Prohibition ushered in an era of lawlessness shrouded in a quixotic cloak of progressive idealism and moral conviction. Cresting on the wave of the Progressive movement, American society was to be changed for the better; John Barleycorn and his evil attendants – debauchery, abuse, and addiction – would be eradicated, freeing the citizens of the United States from their chains in order to pursue a more Christian life, and no less importantly, be more productive workers. Alcohol was seen as one of the main causes of crime, and the advocates of Prohibition promised that America would enter a new era of peace and prosperity. Ironically, Prohibition proved to be one of the most openly violated of any statute enacted in US history. The nation’s unquenchable desire for alcohol had made careers out of circumventing the bonanza the Volstead Act had created in unprecedented ways. Crime became a thirsty public attained booze and syndicates dominated both the illicit alternative existed that killed thousands of suppliers. Farmers and housewives and doctors, farmers and government. For it was the policy of the Department to add poison to alcohol for medicinal purposes, a position that directly led to the untold number of US citizens. The Department contended was not commensurate with the face of Prohibition and has provided us the dispenser of hospitality and murder. Capone and his kind, however, were the breathless headlines of newspapers.
öl and Prohibition

Chris Wachs

in an era of lawlessness shrouded in a passive idealism and moral conviction. The Progressive movement, American for the better; John Barleycorn and his terror, abuse, and addiction – would be citizens of the United States from their a more Christian life, and no less productive workers. Alcohol was seen as crime, and the advocates of Prohibition would enter a new era of peace and Prohibition proved to be one of the most statute enacted in US history. The

nation’s unquenchable desire for alcohol made criminals out of housewives and doctors, farmers and police officers. Those who had made careers out of circumventing the laws of the land saw the bonanza the Volstead Act had created and capitalized on it in unprecedented ways. Crime became organized, as liquor syndicates dominated both the illicit sale of bootleg alcohol and the breathless headlines of newspapers nationwide. Al Capone has provided us the face of Prohibition; the suave, ruthless dispenser of hospitality and murder in well-tailed suits. Capone and his kind, however, were not the only means by which a thirsty public attained booze and death; a far more lethal alternative existed that killed thousands nationwide, for which many placed responsibility squarely on the US federal government. For it was the policy of the United States Treasury Department to add poison to alcohol produced for legitimate purposes, a position that directly led to the gruesome deaths of an untold number of US citizens. The act of consuming alcohol became a potential capital offence; a punishment which critics contended was not commensurate with the crime. The
government was accused of legalized murder in coroner’s offices, newspaper editorials, and on the floor of Congress. Yet, the policy continued as the body count rose. The reason for this lies in the intersection of history, religion, class politics, and the cold calculations of the dominant political movement of the time; the moral certainty and political clout of the American temperance lobby trumped the fact that poor, desperate working class citizens were dying because they engaged in the illegal activity of consuming a beverage. The crusading idealists of the Progressive Era had achieved their greatest victory; in their view America was now dry and on its way towards a greater future. In any war, however, there are casualties.

From the very beginning, alcohol has instilled itself into the history of the United States. Beer, brandy, and gin comprised “no small or unimportant part, from any point of view, of the provision supply” aboard the Mayflower when she sailed in 1620.239 The Puritans who followed brought with them three times as much beer as water, as well as 10,000 gallons of wine.240 Not known for their tolerance for pleas liquor largely alone, and proceeded of rum in the colonies.241 Indeed, divine gift; no less an authority than the Bible, Timothy 4:4 by saying “Drink is in and to be received with thankfulness and to be regarded as a reward for hard work, a lubricant for the operations of drinkers; one historian aptly said the crack of dawn to the crack of clock alcohol consumption was estimated gallons of beer per year.244 By 1883...
of legalized murder in coroner’s offices, and on the floor of Congress. Yet, the body count rose. The reason for this lies in history, religion, class politics, and the cold political movement of the time; the political clout of the American temperance movement of the time; the poor, desperate working class citizens engaged in the illegal activity of the crusading idealists of the Progressive Era; and the crusading idealists of the Progressive Era; and the greatest victory; in their view America was moving towards a greater future. In any war, alcohol has instilled itself into the states. Beer, brandy, and gin comprised part, from any point of view, of the Mayflower when she sailed in 1620. Indeed, alcohol was often seen as a divine gift; no less an authority than Increase Mather channeled Timothy 4:4 by saying “Drink is in itself a good creature of God, and to be received with thankfulness.” In an era when fermented or distilled beverages were considered safer to drink than water, the consumption of alcohol was commonplace; a reward for hard work, a lubricant for political discussions, and an important part of a healthy lifestyle. The New World was a land of drinkers; one historian aptly said that “Americans drank from the crack of dawn to the crack of dawn.” In 1790, per capita alcohol consumption was estimated at 5 gallons of liquor and 34 gallons of beer per year. By 1830, Americans were downing

nearly twice as much spirit alcohol, which equates to an astounding 48 fifths of hard liquor for every man, woman, and child per year.\textsuperscript{245} The expansion of the nation’s drinking habits mirrored the expansion of the nation itself; as the fertile regions of middle America were conquered, the land was put to good use growing an abundance of grain. However, the cost of shipping corn or wheat to the Eastern markets was more than it would bring; as a result, farmers distilled their surplus crops into “liquid assets” that were more readily shipped and sold. Practically every farmer made whiskey and it became its own medium of exchange.\textsuperscript{246}

These farmers on the frontier were the reason the federal government got involved in the business of alcohol in the first place. Alexander Hamilton, not opposed to imbibing liquor himself, saw the enormous potential for government revenue in the bottom of every bottle that came out of the Western states. The Excise Act of 1791 began the extensive involvement of the federal government with the liquor business. However, the costs were too high, and Washington was initially reluctant to have the troops quell the so-called “Witches’ Brew.”\textsuperscript{247} Washington was initially reluctant to use the army for what purpose an army was raised. By 1802, the excise tax lapsing, the excise tax was suspended again in 1817. Abraham Lincoln in 1862 to finance the Civil War. As alcohol was permeating the American culture, it was seen as a “good creature of God.”

As alcohol was imbedding itself in American society, forces were aligning in opposition to what would become Prohibition with alcohol. The First Amendment was a barrier to the national government’s involvement in the regulation of liquor.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{245} Lender, \textit{Drinking in America}, 205.
\item \textsuperscript{246} Berton Rouche, \textit{The Neutral Spirit: a Portrait of Alcohol} (Little, Brown, and Company, 1960), 39.
\item \textsuperscript{247} Ron Chernow, \textit{Hamilton} (New York: Penguin, 2010), 54.
\item \textsuperscript{248} Daniel Okrent, \textit{Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition} (New York: Random House, 2010), 54.
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federal government with the liquor industry, and led to President
Washington taking the unprecedented step of ordering federal
troops to quell the so-called “Whiskey Rebellion” of 1794.
Washington was initially reluctant to take direct action, fearing
that critics of a strong national authority would say “Now we see
for what purpose an army was raised.”
Ironically, the tax on
alcohol became the reason a US army could be raised at all; after
lapsing in 1802, the excise tax was reinstituted by (anti-
Federalist) James Madison to pay for the War of 1812, and
suspended again in 1817. Abraham Lincoln then brought it back
in 1862 to finance the Civil War.

As alcohol was imbedding itself into American life,
forces were aligning in opposition to its excesses. The roots of
what would become Prohibition were planted at the same time
alcohol was permeating the American culture. While recognizing
spirits as a “good creature of God,” Increase Mather finished his

248 Daniel Okrent, Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition (New York: Scribner,
2010), 54.
sentence by asserting that “the abuse of drink is from Satan, the wine is from God, but the Drunkard is from the Devil.”

Thus was born the philosophy behind the Temperance movement; acknowledging the reality of a society infused with alcohol, religious and political leaders sought to blunt the negative effects of a besotted culture by highlighting the evils of excessive drink. For their argument was not with the alcohol itself; rather, they saw excessive drinking or “intemperance” as the cause of social issues such as poverty, profanity, and worst of all, an aversion for religion. So the preachers preached of temperance, and the lawmakers clamored for moderation. Both Increase and Cotton Mather urged more rigid enforcement of laws regulating fewer taverns, and the expulsion of habitual drunkards from the colony.

The findings of a Philadelphia Grand Jury in 1744, the foreman of which was Benjamin Franklin, laid the ills of Philadelphian society at the feet of the taverns and tippling houses. “Ardent Spirits” became the target of the most ill will. In 1771, the General Conference of the Methodists official stance disapproving of alcohol.

Similarly alarmed was John Adams, Fifty three years ago I wrote of a professional army. In 1777, a resolution called for “the several legislatures of the States immediately to pass laws the most energetic which the most extensive evils are likely quickly prevented.” While this resolution it reflected the hardening attitude of the drunkenness and indolence.

249 Holland, The Joy of Drinking, 57.
The abuse of drink is from Satan, the drunkard is from the Devil."249 Thus behind the Temperance movement; of a society infused with alcohol, sought to blunt the negative effects lighting the evils of excessive drink. with the alcohol itself; rather, they preached of temperance, and the intemperance" as the cause of socialuity, and worst of all, an aversion for preached of temperance, and the generation. Both Increase and Cotton enforcement of laws regulating fewer habitual drunkards from the colony.250 The Grand Jury in 1744, the foreman Franklin, laid the ills of Philadelphian pubs and tippling houses.251 "Ardent of the most ill will. In 1771, the General Conference of the Methodist Societies adopted an official stance disapproving of the distillation of grain.252

Similarly alarmed was John Adams, who reflected in 1811 that:

Fifty three years ago I was fired with a zeal, amounting to enthusiasm, against ardent spirits, the multiplication of taverns, retailers, and dram-shops, and tippling houses. Grieved to the heart to see the number of idlers, thieves, sots, and consumptive patients made for the physicians, in those infamous seminaries.253

The Continental Congress also viewed hard liquor as the scourge of a professional army. In 1777, a resolution was passed that called for "the several legislatures of the United States immediately to pass laws the most effectual for putting an immediate stop to the pernicious practice of distilling grain, by which the most extensive evils are likely to be derived if not quickly prevented."254 While this resolution was widely ignored, it reflected the hardening attitude of political figures towards drunkenness and indolence.


Members of the scientific and medical communities soon joined religious and political leaders. Dr. Benjamin Rush, hero of the Revolutionary War and signatory of the Declaration of Independence, produced the first scientific treatise against alcohol in 1785. The most prominent physician of his day, Dr. Rush launched his broadside during the still largely ineffectual, minority campaign to curb excessive drinking; its influence would be most strongly felt a century later during the push for Prohibition. Going against the conventional wisdom of the day, Dr. Rush concluded that alcohol had no value as food or medicine, and that the drinker’s downward path was inevitable; first came burglary, then murder, then madness and despair, and in the end, the gallows. However, Rush was not a prohibitionist, the ranks of which were still a very small minority. Rather, he envisioned a society that would abstain from hard liquor and instead imbibe moderate amounts of beer and wine. He even suggested that alcoholics could be weaned from hard liquor by consuming wine laced with opium instead.

Advocates of temperance soon exercised their first amendment right to express their efforts of the previous generation and went on to try to change aspects of with simply writing pamphlets or delivering lectures to alter human behavior. To truly enforce moderation, legislation must be passed. However, temperance societies in the early 19th century. Second Great Awakening, these societies were still a very small minority. Temperance Union, a sort of nat could boast some 8,000 societies with members. Suddenly, these societies and in the years before Americans s

256 Behr, *Prohibition*, 17.
Advocates of temperance and like-minded individuals exercised their first amendment rights by forming Temperance societies in the early 19th century. Formed on the heels of the Second Great Awakening, these societies sought to further the efforts of the previous generation and discourage the use of hard liquor. Their initial success was limited; like many groups that try to change aspects of which society they disagreed, simply writing pamphlets or delivering sermons was not enough to alter human behavior. To truly affect society in general, legislation must be passed. However, no law could be written that would enforce moderation. Temperance leaders began to dream of a more drastic solution to the problem of the spirits, and their message was spreading. By 1836, the American Temperance Union, a sort of national umbrella organization, could boast some 8,000 societies with approximately 1.5 million members. Suddenly, these societies could exercise real power, and in the years before Americans started killing each other over slavery, a different civil war began to brew. Anti-alcohol

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256 Behr, Prohibition, 17.
257 Asbury, The Great Illusion, 35.
dogmatists had reached the limit of their effectiveness through advocacy alone; temperance was now a popular philosophy, and prominent political leaders of the day were in tune with the message. There really was only one more step that could be taken.

The battle for moderation turned into a war over America's soul. From the 1830's onward, a new theme came down from pulpits across the country; drinking, it was decided, was a mortal sin. The new tone was set by Reverend Justin Edwards, who founded what would become the American Temperance Union. A prolific advocate for temperance, Edwards rejected the idea of moderation in a document prepared in 1835 on the anniversary of the society's founding. In it, Edwards attacked the notion that alcohol was a gift from God; rather, fermentation "is not the product of creation, nor is it the result of any living process in nature...It cannot be found, and it does not exist, among all the living works of God...and is in its nature and exceedingly subtle and diffusive poison."258 Aside from the questionable notion that fermentation could not be held responsible for ferments, the drys had successfully shifted the national conversation toward temperance; from this date onward, the documents speak more generally of ardent spirits merely, but of all its members. It was in 1851, Maine became the first state to prohibit alcohol. With their newfound message and platform, the groups began to flex their moral muscles. By 1854, ardent spirits merely, but of all its members. It was in 1851, Maine became the first state to prohibit alcohol. With their newfound message and platform, the groups began to flex their moral muscles. By 1854, the prohibition movement seemed poised to drive alcoholic American culture into the bottle. Religious and Temperance leaders set the language. Science and politicians responded, some even enacting the Prohibition party in 1869. This was the blueprint for a national referendum on temperance nationwide. However, the temperance movement could only achieve legislative victories.


259 Hallock, Light and Love, 394.
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ardent spirits merely, but of all intoxicating drinks.” 259 Local 

groups began to flex their moral and political muscle, and in 

1851, Maine became the first state of the Union to come up dry. 

With their newfound message and populist clout, the burgeoning 

prohibition movement seemed poised to sweep all vestiges of an 

alcoholic American culture into the dustbin of history. 

Religious and Temperance (soon to be Prohibition) 

leaders set the language. Science and medicine backed them up, 

and politicians responded, some even forming the single issue 

Prohibition party in 1869. This would seem an excellent 

blueprint for a national referendum on banning alcohol 

nationwide. However, the temperance and prohibition societies 

could only achieve legislative victories on local and state levels, 

259 Hallock, Light and Love, 394.
and even then with only mixed results. Massachusetts, for instance, painfully lurched from going dry in 1852, wet in 1868, dry again in 1869, and wet again in 1875.²⁶⁰ Local laws banned liquor in cities and counties, but these statutes meant little without proper enforcement and when the good stuff could be purchased in the next town over. What the Prohibition movement needed by the early 20th century was a well-run, truly national organization that could coordinate the millions of adherents and exercise political power on a grand scale, and attack the liquor problem at the source. What they needed was Wayne B. Wheeler.

While not the first single issue lobbyist group in the United States, the Anti-Saloon League was arguably the most powerful and effective in US history. The ASL realized that they could directly shape legislation, not through organizing a political party and running candidates for office, but rather by using the collective voice of dues-paying members to swing elections to candidates they supported. In this, they avoided the mistakes made by the Prohibition Party from political parties require the adoption of viewpoints on far ranging topics, a directive. In addition, parties and open to the idea of compromise in a the ASL, democracy was a form founder held no illusions about the play. “The Anti-Saloon League,” purpose of administering political became a grassroots juggernaut, elections around the country. They the issue of alcohol, and promised candidates who correctly answered you right on this question?” The law those promises destroyed political changed the Constitution.

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made by the Prohibition Party from the previous generation;
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directive. In addition, parties and candidates have to at least be
open to the idea of compromise in a democracy. As practiced by
the ASL, democracy was a form of coercion; the League’s
founder held no illusions about the role his organization would
play. “The Anti-Saloon League,” he said, “is formed for the
purpose of administering political retribution.” The League
became a grassroots juggernaut, influencing local and state
elections around the country. The ASL focused exclusively on
the issue of alcohol, and promised to deliver elections to
candidates who correctly answered their standard query, “Are
you right on this question?” The League’s ability to deliver on
those promises destroyed political careers and eventually
changed the Constitution.

Founded in 1893 by Reverend Howard Russell, the ASL
took an indirect path to achieve their goal of changing society,

\[261 Okreant, Last Call, 36.\]
which was reflected in its name. While using the same religious arguments employed by their temperance forbears (the League’s slogan was The Church in Action Against the Saloon), supplemented by the leading anti-alcohol medical literature of the day, the Anti-Saloon League focused its weapons on the source of alcohol in America, the “liquor trust.” Their argument was simple, and simply effective; brewers and distillers made alcohol, and saloons sold it, all for a profit. Alcohol consumption is detrimental to society; therefore, the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages must be prohibited. Without supply, the demand would necessarily fall, and American society would be better off for it. The strategy proved to be effective, especially after an unknown lawyer took charge of the League in Ohio.

Wayne B. Wheeler may have come from modest beginnings, but he became the most powerful private citizen this country has ever produced. His organizational abilities and single-minded purpose led him from volunteering for the ASL as an undergraduate of Oberlin College, to authoring the Volstead Act itself, and handpicking the most powerful single individual in the United States sits up and begs.”

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“Wayne B. Wheeler controlled six congresses, dictated to two presidents of the United States, directed legislation in most of the States of the Union, picked the candidates for the more important elective state and federal offices, held the balance of power in both Republican and Democratic parties, distributed more patronage than any dozen other men, supervised a federal bureau from outside without official authority, and was recognized by friend and foe alike as the most masterful and powerful single individual in the United States.”

263 Okrent, Last Call, 39
Known in his day as the driving force behind the 18th Amendment, it is the 21st that has rendered him an historical afterthought. Ironically, it was another Amendment passed in 1913 that led directly to those other two.

The main argument against any kind of national Prohibition was the all important matter of money. Revenues from liquor taxes were vital to the operation of the Federal Government; from 1868 until 1913, an astonishing 90 percent of all revenue came from taxes on liquor, beer, wine, and tobacco. Obviously, an end to the sale of alcohol would end the activities of the government. The 16th Amendment authorizing the implementation of a national income tax changed the nature of the game; the government would no longer be forced to rely on liquor to keep itself afloat. Wheeler saw opportunity in the income tax; not only was the main argument against Prohibition essentially rendered moot, but his League's political muscle allowed his thoughts to alight upon a new goal, his own Constitutional Amendment. 

Section 1 of the 18th Amendment to the United States embodies in its principal inspiration, the raison d'être.

After one year from the ratification of this Act, the manufacture, sale, into, or the exportation the manufacture, sale, or the exportation thereof for beverage purposes.

Contrary to popular belief, the 18th Amendment does not mean the consumption of intoxicating liquor was illegal. It was an attempt to address the pragmatic approach of the ASL’s behavior through economic realities. The Anti-Saloon League (and exceptions). Nevertheless, the years of religious fervor and political reform in American history, the age of Prohibition.

When Americans think of Prohibition, they think of popular entertainment and romantic fiction.

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267 Okreant, Last Call, 58.

268 U.S. Constitution, 18th Amendment.

269 Lee, How Dry We Were, 1.
the driving force behind the 18th Amendment that has rendered him an historical figure against any kind of national important matter of money. Revenues vital to the operation of the Federal government. Until 1913, an astonishing 90 percent of federal revenues came from liquor, beer, wine, and tobacco. Sale of alcohol would end the activities of the Anti-Saloon League, but his League’s political muscle, which had no longer been forced to rely on financial contributions, alighted upon a new goal, his own. Wheeler saw opportunity in the main argument against Prohibition, but his League’s political muscle would no longer be forced to rely on financial contributions. After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited. Contrary to popular belief, the 18th Amendment does not prohibit the consumption of intoxicating liquors; this reflects the very pragmatic approach of the ASL towards changing human behavior through economic realities. Furthermore, the Volstead Act is the legislation that actually details the specific prohibitions (and exceptions). Nevertheless, the result of over a hundred years of religious fervor and political calculation had begat “the longest, saddest, wettest, craziest, funniest, bloodiest adventure in reform in American history,” the age of Prohibition. When Americans think of this period in U.S. History, popular entertainment and romantic notions of criminal activity.

Section 1 of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States embodies in its 44 words the ideals of its principal inspiration, the raison d’être of the Anti-Saloon League:

After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.

Contrary to popular belief, the 18th Amendment does not prohibit the consumption of intoxicating liquors; this reflects the very pragmatic approach of the ASL towards changing human behavior through economic realities. Furthermore, the Volstead Act is the legislation that actually details the specific prohibitions (and exceptions). Nevertheless, the result of over a hundred years of religious fervor and political calculation had begat “the longest, saddest, wettest, craziest, funniest, bloodiest adventure in reform in American history,” the age of Prohibition.

When Americans think of this period in U.S. History, popular entertainment and romantic notions of criminal activity.

267 Okrent, Last Call, 58.
268 U.S. Constitution, 18th Amendment.
269 Lee, How Dry We Were, 1.
have shaped what comes to mind. The reality was that liquor flowed in from every port and sprang up like wells in each corner of the nation. Al Capone was arguably the face of Prohibition, inextricably linked to the criminal enterprise of bringing foreign made liquor into Chicago and distributing it to illicit speakeasies. His story is not unique, of course; every city in the US developed an underground economy based on the inexorable forces of supply and demand. Another image strongly ingrained in U.S. collective memory is the whisky still, whether employed by the backwoods moonshiner or the more sophisticated urbanite distilling gin in the tenement bathtub. The practice of coaxing alcohol from malt syrup or peeled potatoes by industrious do-it-yourselfers was just as widespread as the importation of liquor from overseas. In testimony to a US Senate Committee in 1926, General Lincoln C. Andrews, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in charge of Prohibition enforcement, stated that 172,600 stills were seized the previous year, while admitting that “he doubted his men were finding more than one in every ten.”

Less well known, but still as important of obtaining alcohol, were the legal loopholes filled by local pharmacies. Ironic in the context of Prohibition, the American Medical Association’s unanimous resolution in 1917 that “the use of medicines and therapeutics...has no scientific value” demonstrated that perhaps medicine and alcohol were not mutually exclusive; in 1922, they had settled just five years earlier. In previous findings, the august society had surveyed its members, wherein physicians had demonstrated that perhaps medicinal beverages were useful in treating conditions, including diabetes, cancer and age. Essentially, the 1917 resolution that alcohol had no scientific value no longer held.

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270 Lee, How Dry We Were, 78.


272 Okrent, Last Call, 195.
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Less well known, but still as pervasive as any other means of obtaining alcohol, were the legal ways people obtained their liquor. The Volstead Act explicitly exempted the medical profession from distributing alcohol via prescriptions that were filled by local pharmacies. Ironically, prior to the passage of Prohibition, the American Medical Association passed a unanimous resolution in 1917 that the use of alcohol "in therapeutics...has no scientific value."271 Prohibition, however, demonstrated that perhaps medicine and personal opinion were not mutually exclusive; in 1922, the AMA revisited an issue that they had settled just five years earlier. In a cynical reversal of its previous findings, the august society published the results of a survey of its members, wherein physicians claimed that alcoholic beverages were useful in treating twenty-seven separate conditions, including diabetes, cancer, asthma, dyspepsia, and old age.272 Essentially, the 1917 resolution stating that medicinal alcohol had no scientific value no longer had any scientific value.

272 Okrent, Last Call, 195.
Subsequently, prescriptions for medicinal alcohol would be legally issued and filled for the entire period of Prohibition.

Another legal exemption was extended to the religious community. Catholic churches and Jewish synagogues defended their sacrosanct right to use wine in their ceremonies; an initial proposal that religious groups should substitute unfermented grape juice for wine (as many Protestant churches had done) brought angry responses from leaders of these religions.\textsuperscript{273} Therefore, the Volstead Act allowed an annual allowance of ten gallons of sacramental wine for religious use.\textsuperscript{274} This proved to be a lucrative avenue for priest and rabbis, both legitimate and fraudulent; the Catholic clergy provided financial backing to the sacramental wine business, while rabbis merely had to present a list of their congregations in order to procure the allotted amounts of legal alcohol. Fraud was rampant, and congregations saw their membership soar.

\textsuperscript{274} Lerner, \textit{Dry Manhattan}, 117.
as for medicinal alcohol would be the entire period of Prohibition.

Prohibition was extended to the religious churches and Jewish synagogues defended wine in their ceremonies; an initial groups should substitute unfermented (many Protestant churches had done) from leaders of these religions. This allowed an annual allowance of ten (for religious use. This proved to priest and rabbis, both legitimate and energy provided financial backing to the while rabbis merely had to present a order to procure the allotted amounts rampant, and congregations saw their

The least well known method by which thirsty citizens obtained their alcohol was through the essential business of industrial alcohol. Industrial alcohol is merely ethyl alcohol that is used in industry and manufacturing. The ethyl alcohol that is found in liquor is the result of a transformation of sugars by yeast in the absence of oxygen, a process known as fermentation. This biochemical reaction occurs quite readily, and humans have been deliberately fermenting alcohol since at least 10,000 B.C. Governments have recognized the popularity of alcohol as a tradable commodity and have imposed taxes on its production and sale, the US included. Science, however, has discovered a variety of uses for this compound as well; an excellent solvent, it is a common ingredient in a multitude of products, including solvent based paints, pharmaceuticals, perfumes, cleaning products for home and car, lacquers, and inks.

As the intended uses of beverage alcohol and industrial alcohol are quite different, the industrial alcohol industry


successfully lobbied in the early 20th Century for reform of the alcohol taxation statutes. Under the Denatured Alcohol Act of 1906, the production and sale of industrial alcohol became tax free in order to lower costs for products that contained ethyl alcohol not intended for consumption. However, the government mandated that industrially produced alcohol, in order to maintain its tax-exempt status, must not be used as a beverage. Therefore, alcohol produced for industry must be denatured according to government-accepted formulas; that is, compounds must be mixed with the alcohol in order to discourage or otherwise prevent its consumption. It would also have to be labeled as denatured alcohol, unfit for consumption. Chemicals added included camphor, ether, chloroform, formaldehyde, gasoline, and kerosene. The nature of these compounds varied according to the alcohol’s end use; gasoline would be a desirable additive to to alcohol that would end up in mouthwash, but menthol would be perfectly acceptable. This was satisfactory for the industry, and production of industrial alcohol soared from one million gallons in 1906 to almost two

rules and uncertain demand led to overproduction and underutilization of the legal product. The indoor market for denatured alcohol was already saturated, and the largest untapped market was the illegal market. Overnight, the supply of legal, denatured alcohol was quite large, leaving a vast, largely unregulated market waiting to be tapped by enterprising individuals fulfilling an unquenchable demand. The federal government’s rules to manufacture alcohol were relaxed, and corruption led Assistant Attorney General McKee to conclude that “the policy of granting licenses has not been subject to so much political pressure, corruption and vacillation and puerility.” In the unregulated market, syndicates were readily able to create their own rules by buying and maintaining licensed industrial alcohol plants. They were only one step from producing what they wanted.

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277 Alice Gram and Velma Hitchcock eds., *Congressional Digest, Volume 2* (Congressional Digest, Inc., 1922), 333.


million gallons in 1906 to almost thirty million by 1920 as lax rules and uncertain demand led to overproduction. However, the industrially produced alcohol, in order to discourage or prevent consumption, must not be used as a beverage. The alcohol for industry must be denatured by mixing with acceptable formulas; that is, compounds other than ethanol in order to discourage or prevent consumption. It would also have to be made unfit for consumption. Chemicals such as ether, chloroform, formaldehyde, and gasoline would be desirable in some industrial uses, but alcohol would end up in mouthwash, but not in drinking water. This was satisfactory for the time.

Prohibition, however, changed the rules of the game. Overnight, the supply of legal, drinkable alcohol vanished, leaving a vast, largely unregulated industry awash in alcohol, waiting to be tapped by enterprising individuals intent on fulfilling an unquenchable demand. Obtaining the proper permits to manufacture alcohol was relatively easy, and systemic corruption led Assistant Attorney General Mabel Willebrandt to conclude that “the policy of granting permit privileges has always been subject to so much political pressure that it has been marked by vacillation and puerility.” In other words, organized liquor syndicates were readily able to create a facade of legitimacy by buying and maintaining licensed industrial alcohol manufacturing plants. They were only one step from providing the public what they wanted.

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By the 1920s, some seventy denaturing formulas existed.\textsuperscript{280} These formulas, however, were subject to defeat through basic distillation processes. Different compounds have different boiling points; chemists with knowledge of government denaturing formulas could readily remove the added compounds in a process known as “renaturing.” Bootleggers quickly realized the goldmine that could be tapped, and subsequently employed scientists to renature vast quantities of industrial alcohol. Philadelphia emerged as the hub of the renaturing business, largely due to the innumerable chemical factories that were drawn to the region by the magnetic force of the Du Pont Corporation.\textsuperscript{281} An enormous vertical enterprise sprang up that would be the envy of any business major, masterminded by the Seventh Street Gang under the direction of gambler and fight promoter Max “Boo Boo” Huff.

Max and his associates purchased and operated a number of these chemical factories, legally producing industrial alcohol, and dutifully following government product. They then sold their product—these seldom possessed any more than a filing cabinet for receipts.\textsuperscript{282} These were removed.\textsuperscript{283} The gang could not alcohol around the country. All of power of the Prohibition Bureau beyond the original purchaser.\textsuperscript{284} People that a company manufactured industrial, perfume, and then check the receipts. However, outside the scope of their authority, gallons of illegal, potable alcohol was of legitimate business.

\textsuperscript{281} Okreant, Last Call, 202.
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and dutifully following government regulations to denature their
product. They then sold their products to "cover houses," which
they owned and operated; ostensibly wholesalers and distributors,
these seldom possessed any more facilities than a office with a
filing cabinet for receipts.\textsuperscript{282} These cover houses than diverted
the flow of alcohol to "cutting houses," where the denaturants
were removed.\textsuperscript{283} The gang could now package and distribute the
alcohol around the country. All of this was easily done, as the
power of the Prohibition Bureau to investigate didn’t extend
beyond the original purchaser.\textsuperscript{284} Prohibition agents could verify
that a company manufactured industrial alcohol for use in say,
perfume, and then confirm its sale to a wholesaler, and even
check the receipts. However, what happened after that was
outside the scope of their authority. As a result, millions of
gallons of illegal, potable alcohol were produced under the guise
of legitimate business.

\textsuperscript{282} Asbury, \textit{The Great Illusion}, 225.
\textsuperscript{283} Okrent, \textit{Last Call}, 202.
\textsuperscript{284} Asbury, \textit{The Great Illusion}, 225.
How much industrial alcohol diverted in this manner is unknown, though many estimates have been produced in an effort to recognize the scope of these operations. Assistant Secretary Andrews told the U.S. Senate that between 15 and 20 million gallons were diverted annually, one million gallons a month from Philadelphia alone. The U.S. Attorney for the southern district of New York, on the other hand, told Congress that the annual figure was 60 million gallons; furthermore, so much alcohol was being produced that supply outpaced demand. In a bizarre twist in this bizarre time, renatured industrial alcohol was exported to Canada, where it could undercut that country’s legal, taxed liquor. Sixty million gallons diluted to 80 proof is the equivalent of 150 million gallons of booze; an enormous amount for a population at the time of 115 million men, women, and children, and aside from the liquor that poured over the borders and sprung up from domestic stills.

As with their attempts moonshining, the government flour of industrial alcohol production. To controlling the problem by creating the liquor syndicates could not defe the federal government reworked produce the perfect denaturant. How paid well to renature the alcohol w the formulas the government th exception of one substance: methyl

Methyl alcohol or methanol alcohol or wood spirits, is chemical ethyl alcohol. A colorless, flamma odor when pure, it has a similar int body. Methanol is also cheap discarding wood chips, sawdust, or it was distilled from wood cooked in

known as destructive distillation.\textsuperscript{289} Also an excellent solvent, methanol was used in varnishes, dyes, windshield wiper fluid, and as a fuel; the solid fuel Sterno is made primarily from wood alcohol. Because its boiling point was similar to ethyl alcohol, it was an excellent denaturant; indeed, it was an ingredient in some of the official denaturing formulas. There is one fact about methyl alcohol, however, that became impossible to ignore as the Twenties roared on; it is a highly lethal compound.

Ethyl alcohol is metabolized in the liver by the enzyme alcohol dehydrogenase where it is converted into a toxic substance known as acetaldehyde. Fortunately for humans, acetaldehyde is further metabolized into acetic acid, which is non-toxic. Some people get ill when they drink any amount of ethyl alcohol; this is likely due to a deficiency of the dehydrogenase enzyme that allows acetaldehyde to build up.\textsuperscript{290} Methyl alcohol, on the other hand, is metabolized by dehydrogenase into formaldehyde, and then into formic acid, both of which are highly toxic to especially dangerous, as it attacks swelling and atrophy. A common poisoning is irreversible blindness. causes hypoxia, which is when cell methyl alcohol ingestion leads to coma, and death.\textsuperscript{293} This was a public Prohibition; 25 New Yorkers died to alcohol passed off as the “Pink El The highly accurate saying “blind then mysterious affliction that would at random.\textsuperscript{295} To this day the problem regions of the world; in 2001, methanol poisoning outbreak in the

\textsuperscript{289} Blum, \textit{The Poisoner’s Handbook}, 38.


\textsuperscript{291} WHO, \textit{IPCS INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM}.

\textsuperscript{292} WHO, \textit{IPCS INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM}.


\textsuperscript{294} John Walker Harrington, “Wood Alcohol’s” 1922, 86.

\textsuperscript{295} Blum, \textit{The Poisoner’s Handbook}.

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especially dangerous, as it attacks the optic nerve causing

swelling and atrophy. A common result of methyl alcohol

poisoning is irreversible blindness.

Furthermore, formic acid

causes hypoxia, which is when cells are starved of oxygen; acute

methyl alcohol ingestion leads to respiratory failure, seizures,

coma, and death.

This was a public health issue that predated

Prohibition; 25 New Yorkers died in 1905 from drinking methyl

alcohol passed off as the “Pink Elephant” brand of whiskey.

The highly accurate saying “blind drunk” originated from the

then mysterious affliction that would strike drunkards seemingly

at random.

To this day the problem persists in less developed

regions of the world; in 2001, 43 individuals died from a

methanol poisoning outbreak in the Parnu region of Estonia.

291 WHO, IPCS INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME ON CHEMICAL SAFETY.
292 WHO, IPCS INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME ON CHEMICAL SAFETY.
http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/04/02/us-methanol-poisoning-
More recently, twenty Russian tourists were hospitalized during a Turkish yacht tour in June of 2011 after drinking counterfeit whisky laced with methanol. Four of the tourists subsequently died as a result of what Turkish officials are calling a case of “premeditated murder.”\(^{297}\) However, for the average citizen of the twenties seeking respite from his workday drudgery, talk of methanol would be meaningless. What was sold by the dockworker down the alley might taste terrible, but it still would provide the heady buzz his clients were seeking at a very cheap price. For city health officials, however, the scores of men and women that began to take up residence in their morgues represented a quite meaningful health crisis. The government had achieved a rare victory in their idealistic war for the nation’s soul; however, the price would be measured in pounds of flesh.

In an era when forensic science was in its infancy and the office of Medical Examiner was often a political appointment, Charles Norris was the rare, qualified public official who took his work seriously and revolutionized the newly appointed Chief Medical Examiner (and the first actually trained as a pathologist); however, after a rash of alcohol-related deaths during the Christmas holiday, Dr. Norris unloaded on the bootleggers he held accountable:

> The government knows it is not enough to arrest the bootleggers by putting poison in alcohol. The government must be charged with poisoning processes, heedless of moderation, nor was he against Government must be charged with the growing number of deaths from poisoning processes, heedless cause, although it can be responsible.\(^ {299}\)

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work seriously and revolutionized his field along the way.\textsuperscript{298} As
the newly appointed Chief Medical Examiner of New York City
(and the first actually trained as a pathologist), Dr. Norris charted
the growing number of deaths from alcohol poisonings every
year in the city with increasing alarm. A pragmatic practitioner
of his profession, Norris was not opposed to drinking in
moderation, nor was he against the ideals of Prohibition.
However, after a rash of alcohol poisonings over the 1926
Christmas holiday, Dr. Norris unloaded a broadside against those
he held accountable:

The government knows it is not stopping drinking
by putting poison in alcohol. It knows what the
bootleggers are doing with it and yet it continues its
poisoning processes, heedless of the fact that people
determined to drink are daily absorbing that poison.
Knowing this to be true, the United States
Government must be charged with the moral
responsibility for the deaths that poisoned liquor
causes, although it cannot be held legally
responsible.\textsuperscript{299}

At the request of the mayor, Norris released a report in February
1927 that electrified the country. He revealed that there were 741

\textsuperscript{298} Blum, \textit{The Poisoner's Handbook}, 2.

\textsuperscript{299} \textit{New York Times}, "23 Deaths Here Laid to Holiday Drinking; 89 Ill in Hospitals," December 28, 1926.
deaths the previous year due to alcohol poisoning, up from 98 in 1920.\textsuperscript{300} An additional 1200 were admitted for poisoned alcohol related sickness, blindness or both; as these numbers were only for the Bellevue and Allied city run hospitals, these figures are almost certainly too low.\textsuperscript{301} By comparison, New York had 340 homicides for the year of 1926.\textsuperscript{302}

Norris also noted the disproportionate way poisoned alcohol affected the poorest members of New York society. The really poisonous liquor, he wrote, was sold by bootleggers “who cannot afford expensive protection and deal in low grade stuff with a low grade of trade.”\textsuperscript{303} Of those killed by methyl alcohol, “only a fraction...come from the upper levels of thirsty society.”\textsuperscript{304} The well off could afford to purchase the higher quality, often imported spirits on the market; ordering liquor by brand name in

\textsuperscript{300} New York Times, “Most of Our Liquor Poison, 741 Deaths in City in 1926, Norris Reports to Walker,” February 6, 1927.


\textsuperscript{303} Blum, The Poisoner’s Handbook, 161.

\textsuperscript{304} Blum, The Poisoner’s Handbook, 161.

the saloon era was virtually unheard of by comparison.

By nature of cut rate alcohol during Prohibition, to begin calling for Cutty Sark specifically for export to the dry forces, unable to afford the markup on brand prices, shot in a decrepit dive was literally

Norris’ angry invective and denaturing policy boiled over. In Jersey, recounting the fatalities over New York and other cities on the floor of Congress, dead were victims of “legalized murder.” New York Senator Royal S. Cope, Representative Emanuel Celler of New York and other cities, by asserting

\textsuperscript{305} Okreant, Last Call, 210.

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304 To purchase the higher quality, often shot; ordering liquor by brand name in

the saloon era was virtually unheard of, but the potentially lethal nature of cut rate alcohol during Prohibition led the more affluent to begin calling for Cutty Sark or Dewar’s, brands created specifically for export to the dry former colonies.305 For those unable to afford the markup on brand name liquor, purchasing a shot in a decrepit dive was literally taking your life in your hands.

Norris’ angry invective against the government was picked up and echoed by members of the same. Barely had congressmen returned from the Christmas recess when rage at the denaturing policy boiled over. Edward I. Edwards of New Jersey, recounting the fatalities over the holiday season in New York and other cities on the floor of the Senate, charged that the dead were victims of “legalized murder” by the government.306 New York Senator Royal S. Copeland likened the poisoning of alcohol to “setting guntraps for poachers in England,” while Representative Emanuel Celler of New York invoked the halcyon days of medieval Italy by asserting that

305 Okrent, Last Call, 210.

"We assume the role of Lucretia Borgia when we deal out poison in this fashion to the unthinking and to the lowly and poor multitudes of the country because they are the only ones who drink alcohol thus poisoned with the connivance of the Government which you and I represent."307

The Chicago Tribune spoke directly to the distorted zeal of the stridently righteous, stating "normally, no American government would engage in such business. It would not poison postage stamps to get a citizen known to be misusing the mails. It is only in the curious fanaticism of Prohibition that any means, however barbarous, are considered justified."308

The proponents of Prohibition focused on the fundamental clarity of their vision; those "curious fanatics" responded with a shrug. The editors of the Pittsburgh Gazette Times asked if "the drinker himself is to blame for the ills that befell him as a result of his libations?"309 Senator John Sheppard of Texas, author of the 18th Amendment, rose to challenge of his colleagues and stated that "if the prohibition law had been observed in New York City and other predominantly urban areas, there would have been more fatalities. Maurice Campbell, Prohibition agent in the Prohibition Districts, asserted that "the class of misusers of the mails for the bootlegger to operate..."310 Welfare is not vital to this Republic, there are leeches, parasites and wasters."311 The real culpability lay with those who drank, and that furthermore, those who drank alcohol during a war, there were always casualties:

The Government is under no obligation to supply the people with alcohol that is prohibited by the Constitution. The Government chooses not to supply industrial alcohol is a deliberate policy, and it costs many lives. The policy is a national effort. 312

Essentially, if those people did not have a potentially fatal beverage just wait until the war was over and they would not be dead. Or perhaps, as Representative

312 Time, "National Affairs: Poison," January 1
observed in New York City and other cities where those deaths principally occurred, there would have been no deaths.\textsuperscript{310} Maurice Campbell, Prohibition administrator of the New York Districts, asserted that “the class of people who make it profitable for the bootlegger to operate…are those individuals whose welfare is not vital to this Republic”, and castigated drinkers as “leeches, parasites and wasters.”\textsuperscript{311} Wayne Wheeler declared that the real culpability lay with those that would sell poison to others, and that furthermore, those who drank had it coming to them. In war, there were always casualties:

> The Government is under no obligation to furnish the people with alcohol that is drinkable when the Constitution prohibits it. The person who drinks this industrial alcohol is a deliberate suicide [...] To root out a bad habit costs many lives and long years of effort.\textsuperscript{312}

Essentially, if those people who were reduced to buying a potentially fatal beverage just wouldn’t drink it, then they would not be dead. Or perhaps, as Representative Celler implied, if the

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poor, less educated people of the nation had access to the same high quality alcohol enjoyed by his colleagues in Congress, then that august body should "make it difficult but not murderous to others less informed and less intelligent than members here."\footnote{New York Times, "Congress Wets Denounce Deaths by Poison Alcohol as Government Murders," January 4, 1927.}

Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon, one of the richest men in the country, was troubled by these events. A private drinker who would later put his name on a prominent university, he publicly supported the goals of Prohibition, which he thought would improve the circumstances of the poor. However, the inescapable fact that the denaturing program was leading to thousands of deaths nationwide led him to reconsider that policy. A new revision to it was about to be implemented as a response to the ongoing public health crisis, but he was considering abolishing it altogether. On December 29th, 1926, word was leaked to the press that Mellon was leaning toward rejecting the new revision and phasing out the denaturing program.\footnote{New York Times, "Mellon Opposes Killing by Poison to Enforce Law," December 31, 1926.}

However, while he was Secretary of the Department of the Treasury and ultimate head of the Department and, after an hour of careful consideration, the two men "were in general agreement" that the program be continued, the revision as planned. Mellon dutifully informed senior officials of the ASL.\footnote{New York Times, "Defends Wood Alcohol: Suitable Denaturant Known," January 11, 1927.}

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Treasury and ultimate head of the Prohibition Bureau, he was not
the shepherd that minded the flock; that duty fell to one who
answered to a much higher power. The very next day, Wayne B.
Wheeler called upon Secretary Mellon at the Treasury
Department and, after an hour of chat, he emerged and stated that
the two men "were in general accord."315 Not only would the
program be continued, the revision would take effect the next
year as planned. Mellon dutifully reported to Congress two
weeks later that wood alcohol was "the most effective means" of
denaturing alcohol, and also denied that the ASL had any
involvement in the denaturing policy, disingenuously claiming
that he had no "correspondence" with Mr. Wheeler or other
senior officials of the ASL.316 The government response to the
rising tide of victims was embodied in this revision and seen as
the only way to prevent further deaths; in blackjack, the new
implementation would be known as "doubling down."

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The new rules to be put in place would require manufacturers of industrial alcohol to double the amount of methyl alcohol currently being added for denaturing. Benzene would also be added to instill an unpleasant taste and odor. The theory was that the resultant brew would be so offensive and distasteful that it would truly be impossible to drink. Said Mr. Wheeler, after calling on President Coolidge concerning faithless Prohibition agents, the new mixture would be “less deadly and less drinkable.” Moral certainty and calculated logic once again had won the day. This policy would remain in place through the remaining years of Prohibition.

Deaths from poisoned industrial alcohol leveled off in the years following, though not because of the increase in the toxicity of renatured alcohol. Rather, it was due in large part to the belated entry of the government into regulating the supply side of the alcohol industry. Regulations imposing production quotas were put into effect on January 1, 1928, which clamped down on surpluses and severely restricted diversion to illegal purposes. The number of deaths due to poisoning may have reached as high as 50,000, that of those blinded or paralyzed could surely killing many others. The policy would echo down the generations.

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322 Behr, Prohibition, 221.

323 Blum, The Poisoner’s Handbook, 158.
be put in place would require alcohol to double the amount of added for denaturing. Benzene has an unpleasant taste and odor. The brew would be so offensive and be impossible to drink. Said Mr. Coolidge concerning faithless mixture would be “less deadly and certainty and calculated logic once this policy would remain in place of Prohibition.

Industrial alcohol leveled off in the because of the increase in the toxicity however, it was due in large part to the into regulating the supply side of impositions imposing production quotas January 1, 1928, which clamped down on surpluses and severely restricted how much industrial alcohol was diverted to illegal purposes. Additional regulations imposed by the Prohibition Bureau limited how fast manufacturing plants could produce alcohol. By the end of 1928, the government could claim that federal intrusion into the manufacturing of industrial alcohol had “substantially reduced diversion to illegal purposes.” The damage was already done, however. While an exact figure will never be known, the total number of deaths due to poisoned industrial alcohol nationwide may have reached as high as 50,000, with a total several times that of those blinded or paralyzed. In addition, as Dr. Norris and his staff pointed out, chronic methyl alcohol ingestion was an unstudied phenomenon; they could only speculate that “the liquor which contains enough poison to kill so many is slowly but surely killing many others.” Thus, the effects of Prohibition policy would echo down the generations, producing a legacy that

322 Behr, Prohibition, 221.
323 Blum, The Poisoner’s Handbook, 158.
for the most part was eagerly and quickly forgotten once the 21st Amendment returned the ability of American citizens to consume a beverage that is uniquely suited to easing the pain of persistent memory. However, the strange legacy of this era is evident in current policies regarding the modern war on drugs.

It is perhaps difficult to understand the mindset that would lead members of government to knowingly endanger the lives of American citizens in the name of law enforcement. The callous logic of ignoring the detrimental effects to society of the government’s denaturing policy can readily be dismissed as the product of a bygone era, one in which the government had not yet acknowledged the human cost of policy enforcement. A close modern analogy would be if the government instituted a policy to knowingly poison marijuana plants in an effort to control the supply of the drug and discourage people from using it, aware that many marijuana smokers would still imbibe and subsequently put themselves at risk of serious health consequences.

Which is precisely what the government did. In 1975, the State Department’s eradication program in conjunction with the Mexican government’s program in conjunction with the Mexican government’s program in conjunction with the United Nations’ Helicopter Spraying Program used paraquat, a deadly herbicide, to spray marijuana fields in Mexico.324 One of the most dangerous chemicals ever created, Paraquat acts as a contact herbicide that kills both broadleaf plants and grasses in a matter of minutes, causing irreversible damage. In an effort to limit the supply of marijuana, farmers quickly realized that their crops would be ruined before they harvested their crop in late summer. Thousands of pounds of contaminated marijuana destined for the streets of the United States were smuggled over the border into the country. The lungs of countless American marijuana smokers were filled with paraquat, a poisonous chemical that can cause severe health problems and even death. The program was eventually discontinued due to the high rate of accidental poisoning and the popularity of the drug on the black market.

324 *Time*, “Panic Over Paraquat,” May 1, 1977
326 *Time*, “Panic Over Paraquat,” May 1, 1977
327 *Saturday Night Live*, http://snltranscripts.j1
and quickly forgotten once the 21st century legacy of this era is evident in the modern war on drugs.

To understand the mindset that led to knowingly endanger the lives of policy enforcement. A close look at the history reveals that the government had not yet instituted a policy of policy enforcement. A close look at the history reveals that the government had not yet instituted a policy to control the spread of marijuana by spraying the fields. However, Mexican farmers quickly realized that their product was perfectly viable if they harvested their crop immediately after spraying. The detrimental effects to society of the United States federal government did. In 1975, the State Department established a program in conjunction with the Mexican government to use US helicopters to spray the herbicide Paraquat over known marijuana fields in Mexico. One of the most commonly used herbicides in the world, Paraquat reacts with the sun’s ultraviolet rays to kill broadleaf plants in a matter of days. However, Mexican farmers quickly realized that their product was perfectly viable if they harvested their crop immediately after spraying. Thousands of pounds of contaminated marijuana were then smuggled over the border into the United States into the willing lungs of countless American marijuana smokers. Paraquat laced marijuana became a legitimate public health concern, causing a flood of inquiries to local health clinics and hospitals, and even garnering a skit on the ultimate social commentary television program of the day, Saturday Night Live. Paraquat poisoning

is most acute when introduced into the body through the lungs, and can cause symptoms from mouth and throat irritation to organ failure and death.\textsuperscript{328}

While this may seem like a situation in which the consequences of a policy were not foreseen, the State Department was warned by officials in the Agriculture Department about the potentially harmful effects of Paraquat spraying on the health of end users before the spraying policy was implemented.\textsuperscript{329} That the State Department went ahead with the $13 million program readily recalls the cold logic of the Prohibition era denaturing policy, with one minor caveat; after widespread alarm and condemnation, the federal government halted the program, stating the Paraquat issue was “too hot to handle politically.”\textsuperscript{330} What a difference five decades makes; the government voluntarily ended an effective program even though "no lung or other injury in marijuana users has ever been attributed to Paraquat contamination."\textsuperscript{331} Further shift in attitudes can easily be seen in programs for heroin users, as vs. marijuana; while the possession of Schedule 1 drug remains a felony, declined to pursue medical marijuana as international drug traffic speakeasies of old.\textsuperscript{332} In fact, in a Wayne B. Weeler's sensibilities, actually supplies federally grown patients at a cost of half a million; this program is a glaring contradiction given; that it is reflective of a sea human cost of law enforcement oversight during Prohibition.

\textsuperscript{328} Centers For Disease Control, \textit{Facts About Paraquat}, http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/paraquat/basics/facts.asp

\textsuperscript{329} \textit{Chicago Tribune}, “Poison Marijuana,” April 1, 1978.


\textsuperscript{333} Duara, Nigel, “In Decades-Old Program, U S appears to break its own laws,” March 18, 2009.
Paraquat contamination.” Further evidence of a fundamental shift in attitudes can easily be seen in various clean needle programs for heroin users, as well as the realm of medical marijuana; while the possession and use of marijuana as a Schedule 1 drug remains a felony, the US government has declined to pursue medical marijuana dispensaries with the same vigor as international drug traffickers, or as the operators of the speakeasies of old. In fact, in a bizarre twist that would offend Wayne B. Weeler’s sensibilities, the United States government actually supplies federally grown marijuana to a select group of patients at a cost of half a million dollars and counting. That this program is a glaring contradiction to the War on Drugs is a given; that it is reflective of a sea change in attitudes towards the human cost of law enforcement owes much to the lessons learned during Prohibition.

Prohibition was the tempestuous result of the marriage between the fire of missionary fervor and the ice cold logic of political calculation. This combination of ardor and practicality stretched to the real issue of US citizens dying because they engaged in a personal leisure activity. While the true cost in human life due to a government policy remains elusive, the issue of poisoned alcohol ceased to be politically important. The advent of the Great Depression and the end of Prohibition on the horizon relegated poisoned industrial alcohol to an historic footnote, along with Wayne Wheeler and the temperance movement itself. Yet its echoes can be heard whenever governments attempt to legislate perceived social ills into oblivion; moral absolutism combined with political power can be dangerous to a nation’s health as well as its soul.

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petuous result of the marriage of ardor and practicality US citizens dying because they activity. While the true cost in policy remains elusive, the issue be politically important. The and the end of Prohibition on the industrial alcohol to an historic Wheeler and the temperance choes can be heard whenever late perceived social ills into bined with political power can be well as its soul.

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