

Prohibition Period In The United States

Posted on October 28, 2019

Origins and Goals of American Prohibition

Prohibition in the history of America was a strategy to reduce the level of drinking among citizens in the United States. The measure eliminated the manufacturing, distribution, and, lastly, selling of alcoholic beverages. This measure came after the 18th Constitution Amendment that repealed the licenses from the brewers, vintners, distillers and wholesalers of alcoholic products. Leaders of prohibition were critically alarmed at the rate of drinking in America during those times in history and considering the continued immigration from the European countries, the felt action was appropriate to help in curbing all this mess (Oliver, 2018). The prohibition era is very important in the history of the United States of America. It is through this era where we learn that the federal government's decision is not always the final, we live to fight another day.

Prohibition period in the United States lasted for around thirteen years and it started in the 1920s. It is considered one of the most famous or, to some extent, infamous in the history of America. The actual intention of the legislation was to reduce the rate of alcohol consumption by eliminating the vendors, but the plan never worked, and it backfired on the government. Many considered the measure as a failed social and political experiment; it changed the perception of many Americans on the view of alcoholic products.

Prohibition enhanced people's realization that the federal government is not always the final, and in case their decision is wrong, the majority can always have their way. Prohibition-era was associated with speakeasies, bootleggers, gangsters, and rumrunners, generally a chaotic social environment and network (Oliver, 2018). The period actually began in the year 1920 and the public in general accepted the idea, however, the acceptance did not last a decade before the same public was annoyed with the law and its increasing nightmare enforcement. It remains to be the only constitutional amendment to be repealed, just another after passing the 21st Amendment of the Constitution.

Economic and Social Causes of Prohibition's Failure

Prohibition is one of the terribly failed legislation in the United States. It failed because of several economic and social reasons. One of the failures was the consequences it set in the business community in the nation (Funderburg, 2014). Businesses failed due to the loss of income from the restaurants, entertainment venues and bars. Immediately, the loss of revenue from these sectors followed the loss of lucrative taxes from alcohol generally in most states of the United States. The expectation by the government was that enacting this law would divert people's expenditure to other

sectors of the economy, especially household materials, and this would help in settling the losses.

However, these did not work, and instead, the thirsty American consumers looked for other methods of making their own liquor, which they were tentatively missing. Kits of grape juice marked with very careful warnings of not leaving the juice too long lest it ferments became the popular household purchase after the Amendment. The consumers found themselves stills to buy, including instructions on how they can be used freely through the Department of Agriculture in the United States. Bootleg liquor and homemade kind of alcohol drastically became popular, and due to lack of maintenance, there was a mass explosion of simultaneous dangerous and tainted illegal alcohol broke out. The result was the formation of gangs that purposefully transported these illegal brews of alcohol and sold them in designated dens. The formation of gangs also led to an increase in crime rates due to the purported violence in the trade of this illegal alcohol (Funderburg, 2014). This led to politicians abandoning the activist groups that pioneered the prohibition, and in the year 1933, during the 21st Constitution Amendment, the era was repealed since the temperance movement died and lost its meaning.

However, the prohibition era came along with positivities and negativities. Some of the positive effects of prohibition include; there was a reduced rate of alcohol consumption in the entire nation and as well, and the level of public drunkenness reduced by quite a margin. In the health sector, a report showed that there was a reduction in new liver cirrhosis infections in the general population (Oliver, 2018). The prohibition period also led to the construction of new federal prisons, and through this, a well-laid foundation for more advanced national action on crimes and immorality increased. The employed people were also able to take their salaries at home and dine with their families instead of taking the money to bars. The employees were also able to deliver quality work since they were no longer reporting at work drunk.

Inequality, Crime, and the Unintended Consequences of Prohibition

Besides the positivity of the prohibition era, it was also marked with several negativities that later led to its repeal in the 21st Amendment. First, prohibition brought disparity since the rich enjoyed the liquor while the poor, black immigrants succumbed to arrests by the police and jailing due to violence in their illegal liquor dens. This promoted racism and prejudice extensively in the United States. It also led to the emergence of organized gangs leading to several criminal activities in the suburbs.

Prohibition also affected the political organization in the country as heated debates were held in the congress houses about the topic. The political alignment became divided into two, where we had the “drys,” which were actually the members of the congress who supported prohibition, and they won the motion on the grounds of public health and as well morals. The Anti-saloon League later supported prohibition, and this made it even stronger. However, a strong opposition who then called themselves the “wet” (Braun, 2015). They received support from the German Lutheran community

and the Catholics. Despite the funding from both these two sides, the “drys” had their way and passed the law.

Most of the common Americans, though, felt prohibition was a violation of human rights and their freedoms as citizens. This led to the emergence of the speakeasy, which was an organized underground drinking dens secretly serving liquor to the patrons. They provided other services like live bands and shows, and even food service was provided (Braun, 2015). In this business, corruption was rampant and the police would always take bribes to shut their mouths on the existence of these bars. The police would also notify the owners of these businesses in case the administrators were planning a raid.

Repeal and the Historical Legacy of Prohibition

It was also during this period when the worst racial massacre occurred in United States history. The Tulsa Riot happened in 1921; a white mob attacked the area, which was inhabited by the blacks, followed by a mob attack on the businesses of African Americans in Oklahoma in Tulsa. An estimated number of 300 blacks plus several more were arrested in the attack.

The continuation of the prohibition period led to the illegal vendors finding new methods of making more money for their illegal business. Being that the trade was illegal, the profits became even higher and these made the vendors come up with new ways of expanding their businesses. They invented the use of American cityscape saloons in the United States, and through the saloons, they were able to sell even more of their products. This led to the emergence of so many saloons in the nation. Selling of whiskey with glasses, contrary to the bottles increased the profits made by the sellers of alcohol. Saloon keepers stocked beers for companies sponsoring them they would later be paid for the service (Braun, 2015). Distribution was then done through the saloons. The uncooperative saloon owners were punished by funding a more advanced saloon next door to their premises. The saloon keepers would lure patrons and young men to their illegal business in their saloons through prostitution, gambling, lunches and several other immoral activities in their capability. At last, the prohibition was repealed and beer plus wine was legalized. The Americans were once, again given the opportunity to enjoy the sweet liquor in the year 1933 December under the law (Funderburg, 2014). The Americans celebrate the day of repeal up to date. This decision marked the end of the prohibition era.

In conclusion, the period should always be remembered by making the students study it in school since it tells them how the fight for human rights is a struggle. Through this great happening in history, students learn that alcohol consumption, to some extent, should be controlled in their own capacity even though it is their right once they reach the drinking age. They must always be responsible not to spend all their earnings on liquor. From this struggle during prohibition, the lessons we learn up to date is that human rights are something you can fight for and be granted. We learn that the government’s decision is not final, and we can always have other ways of expressing our

rights as citizens.

References

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