

Questioning Similarities: Prohibition in the United States and Finland

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***Abstract:** Only two republics have ever adopted national alcohol prohibition in peacetime, and they did so at almost exactly the same time. For these reasons and others, historians of temperance have considered prohibition in Finland and the United States to be essentially similar. In fact, despite originating at the same time, the two are quite dissimilar. American prohibition came out of Protestant revivalism and a capitalist desire for worker efficiency. By the late nineteenth century two powerful temperance organizations, the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League, had emerged to lead the movement for domestic prohibition and to evangelize for prohibition abroad. Prohibition in Finland came out of the movement to achieve a cultural and political nationalism. Temperance was part of the Turku academics' attempt to create a virtuous unified peasantry and working class. The working class, in particular, used the temperance movement to organize their movements.*

While the United States and Finland were the only two republics to undertake national prohibition, the US largely ignored the Finnish experiment. They praised it in the early 1920s only to emphasize its later failures as a way of trying to obscure their own inability to achieve a viable policy.

Key words: Prohibition, Finland, nationalism, United States, morality

Of the many comparisons between the United States and the Nordic countries, one of the most common is their shared tendency, unlike most of the rest of western culture, toward alcohol prohibition. In his classic article "Temperance Cultures: Concern about Alcohol Problems in Nordic and English-Speaking Cultures," Harry Gene Levine noted nine temperance cultures, the United Kingdom and its four English-speaking settler nations the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and the

four Scandinavian countries of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland.¹ Not all of these countries followed the same path. The United Kingdom and Canada except for the province of Quebec adopted national prohibition during World War I but then abandoned it. Australia and especially Sweden adopted a regulatory approach. Norway and Iceland both passed national prohibition laws but were compelled by Spanish and French boycotts of their fish exports to make an exception for wine. Russia under Lenin and the Bolsheviks demanded total prohibition but never enforced it. Only Finland and the United States adopted national prohibition, did so nearly simultaneously, and had many of the same problems. This has led to a common misconception that their types of prohibition were identical deriving from similar circumstances. An interesting example is a recent article by the American journalist Gabrielle Glaser. In it she blasts American addiction treatment and especially Alcoholics Anonymous while praising Finnish approaches. Yet, while she freely recognizes the differences in treatment, she bluntly asserts Anglo-American historical dominance and declares “Finland is a country that shares with the US a history of Prohibition. Inspired by the American temperance movement, the Finns outlawed alcohol from 1919 to 1932.”²

But what is the proof that the American temperance movement inspired the Finnish prohibition movement of the 1920s? Glaser is in a long tradition. A Columbia professor of Finnish descent studying Finnish Prohibition in the 1920s noted that the first tracts advocating Finnish prohibition in the 1840s were nothing but word for word translated American tracts. During the same time as these tracts Robert Baird an American Temperance Society missionary based in St. Petersburg travelled extensively through the country.³ When the first universal suffrage Eduskunta (Finnish Parliament) voted overwhelmingly for Prohibition in 1907—although the Czar vetoed it—several temperance leaders had already travelled to the United States to study state Prohibition in order to examine the policy’s financial viability.⁴

1 Harry Gene Levine, “Temperance Cultures: Concern about Alcohol Problems in Nordic and English-Speaking Cultures,” *The Nature of Alcohol and Drug Related Problems*, ed. Malcolm Lader, Griffith Edwards and D. Colin Drummond, New York: Oxford, 1993, 16-26.

2 Glaser, Gabriele, “The Irrationality of Alcoholics Anonymous,” *Atlantic* (April 18, 2015).

3 John Wuorinen, *The Prohibition Movement in Finland*, New York: Columbia University, 1931.

4 Erkki J. Immonen “The American Impact on the Temperance Movement in Finland,” in *Contagious Conflict: The Impact of American Dissent on American Life* ed. A.N.J. Den Hollander (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), and John Wuorinen, “Finland’s Prohibition Experiment,” *Annals of the American Academy of Politi-*

The most important of Finnish temperance leaders, Matti Helenius-Seppälä, wrote two books on American Prohibition, *Facts about Liquor Legislation in the United States and Norway* (1904) and *Probationary Conditions in the USA* (1907).

But the best indication of the connection is that the two nations were the only republics to have universal national prohibition except for wartime emergencies, and they had it for almost exactly the same historical period. After the Czar who had a legal monopoly on spirits had squashed four previous attempts, the newly independent Finland government instituted Prohibition as one of its first legislative acts in June of 1919. The United States quickly followed in January 1920 with the unmet anticipation that the rest of the world would follow suit. Both countries witnessed immediate progress. Public drunkenness declined; deaths from cirrhosis of the liver decreased precipitously; and living standards improved especially for the working classes. However, things quickly deteriorated. Organized crime emerged to fill the vacuum of a public demand. Smuggling became one of the leading growth industries of the economies in both countries. The United States received their liquor from Canada and much of Europe. Finland received its from Germany and especially Estonia. In the United States, consumption which had declined to approximately 30% of pre-Prohibition rates, increased to 60-70%.⁵ Still, it seemed more because consumption was illegal and concentrated in the cities while consumption dropped precipitously in the rural areas. Also, in both countries but especially Finland, while consumption decreased, drunkenness increased. Consumption appeared much higher in Finland, as arrests for public drunkenness were far higher than before Prohibition especially in the larger cities like Helsinki, Tampere, and Turku.⁶ Finally, in both nations politicians refused to accept the reality of the situation. This has led many scholars to equate the two nations' path.

But similar results do not always come from similar causes. There is a good amount of research done on both the American and the Finnish temperance movements leading up to Prohibition. But comparative research

cal and Social Science, 163 (September 1932), 220.

5 Jeffrey A. Miron and Jeffrey Zweibel, "Alcohol Consumption during Prohibition," National Bureau of Economic Research: Working Paper Number 3675 (April 1991), 2.

6 Waeklin, Jussi, "Drinking and Public Sphere in Leningrad/St. Petersburg and Helsinki in the Interwar Period," *Contemporary Drug Problems* (Spring 2005), 32, 57-74.

has been lacking. The American temperance movement began as an attempt to teach their fellow drinkers to drink moderately and to recognize the dangers of excessive drinking; this was the origin of the phrase temperate. Indeed, the anti-alcohol movement in the United States began shortly after the Revolution in response to the republican ideology of the need for individuals to think and act rationally.

Dr. Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and close friend of both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, postulated that inebriates were victims of a progressive disease. Like most of the early reformers, he saw persuasion rather than coercion as the appropriate technique. Rush also was the first American to treat the mentally ill compassionately, and the first American mental institutions also had sections for inebriates.⁷ Several decades later, the working class Washingtonian movement composed largely of ex-drinkers adopted Rush's position on persuasion and insisted that individuals must make the choice of sobriety personally.

Roughly at the same time as the Washingtonians the eventual dominant prohibitionist wing emerged, characterized by two goals. First is the goal of religious and moral reform, the creation of a Protestant utopia that would already exist except for the existence of alcohol. Begun as a mass movement in the 1830s and 40s when other reforms such as abolitionism, women's rights, prison reform, free public education, and vegetarianism began, temperance eclipsed all others in membership. Clearly alcohol was a problem; by 1830 the average American of drinking age consumed over 38 liters of absolute liquor per year.⁸ (According to the World Health Organization in 2014 contemporary Finns drink 12.3 and Americans 9.2 liters.) Drinking increased as the ideology of rugged individualism took hold, and as the rapidly changing economy led to increased anxieties. In 1826 a number of prominent clergymen including the father of Harriet Beecher Stowe formed the American Temperance Society. By 1835 twelve percent of the population and one in five free adults belonged to the ATS. While temperance originally meant moderation, by this time the American Temperance

7 William L. Whyte, *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America* (Bloomington, Illinois: Chestnut Health Services, 199*), and John Crowley and William L. Whyte, *Drunkard's Refuge: The Lessons of the New York State Inebriate Asylum*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004.

8 Mark Edward Lender and James Kirby Martin, *Drinking in America: A History*, New York: The Free Press, 1987, 14.

Society and almost all temperance organizations had changed to abstinence and were moving toward imposing this through coercion.

Their ethical perspective was rooted in an evangelical Protestant ideology. Numerous Catholics joined the temperance crusade and the great Irish temperance crusader Father Theobald Matthew, who had convinced half the Irish population to sign the pledge, crusaded in 1849 and 1851. Still, these individuals rightfully fearful of coercion, resisted the prohibitionist trend. The American Temperance Society had few reservations. Theodore Dwight Weld, one of America's leading abolitionists, scolded in 1832 "All your country requires is that you stop drinking ardent spirits. Didn't Jesus die on the cross? Can't you stop drinking?"⁹ Ministerial leaders demanded that "the ignorant, depraved, and vicious" accept their direction.¹⁰ The period's reformers of all interests based their beliefs on the goal of moral perfectionism, but it was a perfectionism based upon evangelical ideology. For temperance advocates alcohol accounted for all of America's problems. Neal Dow who would push through America's first state-wide Prohibition law concluded an 1854 essay with "You will hardly find an instance of degradation, of pauperism, or of great crime, which has not its origins more or less directly in Intemperance."¹¹

Related to the religious and moral view was the introduction of women into the temperance cause. Always more involved than men in church affairs, women were attracted to the reform and welcome in the paternalistic organizations if only in subservient roles. Lacking legal and economic rights, women rightly feared their husbands' and fathers' alcoholism. "For men the problem was first of all self-control, for women the problem was controlling the behavior of men."¹² Formed in 1874, the exclusively female Woman's Christian Temperance Union grew to an international organization of over 200,000 in 25 years. Their initial goal was to reform drunkards through Christian persuasion; later on they sought to use those methods to make connections with the ruling elite. The WCTU would become the cutting edge not only of such alcohol related reforms as Prohibition and

9 Weld quoted in Thomas R. Pegram, *Demon Rum: The Struggle for a Dry America*, Chicago: Ivan Dee, 1998, 19.

10 Neal Dow in Frank L. Bryne, *Prophet of Prohibition: Neal Dow and His Crusade*, Gloucester Ma: Peter Smith, 1961, 7.

11 Neal Dow "The Story of a Neighborhood," *American Temperance Magazine* 3 (1854).

12 Jack Blocker Sr., *American Temperance Movements: Cycles of Reform*, Boston: Twayne, 1989, 20.

compulsory alcohol education in the public schools but also aggressively for women's suffrage.

Historically parallel with this version of temperance lay the economic one. As the United States underwent industrialization, merchants and especially industrialists sought to achieve not just a moral Christian utopia but a harmonious procapitalist one. The irregular agricultural and artisanal lifestyles did not fit the needs of an industrial society; moreover, many argued that they could not solve industrial problems before they solved the liquor issue. Industrial operatives required self-control, and drinking by definition, especially during working hours, stood for lack of control. Wealthy industrialists and merchants were the largest contributors to temperance organizations; in response the American Temperance Society performed experiments that supposedly proved that sober farm workers did their work more efficiently and safely than drinkers.¹³ In Rochester, New York, evangelical factory owners promoted only those workers who proved their sobriety by joining and attending the same Prohibition-supporting churches of their employers. The goal was a compliant work force which reflected their interests.¹⁴ An owner stated frankly "When times get normal and we can get plenty of help, we always favor the man who doesn't drink."¹⁵

These moral and procapitalist utopias fit together nicely especially in the Anti-Saloon League, the organization the most successful in achieving Prohibition in the United States. Reverend Howard Russell, an ex-lawyer called to the ministry, founded the organization in 1893. By 1899 it had over 100,000 followers who voted according to League orders. Eighty percent of its leadership came from evangelical denominations, and thirty five percent were ordained clergy. Russell proclaimed that God was the true creator of the ASL, while the organization called itself "the Church in action against the saloon." Coldly moralistic, they declared their lack of interest in outgrowths of Prohibition such as poisoned alcohol saying that its drinkers deserved to die. Like Neal Dow whom they canonized, the League blamed all societal problems upon alcohol. Their goal was to create a society where no one would want to drink alcohol. In a speech introducing the Prohibition

13 John Rumbarger, *Profits Power and Prohibition: Alcohol Reform and the Industrializing of America*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.

14 Paul E. Johnson *Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York 1815-1837*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1998.

15 Rumbarger, 145.

Amendment before the House of Representatives, its sponsor and leading ASL propagandist Richmond Pearson Hobson declared “If a family or nation is sober, nature in its normal course will cause them to rise to a higher civilization. If a family or nation, on the other hand, is debauched by liquor, it must decline and ultimately perish.”¹⁶

It was also intensely pro-business. Almost all of its funding came from such business titans as John D. Rockefeller, department store magnate S.S. Kresge, and Andrew Carnegie who declared business efficiency their chief goal. It was, after all, the Anti-Saloon League not the Anti-Alcohol League, and the saloon was the bastion of hard-drinking workers, especially recent immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. They were dangers religiously, morally, and especially economically.

The temperance movement in Finland was both simpler and more complex. The Finnish-speaking Free Church supported temperance, and pietist missionaries Henrik Rehnqvist and Lars Levi Laestadius proselytized an anti-alcohol message. Yet the pietists consistently avoided political issues, with the Sami Laestadians, in particular, noting that, while they chose not to drink, they had no desire to impose their views on others. Moreover, the procapitalist aspect of Finnish temperance was relatively minimal. Rather the roots of the emergence of the Finnish Prohibition movement lay in Finnish nationalism and the emergence of a worker’s movement.

Unlike the United States, Finland in the 1830s possessed neither sovereignty nor a national identity. Rather, Finland had been simply part of Sweden until Russia’s acquisition of it in 1809 and had neither separated itself politically or culturally. In the words of the father of Finnish cultural and political nationalism the exile Adolf Iwar Arwidsson “Swedes we are no longer, Russians we cannot be, therefore let us be Finns.” Finland’s incipient nationalism coincided with other European nations controlled by empires especially in the Baltics and eastern Europe.¹⁷ Temperance represented a strong and broad social movement across the classes that played an important role in the building of the Finnish nation state.

But what did it mean to be Finns? A group of Swedish-speaking upper class intellectuals or representatives of the fennomania movement centered in Turku set out to answer the question. All Finns must speak Finnish (al-

16 Richmond Pearson Hobson, Speech before the United States House of Representatives, December 22, 1914.

17 Singelton, Fred Bernard, *A Short History of Finland*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989, 12.

though few of the fennomania intellectuals did); a national literature and folklore must be developed; and the Finnish peasants—common men and women, harmonious and balanced, cheerful and content even in poverty—would be acknowledged as the epitome of Finnish society. The goal was cultural not political; originally Russia encouraged their organ the Finnish Literary Society as a way to strengthen the ties between their grand duchy and the central government and to distance it from Sweden.

These intellectuals were urban dwellers in a nation of farmers; their perspective on the peasantry was more romantic than realistic especially with regard to their drinking. The peasantry simply did not live up to the idyll of the intellectuals. Similarly to other rural countries like the United States, Scotland, Russia, and Poland, Finland was a grain economy with occasional surpluses and little transportation. Once they had become part of the Russian empire, surpluses increased and prices decreased. The obvious avenue for such surpluses, especially as Finland became more prosperous, was a surge of hard liquor. Finland had traditionally seen great increases of drinking and drunkenness during certain holidays and seasons with groups of rural single men roaming the countryside demanding free drinks. Finns became known, as they are today, for drinking relatively infrequently but heavily on certain occasions.

In the 19th century, the rate of homicides in the countryside and country towns shot up while the rate in Sweden declined. These deaths came primarily during fights among single men from different villages at rural weddings, where the bride's parents sold liquor to cover its cost. In rural areas like Ostrobothnia weapons of choice shifted from wooden instruments to knives. Such behavior hardly fit the romantic vision of the peasants of the cultural elite. And if one could not teach them civilized behavior, how could they justify independence?¹⁸

The connection between cultural nationalism and temperance can be seen in the career of Elias Lönnrot, author of the Finnish national epic the Kalevala. Sponsored by the Finnish Literature Society, Lönnrot travelled through Karelia and surrounding areas to obtain the folklore and oral history for the creation of a national literature. Yet, almost exactly at the same time as the publication of the first version of the Kalevala, he attempted to establish a temperance society in the impoverished rural town of Kajaani

18 Heikki Ylikangas, *The Knife Fighters: Violent Crime in Southern Ostrobothnia 1790-1825*, Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1998.

where he served as a physician. Lönnrot believed that a national literature was insufficient without a movement for self-control and civilization. Temperance became for nationalists, in the words of the historian Irma Sulkunen, “a civic religion.”¹⁹

As temperance movements spread throughout the grand duchy, they came to possess central importance. Alexis de Tocqueville’s classic *Democracy in America* argues that America’s uniqueness came from its multiplicity of societies and the participatory experience they provided Americans. Under the domination of the autocrats Alexander III and Nicholas II, on the other hand, local associations in Finland were placed under strict control and international organizations forbidden.

Groups like the Order of Good Templars, which had spread from the United States and the United Kingdom to become the largest temperance group in Sweden, was banned. Still, Russian administrators approved of local temperance groups that promised to make their subjects more prosperous and efficient. Those groups not associated with the Lutheran church merged into the Friends of Moderation. When its long-time leader A.A. Granfelt took control in 1878, he changed it to the Friends of Temperance. Like the Finnish Literary Society, its goal was to increase Finnish nationalistic spirit and, above all, to impose middle class values. It also saw the traditional cultural elite as the natural leaders; at one point Granfelt denied equal rights to workers in the organization until they had proved themselves to be equal morally to the middle class. The Friends also assumed a moralistic tone. One of its publications proclaimed “The immediate consequences of drunkenness are poverty, sickness, loss of human dignity, a miserable family at home, and, finally perhaps a prison cell.”²⁰

The central importance of temperance came from its emergence as Finland’s first mass organization as well as the first association to reach out to the lower classes. Lacking any experience with associations and blocked from experimenting with their own, various groups, especially women and workers, used temperance as an incubator for their own interests. Temper-

19 Irma Sulkunen, *History of the Finnish Temperance Movement: Temperance as a Civic Religion*, Lewiston New York: Edward Mellen, 1999, 2-4, passim, and Irma Sulkunen, “Temperance as a Civic Religion: The Cultural Foundations of the Finnish Working Class Ideology,” *Contemporary Drug Problems* 12 (Summer, 1985), 267-79.

20 Sulkunen, *History*, 197, 12.

ance was not only a nationalistic and moral ideology but also an organizational tool.²¹

The center for the temperance movement was in southern and western Finland, the most industrialized of the duchy and especially in emerging industrialized cities like Kotka, Lahti, and Tampere. Still this was a tiny fraction of the overall population. Very much unlike the United States, many of these temperance members were workers. While the artisan class was overrepresented, many unskilled workers including women joined as well. Indeed, while in the States workers were considered the greatest drinkers and completely opposed to temperance, in Finland they became the strongest supporters of Prohibition and the Swedish speaking middle class the greatest opponents. Workers had traditionally joined existing temperance organizations as an opportunity to organize and quickly began their own groups. Temperance provided workers with a readymade organizational network within their own class and allied organizations as well. In addition, it was completely respectable and appealed to all workers.

As workers began to organize mass demonstrations in favor of temperance, Granfelt fought back, fearing loss of control. In 1896 the Convention of Workers Societies banned alcohol on their premises opposing Granfelt's support of moderate drinking and opposition to prohibition. In 1898 Granfelt desperately opposed the brilliantly conceived year long alcohol strike by workers. The next year the Marxist Labor Party soon to become the Social Democratic Party (SDP) formed and included the enactment of national Prohibition in its platform. The Party used their early and consistent support of Prohibition and their championing of the landless rural peasantry as key issues in their emergence as the largest political party in the nascent republic. By 1907 the Eduskunta was almost unanimously in favor of Prohibition. Of the five major political parties, only the minority Swedish-speaking Swedish Workers Party opposed Prohibition.

Workers advanced Prohibition for personal as well as political reasons. Many called alcohol "the opium of the people" and argued that owners promoted the use of alcohol to weaken worker solidarity.²² Like their Russian Marxist allies, SDP leaders demanded sobriety and even teetotalism from

21 Irma Sulunen, "Why Did the Finnish Working Class Come to Support Prohibition?" *Reports from the Social Research of Alcohol Studies*, 151, July 1981.

22 Matti Helenius Seppala, "How Finland Won Prohibition," *Cornhill Magazine*, quoted in "How They Made Temperance Easy," in *Literary Digest* 69, May 4, 1921, 34.

their peers.²³ Indeed, the only workers group similar to the Finns was the Russian Bolsheviks who supported both Finnish temperance and independence and officially, if not really, enacted Prohibition in the Soviet Union until Stalin seized power.

During the years leading up to Prohibition, the differences between the two versions of Prohibition emerged publicly. In 1883 the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of the United States established the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Organized in 1874, the all woman WCTU under the brilliant leadership of Frances Willard had expanded its original mission of prohibition to the "Do Everything" platform of such issues as temperance education for children, women's suffrage, vocational education for prostitutes, and age of consent laws. Now she urged her adoring membership to expand their message to the world.

Their chief proselytizers were round-the-world women missionaries who, beginning in 1884, travelled to various countries across the world preaching the gospel of temperance. Although these women shared the evangelical Protestantism of the vast majority of the WCTU members, they limited their message to the evils of alcohol and possible solutions to the problem. Many of these women, especially in Asia, had their perspectives enlarged by their experiences and became critical of the religious missionaries' ties to the local establishment and critical of Willard and her circle as well. On their circumnavigation of the globe, several of these missionaries visited Sweden, Norway, and even Denmark which lacked a strong temperance movement. There is no record of any visits to Finland.²⁴

While these admirable women had some lasting influence especially in India, most of the WWCTU missionaries engaged in two to four year missions in various nations around the world, giving speeches and aiding in establishing local societies. The majority of the missionaries, however, worked in English speaking countries. That came partially from the role of WWCTU President Lady Henry Somerset, the second wealthiest woman in the United Kingdom and by far the largest contributor to the organization. But it also came from the organization's Anglo-American culture and

23 Warpenius, Katharine and Caroline Sutton, "The Ideal of the Alcohol-Free State," *Broken Spirits: Power and Ideas in Nordic Alcohol Control*, ed. Pekka Sulkunen, Caroline Sutton, Christopher Tigerstedt, and Katherine Warpenius, Helsinki: Nordic Council for Alcohol, 2000, 47.

24 Ian Tyrell, *Woman's World, Woman's Empire: The Women's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective 1880-1930*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

feelings of superiority. Their biannual meetings, held mostly in the United States, featured speakers from English speaking nations. The organization's English Secretary was an extreme imperialist and raged against sovereignty for colonial nations. While French, Norwegian, Swedish, and even Bulgarian representatives gave speeches and had their photographs in the official program, notation of Finnish delegates was limited to a listing. Scandinavian women and especially Finns did not fit the WWCTU's gender stereotypes. While the Americans and British women fought desperately for the suffrage, Finnish women had already achieved universal electoral suffrage in 1907. The WWCTU leadership were aggressive feminists whose interests centered around other women and their issues: Scandinavian women of the time were more domestic and accepting of traditional gender roles.

By the time Prohibition came to pass in both nations, Willard had been dead for twenty years and her successors had abandoned her activist positions. The World Woman's Christian Temperance Union reached its peak membership in 1927 but lacked its previous financial strength. In the United States the WCTU had become the very junior partner of the Anti-Saloon League the organization that through lobbying and the control of key voting blocs had done the most to push through Prohibition. Flush with their electoral victory and one and a half billion dollars in pledges, the ASL founded the World League Against Alcoholism. The stated goal was to help other nations achieve freedom from alcohol abuse and not incidentally keep organized alcohol interests on the defensive instead of concentrating on the United States. The League emphasized an educational approach rather than the coercive tactics favored by the American branch but continued to assert that American religion and morality would be the basis of its ideology.²⁵ It centered its advocacy in Europe and had two representatives, one in Geneva concerned primarily with international bodies such as the League of Nations and the second in Stockholm staffed by a Swedish-born Lutheran minister.

At first the official publication of the Anti-Saloon League *The American Issue* praised Finland's "brave" willingness to commit itself to Prohibition.²⁶ Norway and Iceland had likewise voted for Prohibition but had retreated when France and Spain threatened a boycott of their fish exports

25 Ernest H. Cherrington, "The Challenge of a World Crusade: Five Year Period of the World League Against Alcoholism," Waterville: Ohio: American Issue Publishing Co., 1925.

26 William "Pussyfoot" Johnson, "Civil War Over?" 36, number 34 (July 24, 1919), 2.

unless they continued to purchase their wine. Finland's timber products were threatened as well, but it continued its policy.²⁷ The League especially praised Finland's hosting of the Northern Temperance Congress. Noting that Finland had sought to hold it in the past but had been forbidden by the czarist government, they praised the hospitality and noted that every member of Parliament attended. The article's subtitle read "Finland Token of Progress and Democratic Spirit Now Dominant in Scandinavian Countries." As late as 1923 a writer in *The American Issue* stated confidently "Prohibition can from now on be considered so fairly established in the natural life of Finland that no change in policy can be looked for."²⁸ In another piece, unlike the WCTU programs of previous years, the *Issue* provided photographs of six leading Finnish prohibitionists including Helenius–Seppälä and his wife.²⁹ Helenius–Seppälä was highly respected in both countries. In Finland he served as the first Minister for Social Affairs in charge of Prohibition enforcement and in the US he was given the honored title "the Neal Dow of Finland."³⁰

The reference to Dow reflects the American's continued ignoring of Finland's separate path to Prohibition. One of the first official visitors from the League to Finland reported in 1919: "one of the ideas borrowed from the United States decades ago when a few of their seers were caught by the spell of Neal Dow, Frances Willard, and Mary Hunt."³¹

Finland, however, quickly faded from American attention. David Ostlund, the League representative in Stockholm and a Swedish born American, concentrated upon Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.³² Ostlund did send occasional memorandum on Finland to League founder and chief ASL poli-

27 "Changes in Scandinavia," *The American Issue*, 35, no. 37 (September 14, 1918), 3-4.

28 "Finnish Liquor Interests Get Straight from Shoulder Drubbing in Parliament," *The American Issue* 30, no.13 (March 31, 1923), 1.

29 "Ninth Northern Temperance Congress in Session July 16-20" *The American Issue*, 36, number 36 (September 6, 1919), 3-4.

30 Dr. H. B. Carrie, "Finland: The Prohibition Maine of Europe," Report April 1918 to December 1919, Box 4, Folder 18, World League Against Alcoholism Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio hereafter cited as *World League*. Tragically, Helenius–Seppälä died in 1920 while returning from an international conference in Washington. No one ever achieved his stature within the Prohibition movement in Finland either in Finnish or American eyes.

31 "The New Finland Quickly Becomes Dry Country," Box 4, Folder 18, *World League*. Hunt was in charge of temperance education in the public schools for the WCTU.

32 David Ostlund to Ernest Cherrington, May 11, 1929, Ernest Cherrington Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus Ohio, hereafter cited as *Cherrington*.

cymaker Ernest Cherrington. As early as 1921, he noted increased smuggling and public drunkenness and warned that two years was too early to establish Prohibition in either Finland or the US.³³ By 1927 he was noting not only the increased smuggling but also Finland's "inefficient enforcement."³⁴ A year later, Cherrington was making it clear to his European associates that the possibility of Al Smith's election made its international connections of secondary importance. Anything that could lead to criticism of American Prohibition anywhere needed to be eliminated. Cherrington, known as the most tolerant and internationalist of the ASL leadership, nevertheless flooded League offices with ant-Smith propaganda and declared the 1928 presidential election to be solely a referendum on Prohibition.³⁵ Ostlund quickly responded that "the ground built under prohibition in Finland seems a bit weak;" six months later he declared definitively "Finland stands quite unhappily in our way for Prohibition."³⁶ Throughout 1929, Ostlund's communications noted increased public drunkenness, smuggling, and public opposition. In October of 1930, the increasingly cash-strapped League directed Ostlund to concentrate upon Sweden and to ignore Norway and Denmark. Finland was not even mentioned.

Interestingly, prohibition in the United States faced almost exactly the same problems as Finland. A majority of the public had turned against it, smuggling and consequent organized crime flourished, and illegal drinking was endemic. Yet, while American prohibitionists recognized Finland's problems, they denied their own. All criticism was either unfounded or only foreign problems. As the earlier money for Prohibition dried up, even supporters of international movements like Cherrington quickly abandoned them. The failure of countries like Sweden and the United Kingdom to follow the American model and of Finland to achieve the predetermined goal served as scapegoats to hide the disaster of American policy. When a Finnish referendum against Prohibition in late 1931 caused the legislature to overturn the law in February 1932, a bitter ASL member wrote that no

33 David Ostlund, "Dry Law Enforcement Encounters Some Obstacles in Finland as in the US," memorandum to World League Against Alcoholism, September 10, 1921, *World League*.

34 Ostlund, memorandum to World League Against Alcoholism, July 28, 1927, *World League*. Several Finnish prohibition supporters speculated that Ostlund's ethnic identification with Finland's Swedish minority who were overwhelmingly anti-Prohibition colored his views.

35 Cherrington to Robert Herrod and Ostlund, March 19, 1928, and Cherrington to Ostlund, November 26, 1928.

36 Ostlund to Cherrington, April 9, 1928, and May 30, 1929, *Cherrington*.

one should pay attention to Finland's repeal as it was "a nation so diminutive that Uncle Sam might carry it in its vest pocket." They had simply "lacked the courage to carry on."³⁷ Less than two years later, ratification of the Twenty-first Amendment repealed American Prohibition.

After the end of Prohibition, the countries' diverging alcohol policies showed the differences in their prohibitionist stance. The United States federal government has allowed the alcohol industry to be largely unregulated; federal taxes on liquor today are less in real dollars than they were in the 1890s.³⁸ The ideology is that only certain people are genetically predisposed to alcoholism, and that most adults can control their drinking. Finland, on the other hand, adopted a version of Sweden's regulatory Bratt system of alcohol monopoly hated by both Swedish and American prohibitionists as a compromise with the evil of alcohol. Through the years Finland's monopoly system became even more restrictive, controlling numbers of stores and their hours, prices, and products offered. Until the entrance of Finland into the European Union in 1995, these regulations were used to restrict access and hopefully drinking.

Despite the fact that Finnish and American prohibition roughly came in and left together and had many of the same problems, they originated from very different sources. Prohibition in the United States had core components of Protestant moralism and pro-capitalist control of workers' behavior. These elements popped up occasionally in Finnish temperance thought but for most part it was a nationalist ideology preparing the Finnish working class and peasantry for a virtuous nation-state. Neither recognized the differences between them, nor did the United States pay significant attention to the Finnish model or even Finland itself.

In the late nineteenth century especially the 1920s when the United States tried to spread Prohibition first through the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union and later through the World League Against Alcoholism, the Americans sought to launch a worldwide crusade for prohibition. While the WWCTU ignored Finland, the World League acknowledged it but quickly determined that its difficulties with prohibition were hurting international attitudes toward American prohibition. This consciously overlooked the

37 J.W.H. de Reveille. "The Yanks Are Coming," pamphlet, Westerville, Ohio: Century Edition Publishing Co, Inc., January 9, 1932. *World League*.

38 Phillip J. Cook, *Paying the Tab: The Economics of Alcohol Policy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006, 51-56.

US's similar problems and looked for others to blame. Even as relations between temperance supporters in the two nations changed over the years, both failed to recognize that their differences lay far beyond their mere size to the initial needs and ideologies behind their quest for Prohibition.