

# Liquor Commission Headquarters Like Chaotic Beehive at Present

## Systematic 'Control' of New Traffic Not Quite Systematic Just Yet

That the construction of ancient Rome required the contractors more than a day is a historical fact repeated through centuries by those who would excuse their own delays in completion of less pretentious feats.

Frank A. Picard, chairman of the state liquor control commission, said it another way, however, when he blurted out: "You can't set up a five-million dollar business in 15 minutes."

Mr. Picard, members of the commission, officials, and other employes, are trying, however, to bring semblance of order out of the chaos which today is inevitably present.

Offices of the liquor control commission are on the eighth floor of the City National building. They occupy the entire floor. The commission, however, uses at present only about half of the floor space, the remainder not being ready.

### Picard Dominant Figure

Electricians, carpenters, telephone men, plumbers, and other kinds of sub-contractors, mill about in the crowd, installing electric light fixtures, nailing on baseboards over lathing,

wiring up phones, connecting pipes, and otherwise working along methodically while the swirling eddy of girls and men rush and wander about, strive to answer everyone's questions, while asking new ones themselves.

Mr. Picard looms prominently, with his firm stride, his resonant, penetrating voice. Phones—there are five of them working—ring out almost without interruption. Typewriters—there were 12 of them in action Wednesday morning—vie with adding machines to set the fast tempo of the organization which will seek to assure a steady and even flow in Michigan after 6 o'clock Thursday evening.

One official is asked, during a lucid moment, how many employes there are. "Gosh, I don't know," is the answer, with the comment, "I just asked one man what he was doing up here, and he said, 'I work here,' so I walked away." An informal count was made, but it was not accurate, being taken while the identity of workers was still hazy and while those in question were in rapid and continuous motion. There appeared to be about 20 persons attacking the work which lay about in huge piles.

One girl opened and started to sort an imposing pile of mail. It revealed applications by the bucketful, each

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## LIQUOR COMMISSION HEADQUARTERS CHAOTIC

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envelope bearing some conveyance of money, in certified check or postal money order. Applicants who came personally, were pacing about with the flitting determination of disturbed waterbugs, bearing bonds, currency, applications, letters of recommendation from someone, forms approved by their city councils.

### Try Out New Seal

Stacks of supplies were accumulating on the floors. Officials were gingerly "trying out" the new stamping device bearing the die seal of the liquor commission. The handle stood proudly erect; the die sparkled with newness. "It just came in—it is only a temporary die," someone explains to someone else. A piece of bond paper is inserted, the die pressed. The seal of the state, circled by the words, "State Liquor Commission," is inspected eagerly.

A mob presses in the outer hall, seeking admission. A man one foot jammed against the edge of a table, bars the corridor with his leg, as he talks quietly to the applicants who stand in solid formation, proffering batches of documents.

State troopers stand ominously silent, erect and imperturbable in their uniforms. They seem self-possessed and no one asks them any questions.

Elevators of the building carry more people swiftly to the eighth floor, as the minutes pass. At least they did until one of them went out of commission Tuesday afternoon. This occurred just as Mr. Picard, "much as I hate to do it," was ordering the corridor cleared, with all applicants instructed to wait on the ground floor. The chairman would catch the glint of a familiar eye in the crowd, perhaps a newspaperman arriving late. Not knowing his name, Mr. Picard might point and say, "You come in." Eight would swear he was pointing to them.

### Instructs in Pronunciation

Inside, some applicants talk to some of the commissioners in the private office of the chairman. One said, "Now Master Picard," but he was cut off by the even-tempered chairman who said, "I have a good French name, and it's pronounced Pick-kard, with the accent on the last syllable. Don't try to make an Irishman out of me, please."

A man who may have halitosis leans over the desk of one comely secretary, seeking special attention. Suddenly she straightens up, mutters aloud something about "intestinal fortitude," and walks away to another part of the office, frowning.

Another, in a light mood, picks up her new metal letter file, simulates a cigaret girl by lilting, "Cigars, cigarets!" as though she were offering her imaginary stock for sale.

Questions pop up suddenly; people are wanted. A man snaps his fingers, calls 40 feet away to a girl, "Send a wire to So-and-So, and ask him..." Only the girl hears; no one else cares. "Call Mr. Wimpus in Detroit, and see if he..." comes another emergency request.

### Calm to Follow Storm

The people of the state voted for "complete control" of the liquor traffic last November 8. They are getting it, insofar as any group could give it and organize it during the brief time between the passage of the bill and the deadline for beer sales.

The time will come, incredible as it may seem to the casual (if you can imagine anyone casual getting in there just now!) visitor, when everything will have tapered off, and when the approach of a timid applicant may bring the startled whisper, "Look, Mamie, a customer!"