The temper of Oklahomans today is up
over the question of prohibition. The
imperturbable activities of the state’s boot-
leggers, the heftiness of its neighboring
states’ liquor-aided treasuries, and finally,
the election of an action-promising gover-
nor are factors which are once more caus-
ing Oklahomans to re-evaluate their state-
old decision for prohibition.

In the remarks which follow, let it be un-
derstood that there is no intention either
to support or reject repeal of our prohibi-
atory laws. These remarks bear solely upon
the subject of regulation should repeal be
approved. Logically a discussion of such
matters should wait until the voters decide
whether they want repeal. But, unfortu-
ately perhaps, any constitutional amend-
ment which will legalize the sale of intox-
icating liquors will also provide some plan
for sales control and regulation. And any
such plan will become a part of our funda-
damental law.

Here, the case for state-owned and oper-
ated stores is briefly presented primarily
because, thus far, it has received little, if
any attention in the state’s media of news
dissemination. Rather obviously it de-
serves consideration simply because more
than a third of the “wet” states regulate
and sell liquor through state-owned stores,
and are apparently well satisfied with the
results.

It would be difficult, of course, to classify
voters with respect to their opinions on
the repeal issue. Extremes are readily recog-
nizable—those who under no circumstances
would support repeal, and others who
would vote for any proposal tagged wet.

There is also a third group of voters, less
dogmatic and probably constituting the bal-
ance of power, who will impose exacting
conditions upon their support of any repeal
program.

In general they may be expected to insist
upon a system of sales control which,
1. Will offer no encouragement to
increased consumption of intoxicating
liquors, and
2. Will produce the maximum
amount of public revenues.

The principal argument for repeal may be
stated in these words: that liquor be
made available through legal channels to
those who insist upon having it, legally or
otherwise, and at a price sufficiently low to
discourage bootlegging and racketeering.

The advocate of state-owned stores takes
the position that the private dealer is in-
terested in enhancing his sales by the very
nature of his enterprise and that conse-
quently there is increased consumption by
the public. He may also point to the fact
that the cost of regulating and policing the
private dealer, as distinguished from other
aspects of policing the liquor traffic, con-
stitutes a considerable burden upon taxes
derived from private sales of liquor.

State-owned stores, on the other hand, or
those assigned to manage them, will not be
directly concerned about increasing the vol-
ume of turn-over.

The case for state-owned stores, when
considered as a source of public revenues,
is impressive. Kansas, whose experience
with stores has been widely publicized in
Oklahoma, received last year from gallon-
age or otherwise, will avoid this condition.
The achievements or advantages of the pri-
Voter, political subdivisions.

It ought to be freely admitted that the
consumption of intoxicants, whether ob-
tained legally or illegally, creates a dispro-
portionate number of problems—police and
welfare problems in painful variety. And
no one, perhaps, will deny that the regu-
lation and control of the liquor business
is more involved and vastly more expensive
than most forms of business enterprise.

For this reason, the advocate of state
stores contends that any profits from liquor
sales should go to the state and its politi-
cal subdivisions. It is, in his mind, the
only way in which the public can, in some
measure at least, recover the cost of regu-
lation and control, and the increasing out-
lay for welfare programs, the need for
which can in part be traced to the sale and
consumption of intoxicating liquors.

While many thoughtful observers may
agree with this argument, they are reluctant
to accept any plan of state sales because of
a fear that politics would offset advantages.

Probably, as long as liquor is sold, poli-
tics will be manifest. And it is a mistaken
notion that recourse to private stores, pack-
age or otherwise, will avoid this condition.

There is no convincing evidence that poli-
tics is a greater problem in the management
of state stores than in the regulation and
policing of private stores. Furthermore, the
former provides the most effective addi-
tional means of discouraging bootlegging—
the control of liquor prices.

As citizens of the Union’s last dry state,
Oklahomans have an opportunity to con-
sider all aspects of repeal. It is an oppor-
tunity they should avail themselves of im-
mediately in this signal year.