

The Canadian Brewing Industry's Response to Prohibition, 1874-1920

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*The prohibitionist are putting us out of business, so that we have lost heavily.*¹

A.E. Cross, Calgary Brewing and Malting Co., 1916

At the dawn of the twentieth century, prohibition became part of a broader impulse in North American and Nordic countries to regulate the production and consumption of alcoholic beverages. In some nations the 'noble experiment' lasted longer than in others. For instance, in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union prohibition existed from 1914 to 1925; in Iceland it lasted from 1915 to 1922; in Norway it remained a sobering fact of life for eleven years (1916-1927); in Finland prohibition was enforced from 1919 to 1932 - thirteen long years, the same amount of time that it existed in the United States (1920 - 1933).

In Canada, due to division of powers between the central and provincial governments, prohibition lasted longer in some regions than in others. Under the

terms of the nation-forming British North America Act of 1867, the provinces had the constitutional power to prohibit the retail sale of intoxicating drink. This vast power was first exercised by Canada's smallest province, Prince Edward Island; its prohibition period lasted the longest - from 1901 to 1948. Nova Scotia was the next Canadian province to jump aboard the wagon (1916 to 1930), then came Ontario (1916 to 1927), Alberta (1916 to 1924), Manitoba (1916 to 1923), Saskatchewan, (1917-1925), New Brunswick (1917 to 1927), British Columbia (1917 to 1921), and the Yukon Territory (1918-1921). Newfoundland, which was not part of Canada at that time, imposed prohibition in 1917 and repealed it in 1924. Quebec's experiment with banning the sale of all alcoholic drinks, in 1919, lasted only a few months. Quebec has always been an exceptional case in Canadian history. The Protestant moral urge towards prohibition that existed in English Canada was simply not evident in the predominantly French-speaking and Roman Catholic province of Quebec.

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While the temperance acts in each of the Canadian provinces varied, they

generally closed legal drinking establishments and forbade the sale of alcohol for beverage purposes and its possession and consumption except in a private dwelling. Under the terms of the provincial legislation brewers could legally sell their product outside the province, as inter-provincial trade was a federal authority. This created a loophole that was exploited by a handful of more industrious brewers. But in March of 1918, the loophole was pulled tightly shut when the newly elected federal government of Robert Borden stopped, for the duration of the first world war and one year thereafter, the manufacture and importation of 'intoxicating drinks' into provinces where purchases were illegal.² As of 1918, therefore, Canada had gone dry.

Prohibition had a devastating effect on the Canadian brewing industry. Whereas once there were scores of small local brewers, by the end of the prohibition era only a few large beer companies remained. Bottom feeders like Edward Plunkett Taylor - later dubbed Excess Profits Taylor by his critics - used the opportunity of prohibition to capture assets at rock-bottom prices and to construct large breweries that could capitalize on modern production techniques and advertising. By 1935, Taylor's company, Canadian Breweries, was twenty times the size of most turn-of-the-century breweries and represented a new post-prohibition reality. As a result of prohibition, the fortunes of many Canadian brewers evaporated. Legacies were lost;

thousands of well-paying jobs disappeared; and the civil liberties of thirsty Canadians were restricted. Yet all this might all have been avoided had the brewers waged a better war against the prohibitionists.

It has long been the position of social and political historians alike that prohibition was destined to become a factor in Canadian life during the early twentieth century. Business historians generally agree, concentrating their studies - to the limited extent that they exist in Canada - on the efforts of brewers to overcome the obstacles presented during the prohibition era.³ The existing historiography is without exception complimentary of the endeavours of Canadian brewers and their ability to survive during this 'difficult' period. The consensus, therefore, is that brewers 'made the most of their opportunities.'

The following paper challenges the existing historiography. Contrary to the established position, the paper argues that the unwillingness and inability of the brewing industry to organize itself and lobby effectively as well as its failure to reach out to other anti-prohibitionists in society (e.g. labour) was as much a factor in the onset and continuation of prohibition of beer as the actions of prohibitionists. Had the brewers been better organized, less defensive, and more strategically minded perhaps they could have had their product - 'a temperance drink' - exempted from prohibitionist legislation.

The Canadian brewing industry at the turn of the century

By the end of the nineteenth century, the brewing industry was an established and vibrant concern in Canada, although from an international perspective it was still relatively small. In 1892 the number of breweries was 125.⁴ Ten years later the number had increased slightly to 133. There were breweries in every province across the land: 18 in the province of Quebec, 2 in New Brunswick, 4 in Nova

Scotia, 1 in Prince Edward Island, 36 in British Columbia, 4 in the Yukon Territory, and 61 in Ontario. The Canadian brewing industry had large investments in hotels, saloons, factories, equipment, casks and other real assets. It also paid out more than \$2 million a year for various supplies and services, including \$817,350 in wages. Canadian brewers employed 1,977 individuals directly and paid about \$1 million in excise and custom duties.⁵ In comparison, the manufacturers of iron and steel products employed

Country	Production	Output per capita	Breweries
Germany	1,464,839,000	26.01	3,544
United States	1,224,555,000	16.07	1,886
England and Wales	1,157,283,684	35.88	155
Ireland	109,873,000	24.60	36
Scotland	82,405,728	18.57	125
Netherlands	49,532,518	9.70	494
Italy	31,873,508	1.00	99
Canada	25,108,254	4.73	131
New Zealand	7,376,004	8.92	74

Table 1. National production (imperial gallons), Beer production per capita, and number of Breweries in 1900

Sources. Wilson, R.G. and Gourvish, T.R. (1988) The Dynamics of the International Brewing Industry since 1800. Routledge: London and New York, pp. 31, 40, 77, 116 and 191, 249; Donnachie, I. (1998) A History of the Brewing Industry in Scotland. John Donald: Edinburgh, table 56, p. 150; Anon. (1903) One Hundred Years of Brewing: A Complete History of the Progress made in the Art, Science and Industry of Brewing in the World, particularly during the Nineteenth Century. H.S.Rich: New York, p. 616.

4,110 workers and paid out \$1,693,542 in wages, while lumber product manufacturers paid out \$2,689,864 to their 2,075 employees.⁶ While by no means Canada's most significant industry, brewing played an important part in Canadian economic life.

The output of the brewing industry had increased steadily since Confederation. In 1867, 137 breweries produced 6,843,000 gallons of malt liquor. By 1900, an almost identical number of breweries (131) manufactured over twenty-five million gallons of beer.⁷

Admittedly these numbers paled in comparison to those of the great beer-producing nations at the turn of the century (see Table 1). In 1900, England and Wales produced over a billion gallons of beer.⁸ That same year, 1,816 brewers in the United States manufactured 1.2 billion gallons of the beverage, while German brewers produced 1.4 billion gallons of malt liquor. And although Canada had a larger population in 1900 (5.3 million Canadians compared to 5.1 million Dutch), the Netherlands produced twice the amount of beer.⁹

The number of Canadian breweries declined from 135 to 117 between 1900 and 1911. Despite this, output remained relatively constant at roughly 24,000,000 gallons per annum.¹⁰ The largest Canadian brewers at the turn of the century were Dow and Dawes (Montreal, Quebec), Carling (London, Ontario), Labatt (London, Ontario) and Sleeman

(Guelph, Ontario). Two of these firms would not survive prohibition. Canadian breweries were getting bigger, although they were not yet the massive firms that they would become after the Second World War. Nor were they anywhere near as big as their international counterparts. In 1900, for example, Labatt and Carling combined to produce 1,000,000 gallons of beer.¹¹ In comparison, that same year Ireland's single largest brewer, Guinness, manufactured over 74,000,000 gallons of malt liquor. In the United States, Anheuser-Busch produced over 30,000,000 gallons of beer.

The increase in beer production over the last quarter of the nineteenth century - in Canada and elsewhere - was due in large measure to technological developments. For example, new refrigeration processes, such as ice-making equipment and ammonia-based refrigerators, permitted year round beer production. In addition, machinery for filtering the beer under pressure speeded up the entire production process. Finally, in larger plants, bottles were no longer filled by hand, but moved quickly through sterilizing equipment and along conveyor belts to be filled and then sealed automatically with a crown cap.

Brewers were producing more, and beer drinkers were correspondingly consuming larger amounts of their favourite brand of beer - be it a Labatt's Pale Ale, Carling's Canada Club Lager or Grant Springs Brewery Ale which the owners proclaimed: 'gratifies the taste, refresh-

Country	1875-79	1880-84	1885-89	1890-94	1895-99	1900-04
England & Wales	40.50	33.60	32.50	33.40	34.50	34.30
Germany	n.a.	17.66	21.33	23.51	26.57	26.35
United States	6.60	13.30	19.20	15.00	16.00	18.30
Canada	2.45	2.61	3.01	3.57	3.65	4.88
Italy	n.a.	n.a.	0.17	0.13	0.11	0.15

Table 2. Per Capita Beer Consumption in Select Countries, 1875-1904 (Gallons).

Sources. Wilson, R.G. and Gourvish, T.R. (1988) The Dynamics of the International Brewing Industry since 1800. Routledge: London and New York, pp. 40, 77 and 94; Anon. (1903) One Hundred Years of Brewing: A Complete History of the Progress made in the Art, Science and Industry of Brewing in the World, particularly during the Nineteenth Century. H.S.Rich: New York, p. 616.

ens the body.¹² Immigrants who came to Canada after 1860 were from strong beer drinking countries such as England, Ireland, Scotland and Germany and this contributed to an emerging beer culture in Canada. In addition, Canada was becoming increasingly industrialized and urbanized. Many of the workers in the manufacturing and mining sectors drank beer during and after work. Furthermore, as workers began to receive higher wages and salaries, they purchased more beer. As a result beer consumption on a per capita basis increased from 2.45 gallons per year during the period 1875-1879 to 4.88 gallons per year by 1900-1904.¹³ While this level of consumption was relatively low compared to that taking place in Germany, England and

Wales at the time, it was relatively high compared to that in nations with strong wine-drinking cultures - such as Italy (see Table 2). Added to which, Canadian consumption was on the rise. In 1914 each Canadian was consuming, on average, over seven gallons of beer a year (a 65% increase since 1900).¹⁴ And this was not the relatively watered-down beer of the post-prohibition years; rather it ranged in strength from 8 to 12%. But prohibition changed all that.

The effect of prohibition on the brewing industry

Prohibition had a destructive effect on the Canadian brewing industry. Nationally,

the number of breweries in operation was cut in half, from 112 in 1915 to just 66 in 1935. In Alberta firms like the Mountain Springs Brewing Company put their assets up for sale under the strain of prohibition.¹⁵ 'I am no longer able to continue,' the owner of Mountain Springs, Konrad Knapp, wrote to his sister in the summer of 1918. 'All of our toil has been for naught.' In Ontario there were 49 breweries in 1915. Two years later there were only 23 left. Business was so bad at Labatt, one of Canada's largest brewers, that in June of 1921 the directors of the company held an emergency meeting and agreed to wind up the affairs of the firm. The board was subsequently talked out of its decision by Edmund M. Burke, who would go on to lead the company through the dark days of prohibition.¹⁶ Labatt managed to survive prohibition largely by shipping beer and spirits to the United States. The London brewer organized export operations at Port Stanley on Lake Erie, Ford City in Windsor, and Sarnia on Lake Huron and hired special staff to handle business with reliable bootleggers.¹⁷ Other Canadian brewers were not so fortunate. For example, Sleeman Brewing and Malting Company, which had been in business since 1847, was forced to close its doors in 1916 due to the effects of province-wide prohibition.¹⁸ Likewise, Carling Brewery was unable to operate under the constraints of prohibition and was sold in 1924 to the rum-running syndicate of Low, Leon and Burns.

By the end of the prohibitions (i.e. around 1930) instead of the scores of small

breweries that once dominated the Canadian beer industry, only a few large breweries remained. The large breweries took advantage of the demise of local breweries to exploit a void in the market. This, along with improved transportation provided by the railroad and the rise of the trucking industry, made it possible for large centralized companies to dominate the beer industry. Prohibition had cost a good deal: those who once made their living from the brewing industry were forced to find other work; personal fortunes vanished; the government lost tens of thousands of dollars in tax revenue; and some of Canada's finest beer was no longer available for consumption. And it might all have been avoided if the brewers had got their act together and embraced a conventional commercial tactic: i.e. the art of inside and outside lobbying.

Lobbying

By the turn of the century, lobbying was a well established business practice in Canada. Indeed, lobbying had been a part of the Canadian landscape since the earliest colonial times. The grants, monopolies and concessions that made possible the early voyages of Jacques Cartier, Martin Frobisher, Henry Hudson and others were obtained through lobbying at court; the decisions that favoured the Family Compact and the Chateau Clique (i.e. a small group of Canadian colonial elite) were the result of lobbying the British Cabinet and Parliament.

These pressure tactics on the part of the business community continued following Confederation. After Hugh Allan's lobbying for the contract to build a transcontinental railway led to the Pacific Scandal and the subsequent fall of the Conservative government, John A. Macdonald (Canada's first Prime Minister) regrouped and made a triumphant return to power based on the support of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association. By 1870, the manufacturers of the nation were well-organized, strategically-minded and focused in terms of the public policy they sought from the federal government.

Unlike the brewers of the nation, Canadian manufacturers understood that effective lobbying required a coordination of two very different kinds of lobbying activity, what political scientists now term 'inside' and 'outside' lobbying. 'Inside lobbying' occurs in the nation's capitals and includes a mix of activities, from providing analysis and information to committees to negotiating with policy makers. 'Outside lobbying', on the other hand, is an activity that takes place outside the capital and is aimed at shifting the politics and pressure around an issue. Some of these activities include ad campaigns, building broad and diverse coalitions, and grassroots rallies. If history is any guide, lobbying works best when 'inside' and 'outside' activities are co-ordinated to ensure that they set up a strategic synergy in terms of timing, targeting, and messaging. The Canadian Manufacturers Association understood this when it successfully lob-

bied the federal government for the 'national policy' tariff of 1879.¹⁹ They succeeded in equating their narrow sectoral interests with the broader political interests of politicians and other classes in Canada. It was a different story when it came to the Canadian brewers and their response to prohibition.

Inside Lobbying

To be fair, the Canadian brewers appreciated the benefits to be derived from 'inside lobbying', and they worked hard at cultivating ties with those in political power. As early as 1852, the brewers employed a paid lobbyist to pressure certain elected officials to block the passage of the Cameron Act - an act calling for prohibition in Canada East and Canada West.²⁰ While they were successful on that occasion, they were not in 1864 when the government passed the Dunkin Act. Named after its parliamentary sponsor, Christopher Dunkin, the Act empowered any city, county, parish, town, or village in Canada to enact legislation prohibiting the sale of intoxicating beverages. The brewing lobby was no more successful in 1878 when it attempted to prevent the ratification of the Scott Act - an act which gave local governments the right to prohibit, by popular vote, the retail sale of alcohol.

The Scott Act was tenaciously opposed by the brewers and distillers of the nation as well as traditional Tory supporters, especially in Quebec. The most organ-

ized opposition came from brewers of Ontario, who traditionally supported the Conservative Party. In Guelph, the brewer George Sleeman helped to organize local opposition to the bill and later was an important part in the campaign against the enactment of the 'local option' in his township.²¹

Shortly after the introduction of the Scott Act, the brewers of the nation formed (in 1878) the Canadian Brewers and Maltsters' Association (C.B.M.A.).²² While the long-term mandate of the C.B.M.A. was 'to promote Canadian brewing and further the interest of Canadian brewers', its immediate objective was to lobby for the Scott Act's repeal. It proved to be too little, too late.

On Parliament Hill there was no craving to revisit the liquor question. Even the prime minister, John A. Macdonald - a man who enjoyed his drink almost as much as he did his political power - was unwilling to come to the defence of the liquor traffic. Despite the presence of the brewer John Carling in cabinet, 'Old Tomorrow' recognized the political advantages of inaction. Macdonald understood that the late 19th century issue of prohibition split Canadians more-or-less down the middle. For a man whose paramount concern was always national unity, Macdonald was not about to take any action that might divide the population.

Nevertheless, the brewers felt they had a friend in Macdonald. On 1st December 1880, Eugene O'Keefe wrote to

Macdonald informing him that he and various other brewers would be petitioning parliament to repeal the Scott Act. O'Keefe was seeking the Prime Minister's support. He was not hesitant to point out that the brewers were spending 'large amounts of money for effective representation' in the nation's capital.²³ Macdonald, however, was not to be pressured. He neither responded to O'Keefe's letter, nor pushed for the Scott Act's repeal as had been requested. Instead, he opted for the status quo. By allowing any county or municipality - or province - to prohibit the retail sale of liquor by majority vote, the Scott Act relieved the federal government of the responsibility for the law. Having passed the Scott Act, the federal government had no real reason to pay any attention to Eugene O'Keefe. This left O'Keefe and the brewing lobby in a very difficult position. Now they would have to fight against 'local option' referenda that, governments could justly argue, represented 'the will of the people'. Not until after the turn of the century did the brewing lobby come to realize that if it was to influence the 'will of the people' then it would have to launch an effective publicity campaign and/or a grass roots movement (i.e. outside lobbying effort) rather than an inside lobbying campaign. But most brewers did not realize this until it was too late. Only in June of 1915, after suffering recent 'local option' losses in Shawinigan and Grand Mère, did Quebec brewers start to talk about a new plan of action. 'I am at the present time', G. Norman wrote to his boss Norman Dawes, the president of

Quebec's largest brewery, 'seriously studying the plan of incorporating a society, whose aim should be to fight any measure or step taken having in view the prohibition of beer'.²⁴ Until that time, the brewers continued to focus their efforts on lobbying the federal government from the inside.

In 1885, the brewers of the nation lobbied the Senate to pass an exemption to the Scott Act allowing for the sale of less-potent beer, wine and cider, but lost out when the House of Commons balked at the measure. In part this was due to the fact that those on the Hill were receiving mixed and contradictory messages from those engaged in brewing. Most brewers supported the position of the CBMA. The London brewer John Labatt was representative of this group. 'The [Scott] act is a big humbug', he stated. 'It does more harm than good and needs to be repealed'.²⁵ But other brewers - usually those who were relatively small in scale and located outside of the large urban centres of Central Canada - defended the status quo because of the enormous profits that could be made by violating the intent of the law. Without a businesslike, bureaucratic and non-democratic structure, the C.B.M.A. was unable to maintain solidarity of brewers and rein in dissidents within the industry.

This became further evident in 1894 when the Ontario Brewers and Maltsters' Association began cultivating political ties with the federal Liberal Party. At an executive committee meeting in November of

that year, the decision was made to 'call on every brewer in Ontario' to donate \$50.00. 'The money', Ontario brewers were told, 'is wanted immediately for an important purpose from which you will derive great benefit.' Shortly thereafter the secretary treasurer of the Ontario Brewers' Association, Eugene O'Keefe, wrote the leader of the Liberal Party, Wilfrid Laurier, stating that a 'large sum of money' would soon be coming his way.²⁶ The action had not been sanctioned by the C.B.M.A. Indeed, the C.B.M.A. knew nothing about it until much later, indicating the lack of co-ordination between the federal and provincial brewing bodies. The brewing lobby was thus functioning in an *ad hoc* manner with no overriding strategic vision and no division of duties between the provincial and national brewing lobby. As it turned out, Laurier was no more willing than Macdonald to become a captive of special interests. On the matter of prohibition he would let the people decide and therefore he called for a plebiscite on the issue during his first term as Prime Minister.

In the weeks leading up to the 1898 national plebiscite on prohibition, Prime Minister Laurier (1896-1911) was inundated with mail. Indeed he received 97 letters relating to the matter. All the major prohibitionist groups let their voices be heard, drawing on a long heritage of temperance agitation in Anglo-Canada. In a two-week period in late February, Laurier received impassioned correspondence from the Christian Temperance Union, the Centennial Methodist Church, the

Congressional Union of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the Prohibition Council, the Sons of Temperance and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.²⁷ The letter-writing campaign represented a co-ordinated lobbying assault without equal in the annals of the Canadian temperance movement.

In comparison, the lobbying efforts of the brewers were dismal. Only three of the letters Laurier received on the issue of the prohibition plebiscite came from the brewing lobby and one man had written them all. Eugene O'Keefe had entered the brewing business in 1861 when he purchased the Victoria Brewery at the corner of Victoria and Gould streets in Toronto. An enterprising and ambitious man, O'Keefe grew his business into one of Ontario's largest breweries. In 1898, he became the first brewer in Canada to install a mechanically refrigerated storehouse.²⁸ The machinery had not come cheaply, however, and thus he had more than most to lose by prohibition. In September 1898 - fully six months after the high water mark of the prohibitionists' latest campaign - he wrote Laurier with 'a few reasons we advance in opposition to the stance of our prohibitionist friends.'²⁹ Again, it was too little too late. The national plebiscite went ahead and the anti-prohibitionists lost. Fortunately for the brewers of the nation, the government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier felt the majority of 13,687 (or 51.3% of the popular vote) in favour of prohibition was not large enough to warrant passing a law, especially since Québec had voted over-

whelmingly against it. Laurier was thus able to ignore the 'will of the people'. County, municipal and, later, provincial governments, however, would ignore such plebiscites at their own peril.

In the aftermath of the national plebiscite, prohibitionists turned their attention to effecting 'dry' legislation in the provinces. They faced little opposition from the brewing lobby. 'The campaign against us was a still one,' a Saint John clergyman wrote in 1909. 'They held no public meetings, nor did they appear at our meetings'.³⁰ In most of the provincial referenda of 1915-1916, the Canadian brewers and distillers had no army of volunteers to support their cause and had to rely, instead, on newspaper advertising to make their case.³¹

When the issue of national prohibition resurfaced in 1914 the brewers of the nation were little more prepared than they had been forty years earlier when confronted with the possibility of local-option prohibition under the Scott Act. The brewers' associations still lacked the full-time staff necessary to develop provincial and/or national strategies. Furthermore, the brewing lobby lacked the ability to coordinate internal and external activities and foster organizational growth. To make matters worse still, the man who had almost single-handedly battled the prohibitionists over the last 30 years was now gone. Following the death of his only son in 1911, Eugene O'Keefe lost interest in brewing matters. He sold his shares in his brewery and resigned as the presi-

dent of the Ontario Brewers' and Maltsters' Association. Without O'Keefe, the brewing lobby lost what little potency it possessed. Thus when wartime prime minister Borden proposed instituting national legislation which would forbid the manufacture of intoxicating beverages, the brewing industry did not directly appeal to him to do otherwise. While the prime minister heard from the Licensed Victuallers³² and various distilleries,³³ he did not from the brewers of the nation. With the most to lose from prohibition the victuallers were 'left to carry the ball in challenging prohibition legislation in the courts and in lobbying efforts with governments'.³⁴

The brewers of the nation, therefore, were moderately successful when it came to the act of inside lobbying. While the brewers understood the benefits to be derived from cultivating influence within the federal and provincial political parties they were often insufficiently organized to achieve their goals. It was an even sorer tale when it came to the act of 'outside lobbying'.

Outside Lobbying

Prohibitionists realized something that the brewers did not: this was a cultural/moral battle as much as a political one; it was a fight for the hearts and minds of Canadians, as much as for having influence in the corridors of political power. Thus relatively early in their campaign the prohibitionists embarked upon a zealous

program of 'outside lobbying'. As in the United States, Canadian prohibitionists sought to mobilize a national constituency of thousands of people, which would be united in purpose and singular in objective.³⁵ Admittedly it took some time for the prohibitionists to act in a cohesive manner. For most of the nineteenth century, dry voices were rarely in absolute harmony.³⁶ Nevertheless, when the movement did coalesce around the turn of the century it became a force to be reckoned with. Indeed, so innovative was one particular prohibitionist organization - i.e. the Anti-Saloon League of America - that it 'changed the nature of popular political action'.³⁷

In an attempt to convert Canadian culture the prohibitionists continued to stress the dangerous effects of consuming intoxicating beverages. The message of prohibitionists was often clear, concise and direct, as the poster below demonstrates.

In defence against posters such as this, Canadian brewers maintained that they contributed a good deal to the nation in terms of tax revenue and jobs.³⁸ The prohibitionists responded that any economic gain was grossly outweighed by the social cost. Alcohol was not only the cause of poverty, misery, and crime, but also insanity and health defects. The beer manufacturers had often attempted to entice Canadians to drink their particular brand with promises of better health. 'Good health will be yours if you drink O'Keefe's Bold Label Ale', one advertise-

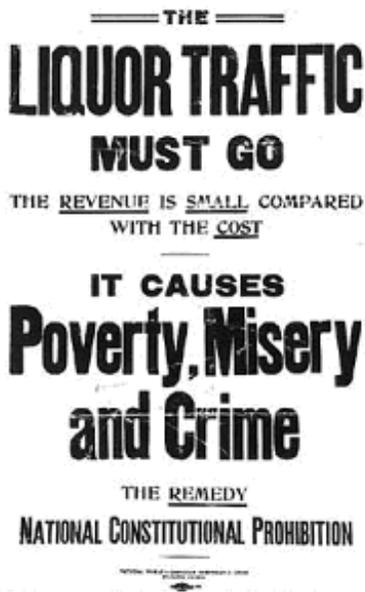


Figure 1. Prohibitionist poster.

Source. Glenbow Archives NA-2629-5

ment read. Similarly, Vancouver Breweries pledged that its Cascade beer was as 'truly a food as the bread you eat' and 'not only a drink that refreshes, but one that tones up the system, builds body strength and brain efficiency.' But whereas the campaigns of the brewers were primarily intended to increase brand market share and thereby profits, those of the prohibitionists were designed to change social behaviour. In effect, it was an unequal battle of moral imperatives against narrow material gain. When it came to outside lobbying the prohibitionists were far more strategically minded

and empowered by the moral imperatives of late nineteenth-century Anglo-Protestant Canada.

In the 1890s, prohibitionists effectively worked to have their message heard by the youngest and most impressionable individuals in society. 'Health Readers' began to appear in Canadian schools. These readers were filled with prohibitionist propaganda on the dangerous effect of drinking beer. On reading a description of the alleged effect of beer consumption on the heart, the young reader was left with the dire warning that 'the heart bears this abuse as long as it can and when it stops - the beer drinker is dead'.³⁹ There was no attempt by brewers to have such propaganda removed from the schools.

The prohibitionists were also better than the brewers at crafting their message so as to resonate with the dominant values of the day. During the First World War, for instance, the prohibitionists were able to associate their cause with the war effort. Prohibitionists successfully employed the rhetoric of 'efficiency,' 'duty,' and 'self-sacrifice.' With this patriotic war-cry added to all their other slogans, the prohibition forces rapidly moved on to new victories.

Again, the brewers of the nation found themselves on the defensive. Indeed, one wonders if the brewers themselves were not being affected by the prohibitionist rhetoric. After all, despite being brewers, they were attached to their

churches and their wives and would have had to bend their sensibilities. At Labatt brewery in London some members of the board even quietly questioned if the prohibitionists might not be right about the need for wartime sacrifices.⁴⁰ Such self-doubts certainly did not strengthen the anti-prohibitionist cause. In the twilight of his career, John Carling spent much of his time lobbying both the provincial and federal governments for funds to build a regional insane asylum in London. A Methodist himself, Carling was motivated to do so out of a sense of guilt and an unconscious acceptance of the prohibitionist rhetoric linking alcohol consumption to insanity. The ambiguous attitude of brewers to their own profession was also reflected during the Royal Commission on the Liquor Traffic (1892-1895). When asked if they would give up their business if financially compensated, about half of the brewers stated they would. Some of the same brewers talked openly about the mental and moral strain of operating a brewery in 'temperate times'. One might speculate that the brewers were affected by the perceptions of a large and overtly judgemental segment of society. Perhaps, to use the terminology of post-modernist philosophers, they had come to 'internalize the gaze.' Whatever the reason, after 1900, the brewers of the nation were constantly on the defensive.

But perhaps the greatest failing of the brewing industry was its failure to build a broad-based coalition capable of drowning out the 'dry' voices in society. Many would be negatively affected by prohibi-

tion if it became a fact of Canadian life: labourers, farmers, hotel and saloon owners, barrel makers, bottlers, shippers, as well as the vintners and liquor manufacturers. Yet the brewers of the nation did not reach out to these groups.

The case was different elsewhere. In reaction to vehement attacks by temperance reformers in late Victorian times, English brewers and publicans - a potent combination in terms of lobbying - formed 'the trade'. In a relatively short period, 'the trade' gained a formidable reputation, which other pressure groups could only envy.⁴¹ Having reached out to working-class drinkers and moderate reformers as well as overcoming internal divisions, 'the trade' was able to resist government support of anti-drink legislation.⁴² 'The brewers had the money, while the publicans swayed votes of working-class drinkers'.⁴³ As a result prohibition failed to become a reality in England. In Denmark, brewers made much of the fact that beer was a 'temperance drink.' Its relatively low level of alcohol distinguished it from harmful spirits like vodka. Unlike the brewers in Canada, Danish brewers distanced themselves from the manufacturers of hard liquors. They supported the temperance movement in the expectation that restrictions on spirits would improve their prospects.

The success of 'the trade' in England might well have served as a model for brewers in Canada. But they took no notice. This was unfortunate because Canadian brewers would have also found

an ally in labour. Of the various groups in society, the working class was overwhelmingly against the idea of full-fledged prohibition.

The prim, tee totalling working-class masculinity of the prewar years had apparently been largely eclipsed by a version that had quietly taken root in working-class saloons in the same period, and was finally ready to defend publicly their right to drink responsibly and moderately.⁴⁴

During the depression of 1913-1915 labour leaders told provincial and federal governments that the prohibitionist legislation had forced 'thousands engaged in the brewing and allied industries out of work'.⁴⁵ Workers argued that it was their constitutional right to be able to consume beer.⁴⁶ These efforts by organized labour to prevent a bone-dry regime seemed to resonate with a larger number of Canadian working-men and women. But the brewing industry was unwilling to unite and co-ordinate with labour in an attempt to prevent prohibition.

Conclusion

The unwillingness and inability of the brewing industry to organize itself and lobby effectively, as well as its failure to reach out to other anti-prohibitionists in society (e.g. labour), were as much factors in the onset and continuation of prohibition in Canada as the actions of prohibitionists. Had the brewers been better organized, less parochial, more

proactive and far more strategic in thought and action, they might well have had beer exempted from prohibitionist legislation. Historically, lobbying has worked best when 'inside' and 'outside' activities have been co-ordinated to assure that they make strategic sense in terms of timing, targeting, and messaging. But this is something the brewing lobby did not do. While they dedicated significant resources to lobbying government from the inside, they did little to influence the culture around the issue of beer drinking and prohibition. Thus, in the end, theirs was an extremely weak response to the threat and onset of prohibition.

From a nineteenth-century perspective, this was a very un-Canadian tale. Usually, Canadian business successfully lobbied government for the public policies it wanted. But in the case of prohibition, the brewing industry ultimately failed to persuade the government to do its bidding. From another perspective, however, the story was very Canadian. In the years following Confederation, the fragile Canadian nation was divided along regional, religious and socio-economic lines. These divisions were omnipresent during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, dividing those within the brewing industry. Canadian brewers were trapped between their wallets and their social register. Steelmakers had no moral qualms about making steel because steel made nations. But did beer make nations? Or did it cause national decay? Canadian brewers were increas-

ingly uncertain. As a result, they served up a watered-down response to prohibition.

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Prohibition was the attempt to outlaw the production and consumption of alcohol in the United States. The call for prohibition began primarily as a religious movement in the early 19th century – the state of Maine passed the first state prohibition law in 1846, and the Prohibition Party was established in 1869. Groups such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), formed in 1874, and the Anti-Saloon League (ASL), founded in 1893, became powerful crusading forces and by 1916, 26 of the then 48 states had already passed prohibition laws. A drink for the devil: 8 facts about the history of coffee. The history of middle-class wine drinking. At the same time prohibition almost completely destroyed the brewing industry, causing a huge loss in jobs. Canadian history; government-business relations; brewing industry; culture of consumption; branding and brand management; lobbying; culture of consumption. News and Events. The Shannon Lectures in History. “The Canadian Brewing Industry’s Response to Prohibition, 1874-1920”, *Brewery History*, 132 (Fall, 2009), 2-17. *Profiting the Crown: Canada’s Polymer Corporation, 1942-1990* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005). (ed.) 1864: The Dunkin Act, or the Canada Temperance Act (1864), is passed, allowing any counties or municipalities to prohibit the retail sale of alcohol if supported by a majority vote. 1874: The Women’s Christian Temperance Union is formed. 1875: Hundreds of religious groups and societies across Canada form the Dominion Prohibitory Council in Montreal (later renamed the Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of Liquor Traffic). 1878: The Scott Act, or the Canada Temperance Act (1878), is passed, extending the first Canada Temperance Act Nationwide. 1898: Canada’s first attempt at federal prohibition; Sir Wilfred Laurier’s government held a federal referendum on the subject of national prohibition.