the only people who have an interest in the question of whether municipal liquor stores are to be established. Around each municipality are large numbers of farm families and others, who come into the municipality to do their trading and who must in many cases send their children into the municipality for schooling. All have a vital concern in this question of whether liquor stores are to be opened in the nearby municipalities, which serve as the center and gathering place for young people and adults alike, from the farms as well as from the cities and towns.”

The disadvantages to local option that have been suggested are even more valid when applied to the smaller villages. Villages with populations as small as 125 are almost wholly rural centers.

The present county option law would seem to offer a fair opportunity for a majority of the people to effect any permitted change in the method of control and do it on a basis that entitles all the people in a county to participate in the decision. The free use of county option elections has been exercised fourteen times in the last two years.

The suggestion has again been made that the passage of this bill would make it easier to enforce the liquor laws. As I stated in the veto message of two years ago, “I feel that law enforcement can be made fully effective only through a will on the part of officials to see that the laws are obeyed and a willingness on the part of the people to back up the officials who make a real effort to enforce them.”

Respectfully yours,

LUTHER W. YOUNGDAHL,
Governor.

Mr. Dunn moved that the Veto Message be laid on the table.

Which motion prevailed.

There being no objection the Order of Business reverted to Messages from the Senate.