

Prohibition in usa essay sample



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Throughout the nineteenth century, two Temperance movements, the Anti-Saloon League and the Women's Christian Temperance Union were very prominent in their attempt to make known their views. They believed that alcohol was pure evil and campaigned endlessly to pressure the Congress to ban it. They believed that it ruined family life because it took fathers away from their homes and it wasted the wages he earned, leaving the rest of the family poor and hungry. One thing that aided the fight they were caught up in was the propaganda posters that they produced and put up everywhere.

Sources C and D are very typical of the Prohibition period and both have underlying messages that were very important then. The two sources were pre-Prohibition, being produced in 1910 and 1915 respectively. Source C shows a man at a bar, buying a drink, with other men in the background playing cards and a bartender who looks happy. The corner shows a family of a mother and children, which could be his, or a generic family, who seem to be hungry and poor. The man is handing over his week's wages and the bartender has his hand straight into the cash drawer, representing the fact that he was almost 'wasting' his money.

The other men in the background are sitting around a table, drinking and playing cards. It can be assumed that they are gambling, which was seen as evil. The man is handing over a bag of money, labelled "Week's Wages" which shows that he is spending all of the money the family is receiving. The bartender is smiling as he is being given lots of money and he has his hand in the cash drawer, showing that the money changes hands straight away. The men in the background are gambling and playing cards, which was seen as extremely evil at the time.

The family in the corner are seen to be seated around an empty table and the child is holding up an empty frying pan. This shows that they seem to be hungry and possibly poor. This could be the family of the man, or it could be representing a generic family, as this situation was very common with many families. The caption at the top of the cartoon says “ The Poor Man’s Club, The most expensive to belong to. ” This is a pun on the phrase “ Gentleman’s Club” in which men paid the dues, to belong to the club.

They were considered as the upper class and although it was expensive, belonging to the club meant that you were respected. The next caption then says “ A club member in good standing, paying his dues”. This draws on the fact that the man we see is a regular attendee at the bar and so could be considered a ‘ club member’. As he is handing over money to the bartender, he is almost paying his dues towards the ‘ club’ he is unfortunately a part of. It also states that he has to pay dearly to ‘ belong’ to this bar and this means that he is paying for his drink with money that should’ve been spent on his family.

The other says “ Slaves of the Saloon”, which is very true as the man is obviously a regular attendee at the bar and so has become addicted to alcohol, causing him to become enslaved to drinking. This leaves his family poor as they are indirectly also slaves to alcohol. I believe that the artist’s view is that alcohol can be seen as evil as it draws men into a sinful, wasteful life. The artist believes that bars have become clubs to which people will become poor because of alcohol.

Because of the image of the poor and hungry family in the corner, it can be supposed that the artist sympathises with the families of men who drink. It shows that alcohol was thought of as “one of the great evils of the times” (Source B). I know that temperance movements such as the Anti-Saloon League and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union believed that alcohol was evil and ruined family life. It kept families poor and corrupted morals. This is reflected in the cartoon, so it may be probable that it was produced by one of these two temperance groups.

Source D shows a girl and small boy, standing outside a saloon door. They are looking fairly sad and alone, are wearing old clothes and have no adult looking after them. The background shows a saloon door, and behind the door, all is dark. This could represent the fact that saloons were seen as evil and dark. The two children are looking very sad and forlorn. They are standing outside the saloon door and are obviously slightly scared of it, which is not surprising as many of the men who would’ve passed through that door would’ve been drunk.

In the carton, the door to the saloon is shown as dark and ‘scary’. The caption at the top of the cartoon says “Daddy’s in There...” This is obviously referring to the fact that the children’s father has gone into the Saloon and so has left them alone outside. The other caption says “And our shoes and stockings and food are in the saloon too, and they’ll never come out”. This is clearly not literal, but it means that the money that the father could have spent on clothes and food for his children has been wasted on alcohol.

These items are the essentials for life for these two children and without them, life is not the same. The father has wasted a lot of money on ‘useless’ alcohol which doesn’t last long, when he should’ve bought things that were useful for his two children. I believe that the artist commiserates with the two children and also believes that saloons are evil and dark. It can be assumed that the artist is against alcohol and believes that it produces evil in families and leaves many women and children poor, hungry and without the basic essentials of life.

I know that family life was held very highly by temperance movements such as the Anti-Saloon League and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, who believed that alcohol was evil and ruined family relationships. It kept families poor and directly hit children hard. Supporters of Prohibition, known as dries, claimed that “3000 infants are smothered yearly in bed, by drunken parents. This is reflected in the cartoon, so it may be probable that it was produced by one of these two temperance movements.

In conclusion, I believe that the artists for both Sources C and D were supporting Prohibition and I think that both cartoons may have been produced by temperance movement groups such as the Anti-Saloon league and the Women’s Christian Union. Both cartons represent alcohol in a bad light and show the disastrous effects that it can have on families and children. Propaganda posters like this were used by temperance unions to persuade the public and to bring pressure to Congress to ban the sale, manufacture and transport of alcohol.