

There is Every Place for the State in the Barrooms of the Nation:
The Temperance Movement and Freedom in Canada, 1872-1898

by

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Abstract:

This paper examines how the temperance movement within Canada during the years 1872-1898 sought to justify its political program of prohibition using the concept of freedom. By examining the rhetoric employed by the temperance movement and the popular concepts to which it appealed, I hope to convey the importance of freedom within nineteenth century Canadian political culture, and to better understand how such a principle was employed in political debates. This paper engages with Ian McKay's Liberal Order Framework by contesting his conception of the primacy of the individual in the implementation of liberal values, as well as exploring the role of Christianity within the creation of a liberal order. To do so, this paper draws upon the writings of prominent English-speaking Central Canadian temperance advocates and organizations.

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Dedication

To my family, friends, professors and my partner Carrie

Introduction

“No language can depict the woe that is poured into the hearts and homes of our people by [the liquor] traffic. It is enough to make one weep tears of blood to think of it.”¹ In the 1870s, Evangelical preacher William MacKay used these words when addressing a Christian audience on the subject of removing the influence of alcohol from Canadian society. MacKay, a Methodist preacher and author of spiritual tracts on matters ranging from the proper method of baptism to the evils of the Roman Catholic Church, was born in 1842 and ministered to the Methodist congregation of Woodstock, Ontario from 1864 until his death in 1905. He was one of many Protestant leaders who were active in the movement to ban the production, sale and consumption of alcohol. MacKay’s contemporaries used language similar to his own when they characterized the network of producers and distributors of alcohol (collectively known as the liquor traffic) as being “worse than the slave trade,” and stated that it brought “present and eternal ruin” upon thousands of individuals and families. Known as the temperance movement, the collective of persons supporting the cause of prohibition demanded that the government ban, or at least heavily regulate, the alcohol industry.² To a modern reader, the rhetoric used by these prohibitionists may seem inflammatory and extreme; however, the viewpoint advocated by these individuals was an accepted mainstream political position widely supported by many citizens of Victorian Canada. Prominent members of the Liberal party, such as Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie, and Conservative cabinet ministers, such as George Foster, supported the prohibitionist position, and successful temperance groups like the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of the Liquor

1 W.A. MacKay, *The Textbook for Campaign: An Appeal to the Christian public Against the Liquor Traffic* (Canada: [n.p.], [ca.1875]), 2.

2 By the 1870s the terms prohibition and temperance were used interchangeably and it was generally understood that temperance organizations were advocating not temperate behaviour but rather state-legislated prohibition. Throughout the paper I will use these two terms interchangeably.

Traffic (Dominion Alliance) had thousands of members. Canadian prohibitionists were not alone in supporting temperance. Temperance movements were also strong in the United States and Britain, ultimately succeeding in the neighbouring republic while failing in Britain.

Canadian social historians, as well as their colleagues in the United States and Britain, have been very active in documenting the history of the movement.³ They have predominantly focused on the period of temperance activities from 1820 until the achievement of prohibition in Canada during the First World War. In his survey of the history of alcohol in Canada, Craig Heron examined the role it has played in Canadian society, and the gradual loosening of restrictions governing its consumption. It is in this context that he discusses the role of the temperance movement and their ultimate failure to permanently enact prohibition.⁴ Jan Noel limited her scope of analysis and focused only on the evolution of early temperance groups, ending her work at Confederation. She chronicled the evolution of temperance groups from organizations focused on influencing individual behaviour to ones seeking state legislation to deal with alcohol consumption.⁵ Brian Ferry expanded the scope of this analysis and examined temperance organizations throughout the nineteenth century. He argued that the longevity of the temperance movement ultimately rested on an appeal that managed to cross class and gender lines⁶

The importance of class and gender in the study of the temperance movement has been highlighted in numerous studies. For instance, adopting a class perspective, Andrew Holman has

3 Eric Burns, *The Spirits of America: A Social History of Alcohol* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), Griffiths Edwards, *Alcohol: The Ambiguous Molecule* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000) and Jack Blocker, "Kaleidoscope in motion : drinking in the United States 1400-2000," in Mack Holt (ed.) *Alcohol: A Social and Cultural History* (New York: Berg, 2006).

4 Craig Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History* (Toronto, Between the Lines, 2003), 146.

5 Jan Noel, *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades before Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

6 Brian Ferry, "'To the Interests and Conscience of the Great Mass of the Community:': The Evolution of Temperance Societies in Nineteenth-Century Central Canada" *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*. 14 (2003): 137-163.

explained how temperance became an integral part of the identity of the middle class in Victorian Canada. He argued that the dominant viewpoint adopted by middle class reformers prior to the First World War was that weak individuals needed to be protected from the pervasive and destructive influence of alcohol through the creation of a better moral climate.⁷ Matthew Sendbuehler has also examined the role of class in temperance debates within Toronto in the 1870s. He argued that middle class reformers sought to control lower class drinking by regulating taverns and other public drinking spaces.⁸ Other historians have preferred to study the movement from a gender perspective, analyzing the ways in which temperance activities and legislation served to shape both masculinity and femininity. Wendy Mitchinson and Sharon Ann Cook both examined the Women's Christian Temperance Union and argued that the group's Protestant ideology helped to create and support a liberating climate which justified women's participation in the public sphere during the nineteenth century. However, with the failure of temperance and the rise of more conservative interpretations of Evangelical Protestantism in the 1920s, this liberating climate disappeared.⁹ Craig Heron also focused on the creation of gender identities, but instead of analyzing the creation of femininity, he examined how a male working-class culture in Hamilton was shaped by public drinking. He argued that temperance was a means for middle class reformers to regulate what they saw as harmful expressions of male identity during the early twentieth century.¹⁰

Although social historians have written the bulk of the studies about the Canadian temperance movement, religious historians have also shown some interest in the movement. For

7 Andrew Holman, *A Sense of their Duty: Middle Class Formation in Victorian Ontario Towns* (Montreal - Kingston, McGill Queen's University Press, 2000), 149-152.

8 Matthew Sendbuehler, "Battling the Bane of Our Cities: Class, Territory and the Prohibition Debate in Toronto 1877." *Urban History Review* 22: 1 (1993): 30-48.

9 Wendy Mitchinson, "The WCTU: For God, Home and Native Land: A Study in Nineteenth Century Feminism." in *A Not Unreasonable Claim*, ed. Linda Kealey (Toronto: The Woman's Press 1979), 151-168.

10 Craig Heron, "Boys and Their Booze: Masculinities and public Drinking in Working-Class Hamilton, 1890-1946," *Canadian Historical Review*, 3 (2005): 411-452.

instance, Neil Semple has studied the role of the Protestant churches by specifically analyzing the influence of the Methodist church in promoting temperance. He argued that temperance played a pivotal role in the Methodist project of creating a Christian society on earth, and that the achievement of such a goal required state intervention to limit individual freedom in favour of community welfare.¹¹ Furthermore, Marguerite Van Die has examined the teachings of prominent Methodist scholar and preacher Nathanael Burwash, and used him as representative of Methodist thought in Ontario during the late Victorian period. She specifically argued that a critical component of Methodist beliefs was the idea of seeking to align Canadian society with the moral truths of scripture. The pursuit of temperance was seen as one of the key means of achieving such a goal.¹²

All of these social and religious historians have studied important aspects of temperance such as the role of class, gender and religion within the movement; however, they have not examined the intellectual and political foundations to the same degree as other elements of the temperance movement. They have tended to overlook the fact that beyond being a religious or social movement, temperance was also a political movement inspired by important principles and designed to lobby for specific legislation. Central to the movement's goal of lobbying for certain changes was the necessity of justifying its proposed ban on alcohol. Opponents of temperance predominantly attacked the idea of prohibition by appealing to the importance of freedom. Men such as Nova Scotia politician Joseph Howe, journalist E. King Dodds and Provost of Trinity College Goldwin Smith all argued that temperance legislation was a misuse of Parliament's power and an unjustified attack on personal freedom, as well as being a means of enforcing a specific religion's beliefs onto society as a whole. Craig Heron also provides an

11 Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill Queen's University Press, 1996), 334-362.

12 Marguerite Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada, 1839-1918* (Montreal-Kingston, McGill Queen's University Press, 1989), 181.

analysis of the temperance movement, in which he argued that one of the key reasons for its ultimate failure prior to the First World War was an inability to reconcile the desire to restrict individual behaviour with the prevailing notions of freedom in Canadian society.¹³ Similarly, Mariana Valverde placed temperance within the context of Christian moral reform occurring in Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. She characterized prohibition, along with other projects of the moral reform movement, as an explicit attempt to restrict freedom in order to reinforce a middle-class, white, British vision of Canada.¹⁴ Valverde specifically engaged with the concept of freedom, however, she sought to demonstrate how the moral reform movement was opposed to freedom, and how its members appealed to other values as a means of justifying limiting individual freedom.

Such analysis is too reductive. Rather than attempting to reconcile prohibition with, or to outright suppress, freedom, supporters of the movement utilized the principle of freedom as means of supporting their position. Such justifications for temperance were developed through the process of supporters defending their values against attacks from opponents. This paper will examine how temperance advocates used the concept of freedom to justify their political agenda. By examining the rhetoric employed by the temperance movement and the popular concepts to which they appealed, it will be possible to understand the importance of freedom within nineteenth century Canadian political culture, and how such a principle was employed in political debates, increasing understanding of political culture in Victorian Canada.

A few historians have examined the relationship between temperance and freedom. One prominent example is historian Diane Hallman, who based one of her articles around the concept of freedom and analyzed how men and women in late Victorian Canada conceived of it by analyzing a specific debate over prohibition from 1877. She argues that men had an

¹³ Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History*, 146.

¹⁴ Mariana Valverde, *Age of Light, Soap and Water* (Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1991).

individualistic conception of freedom, while women placed it within a community context.¹⁵

While Hallman does examine how the principle was understood by members of the temperance movement, her scope is limited to a single debate. Furthermore, her focus is on how males and females respectively understood freedom, not how the concept was employed politically in the context of prohibition. While Heron, Valverde and Hallman all make important contributions to the historiography of temperance, they do not discuss how the temperance movement employed political values in their discourse, nor what such appeals can tell us about Canadian political culture in the late Victorian era. Ultimately, this paper will argue that in order to justify prohibition to the Canadian public during the years 1872 to 1898, the temperance movement relied on a political appeal based on the idea of preserving and promoting freedom.

To support this contention, this paper draws upon materials published by prominent temperance organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and The Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic (Dominion Alliance), as well as written sources drawn from the public and private writings of key figures in the temperance movement. These individuals and groups were selected based on the representative nature of their writings, as well as their prolific output. This paper predominantly focuses on the temperance movement in Ontario, particularly the activities of organizations and individuals operating out of Toronto. While the WCTU and Dominion Alliance were national organizations, the individuals selected, barring Robert Sellar of Montreal, are all from Ontario, as this was where the movement's Evangelical Protestant base was concentrated. As well, the two major theological colleges for training Presbyterian ministers (Knox College) and Methodist ministers (Emmanuel College) were located in Toronto. The concentration of theological institutes in Southern Ontario meant that most Protestant Evangelical writers and thinkers were located there,

15 Diane Hallman, "Rights, Justice, Power: Gendered Perspectives on Prohibition in Late Nineteenth-Century Canada." *History of Intellectual Culture*. 2 (2002): 1-14.

hence the Ontario-centric nature of the sources used.¹⁶ Additionally, Evangelical theology provided an intellectual basis for the temperance movement, as well as organizational support for many activists.

Temperance and the Creation of a Liberal Order

While the temperance movement did rely on churches for logistical and financial support, it was, at its core, a political movement as opposed to a religious one, and any discussion of its activities relates to a broader discussion of Canadian political values in late Victorian Canada. Ian McKay advances the idea that these values were liberal values, and his liberal order framework provides a means of understanding the dominant principles within Canadian political culture during the late nineteenth century. McKay argues that Canada should be conceived of as a liberal project of rule, and Canadian history as the implementation of a political order based upon the liberal belief in the primacy of the individual. Stemming from this belief, the liberal order places emphasis on three key values, these being, in order of importance, property, liberty and equality. McKay argues that this project of spreading liberal values began in the early 1840s and continued until the end of the 1930s as a small group of Central Canadian elites sought to impose these values on the population in the geographic area now known as Canada. He states that by the 1880s, liberal values had become dominant within Canada and had been adopted by most of society.¹⁷

This paper will seek to nuance two aspects of McKay's argument. First, it questions the primacy of the individual in relationship to the implementation of liberal values. The temperance movement sought to interpret liberal values within systems of thought that did not always

16 For more information on Evangelical Protestantism in English Canada, with a particular focus on the role of theological colleges see Michael Gauvreau, *Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill Queen's University Press, 1991).

17 Ian McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review*, 4 (2000): 617-645.

prioritize the individual, and the result could be the application of liberal principles to communities and groups of people, not just individuals. Second, it expands the scope of McKay's analysis by examining the influence of Christianity within Canadian political thought. The logic for applying these liberal values beyond the individual was often based on Christian principles and in his work, McKay does not investigate the influence of Christianity on the application of said values.

While McKay argues that liberal values came to be dominant in Canadian politics, liberalism itself was not the only ideology in Canada and in fact, liberal values were adopted by different political ideologies. For McKay, ideologies such as liberalism, provided their adherents with a means of interpreting the world around them. They also provided a hierarchy of principles for followers to employ when making decisions.¹⁸ Such ideologies were a combination of descriptive and prescriptive elements, all of which helped to shape specific views on human nature and the organization of society. They stemmed from basic assumptions which were formed either rationally or irrationally, and provide a framework of thought to be applied when making choices regarding political and social matters. Due to the combination of rational and irrational elements, ideologies were not always consistent, and within each system of thought, multiple perspectives on similar issues existed as certain core values were interpreted and applied in different situations.¹⁹

Within the context of the British Empire during the nineteenth century, the two dominant ideologies were liberalism and conservatism. Both ideologies emerged from the Whig tradition which dominated politics in late eighteenth century Britain. Whigs were predominately opposed to the arbitrary power of the monarch and sought to protect freedom and private property under

18 McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework," 624.

19 Leach, *British Political Ideologies*, 16-23, 27-28 and Stuart Hall, "Variants of Liberalism," in *Politics and Ideology: A Reader*, ed. J. Donald and S. Hall (Philadelphia, Open University Press, 1996), 35-6.

the law while simultaneously promoting religious tolerance.²⁰ It was from this political context that the Victorian Conservative and Liberal parties evolved. Thus, British conservatives and liberals shared a common intellectual heritage which emphasized the values of freedom, law and a certain understanding of equality.²¹ What divided liberals from conservatives was how they prioritized these values, with liberals generally prioritizing freedom while conservatives placed a greater emphasis on law and order. However, due to their shared heritage and values, the dividing lines between the two ideologies was often not clear.

The definition for liberalism used in this paper is strongly influenced by McKay's conception of liberalism. He argues that liberalism is based on the ontological and epistemological primacy of the category of the individual, and that liberalism sees the individual as the basic unit of society and the locus for moral calculations.²² Building off of McKay's understanding, this paper will additionally argue that for liberals, the individual was also defined as a rational thinker. The liberal assumption of humans as rational beings stems from eighteenth century Scottish intellectual Adam Smith. Smith emphasized individual rationality and the ability for each person to know what was best for him or her when he wrote, "It has been entrusted to the slow and uncertain determinations of our reason to find out the proper means of bringing [one's own happiness] about."²³ Freedom has consistently been one of the defining values of liberalism as a political ideology. Freedom was an essential organizing principle for society as it allowed rational individuals the ability to use their reason to determine and pursue what they perceived to be the most beneficial course of action. Liberals believed that allowing freedom would benefit the majority of people and result in greatest possible happiness for the majority,

20 Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*, 7th Ed. (Chicago, Regnery Books, 1986), 14.

21 Arthur Aughley, Greta Jones and W. Riches, *The Conservative Political Tradition in Britain and the United States* (London, Pinter Publishers, 1992), 17.

22 McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework," 620.

23 Adam Smith, *A Theory of Moral Sentiments, or, An Essay Towards and Analysis of the Principles by Which Men Naturally Judge Concerning the Conduct and Character, First of their Neighbours, and Afterwards of Themselves* (Harrowgate, Duchy, 1990), 130.

which was seen as the ideal goal of society. However, in order to create this ideal society, some restrictions on freedom were necessary and these restrictions needed be rationally justified.²⁴ Many liberals adopted the philosophy of utilitarianism, as they saw it as providing a framework for rationally assessing the merits of differing restrictions.²⁵ Beyond freedom, equality was also an important liberal principle. Equality was understood by liberals to mean equality of the individual before the law, and liberals believed that the role of the state in promoting equality was to ensure that the law was applied equally and consistently to all people.²⁶ Overall, liberalism can be understood as a theory of sociability, for by advancing the concept of freedom, it sought to create an ideal society of free-thinking, rational individuals.²⁷ The merits of possible restrictions had to be debated openly by all citizens lest some individuals be susceptible to coercion or bribery. Such an occurrence would undermine freedom as it would grant undue political power to a limited group of elites.²⁸

Conservative ideology also engages with the concept of freedom. However, unlike liberalism, which prioritizes preserving and enhancing individual freedom, conservatives see the individual as belonging to a continuing and pre-existing social order within which freedom has to be exercised.²⁹ For conservatives, each person is, according to influential eighteenth-century thinker and British MP Edmund Burke, part of an immortal contract that unites the dead, the living and the unborn.³⁰ Stemming from this view, conservatives believe that when making decisions, one must take this contract into account and appeal to tradition and commonly

24 John Gray, *Liberalism: Essays in Political Philosophy* (New York, Routledge, 1989), 219.

25 Hall, "Variants of liberalism," 59. The philosophy of Utilitarianism was a British moral philosophy developed by Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, which emphasized that the decision which brought about the greatest good for the greatest number of people was the morally correct one.

26 Leach, *British Political Ideologies, 2nd Edition*, 71.

27 Hall, "Variants of Liberalism," 40.

28 Eugenio Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992), 316.

29 Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism, Third Edition* (Hampshire, UK, Palgrave Press, 2001), 10.

30 Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*, 69.

understood practices, unlike liberals, who argue that one should rely solely on reason. Furthermore, rather than believing that the state should primarily protect freedom by limiting its involvement in the lives of individuals, conservatives instead argued that freedom should be exercised within a framework that preserves discipline and creates an orderly society, thereby protecting society from threats, both external and internal.³¹ Furthermore, conservatives shared a similar understanding of equality with liberals, and also sought to promote equality before the law. While conservatives often disagreed with liberal assumptions regarding the nature of the individual and society, due to their shared intellectual heritage they could do so without fully rejecting values such as freedom and equality. Rather, conservatives simply saw freedom as being a specific value situated within a broader historic context, rather than a universal concept.³²

When engaging with the concept of freedom, liberals and conservatives were discussing both ideas and their embodiment as specific legal practices. Intellectually, freedom was seen as a concept which inspired a set of principles that prescribed certain rights. However, these principles were subsequently codified in legislation that granted specific rights. Beginning with the concept of Habeas Corpus and the right to have the validity of one's detention adjudicated, acts were passed which legally guaranteed specific freedoms. Over time, the law came to protect the freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of association and freedom of expression. All these specific rights represent the practical application of freedom by Parliament. Finally, by the late Victorian era, the use of concepts such as freedom and rights had become strongly associated by many with being British, and a core aspect of Britishness was an inherent respect for freedom. Thus, the British political tradition was often invoked as a means of justifying freedom.³³

31 Leach, *British Political Ideologies, 2nd Edition*, 108-109.

32 Aughley, Jones and Riches, *The Conservative Political Tradition in Britain and the United States*, 17.

33 Kurt Komeski, "Britishness, Canadianness, Class and Race: Winnipeg and the British World, 1880-1910s," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 2 (2007): 165.

The Temperance Movement within Canada

While members of the temperance movement held a variety of different opinions on issues concerning politics and society, they held shared ideas on certain key principles, most importantly, the concept of freedom. In order to better understand the influence of the movement, it is important to situate it within the broader context of Canadian history. Temperance first emerged as a prominent force both in Canada and the rest of the world during the 1820s.³⁴ The early movement prior to 1850 was led predominantly by Evangelical Protestant religious leaders who were not concerned with freedom and other political values, but rather, were focused on changing individual behavior through the use of moral suasion. Temperance activists sought to engage personally with other community members in order to convince them to make a free choice to abandon their use of alcohol in favour of more temperate behaviors, resulting in the movement being labeled as the temperance movement.³⁵ However, by the 1850s, the focus of the movement was becoming increasingly state-centric, as it sought to mobilize public opinion to encourage Parliament to enact restrictive measures on what was termed the 'liquor traffic'.³⁶ By the early 1870s, the movement had fully developed into one dedicated to bringing about a legislative repression of the liquor traffic, resulting in increased debate over temperance and requiring activists to justify their position by appealing to the values of the broader Canadian society. It was in the 1870s that temperance supporters begin to employ a rhetoric of freedom, both in response to their detractors and also as a proactive justification for their cause. Despite the changes in tactics from promoting personal temperance to encouraging legal prohibition, the movement still referred to itself as the temperance movement. By the 1870s, the terms “temperance” and “prohibition” had become synonymous in the political discourse.³⁷

34 Noel, *Canada Dry*, 4.

35 Ibid, 5.

36 Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History*, 146.

37 Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water*, 23.

The shift in tactics precipitated the decline of traditional temperance lodges dedicated to regulating the behaviour of their members, such as the Royal Templars of Temperance. Instead, there arose new secular organizations with an explicitly political purpose. Men involved in these new temperance organizations might be farmers, small businessmen or upwardly ambitious labourers, but the movement was largely controlled by professionals, businessmen and Protestant clergy. Nonetheless, one of the largest of these new groups to emerge was the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). The group, founded in 1875 in Toronto by Letitia Youmans, was dedicated to campaigning for the legal prohibition of alcoholic beverages. Membership in the WCTU largely mirrored the class make-up of other male dominated temperance organizations. In rural areas, WCTU branches were largely comprised of farmers' wives, whereas in urban areas the membership was largely middle class.³⁸

By 1874, the prohibition movement had consolidated into a nation-wide umbrella group, originally called the Dominion Prohibitionary Council and, after 1875, known as the Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic (Dominion Alliance). The formation of this group was spearheaded by sixteen mostly backbench prohibitionist members of Parliament, from both the Conservative and Liberal Parties. One of the leading MPs of this group was Liberal MP and future premier of Ontario George Ross, and the Dominion Alliance managed to establish branches in all provinces over the course of the 1870s.³⁹ The group was also fully supported by the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, who had previously been unwilling to endorse organizations not directly affiliated with their respective churches. Throughout the later decades of the century, most prohibitionist activity fell under the umbrella of the Dominion Alliance. Their leader, Francis Spence, a Toronto based Methodist minister born in Ireland in 1850 who immigrated with his family to Toronto in 1861, was one of the most recognizable and

38 Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History*, 148-149.

39 Karen Molson, *The Molson's: Their Lives and Times 1780-2000* (Toronto, Willowdale, 2001), 273.

vocal advocates for temperance.

Beginning with the election of Alexander Mackenzie's Liberal government in 1874, the temperance movement, led by Spence's Dominion Alliance, managed to achieve numerous political victories. Mackenzie initially created a Royal Commission to investigate the harms of the liquor traffic, and in 1878, his government passed the Scott Act. This act allowed individual counties and cities to outlaw the sale of alcohol within their boundaries (known as "the local option") if 50% of the population voted in favour of the measure during a local referendum.⁴⁰ Temperance successes culminated in pressuring the Ontario Liberal government for an 1894 Ontario-wide plebiscite on prohibition, in addition to persuading Laurier's Liberal government to hold a national plebiscite on prohibition in 1898. Despite achieving majorities in both these votes, neither the Ontario nor federal Liberal governments were willing to institute prohibition. Such a rebuff by both levels of government created a great deal of pessimism regarding the ability of the movement to achieve its goals, and it was not until the outbreak of the First World War that the temperance movement was able to again effectively rally supporters. However, by this time the rhetoric employed had shifted away from an emphasis on freedom to a greater focus on sacrifice and national duty. It was within this wartime climate that all provinces other than Quebec ultimately enacted probationary laws.⁴¹

By the 1870s, both liberals and conservatives were prominent members of the temperance movement. While liberals comprised a significant portion of temperance advocates, many of the leading religious figures of the movement were inspired by conservative principles. A prominent conservative within the movement was Methodist Minister Samuel Chown, born in Kingston, Ontario and later a minister at the Carleton Street Methodist Church in Toronto.

Chown's main concern was the protection of the community as a whole. He saw Canadian

40 Peter B. Waite, *Canada 1874-1896: Arduous Destiny* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1971), 88-90.

41 *Ibid*, 149-155.

society as being an independent entity that was more than simply an agglomeration of individuals. In an address on temperance Chown delivered to the Quebec branch of the Dominion Alliance, he emphasized his belief that the community itself could place limitations on the rights of an individual. He stated that “The rights of society are bigger than any individual, and that society has a right to protect itself. This right is inherent in all law.”⁴² He further argues in a sermon on temperance that, “If the liquor traffic does harm to the community, if it brings forth evil fruit, it should, in consistency with good government, be prohibited.”⁴³ For Chown, the government's main priority should be to protect the community and its moral foundations. The welfare of the community was more important than any claim one individual could make against the society as a whole.

Robert Sellar, a Scottish immigrant who was editor of the Quebec Anglo-Protestant paper *The Daily Gleaner* from 1863 until his death in 1919, shared Chown's ideas regarding the place of the individual within the community. In an 1872 lecture given on temperance in his home town of Huntington, Quebec, Sellar stated that “It is an inevitable element in society, that its individual members be ready to waive their abstract right for the good of the whole.”⁴⁴ Both men emphasized the fact that individual rights were subservient to larger goals of community well-being, and rights claims had to be understood within such a framework.

The primacy of the community's well-being was seen as an idea which should shape the state's actions as well. Robert Wallace, a Presbyterian minister and Irish immigrant who preached in churches across Southern Ontario before ending his career in Toronto, emphasized the important role of government in his writings. In a pamphlet on temperance, he wrote,

42 United Church of Canada Archives, Samuel Chown Fonds, 1986.008C, Box 11, File 287, Page 2, “Anniversary Address to Quebec Branch of Dominion Alliance at the American Presbyterian Church of Montreal: How to Win the Battle,” 26 February 1903.

43 United Church of Canada Archives, Samuel Chown Fonds, 1986.008C, Box 5, File 121, Page 11, “Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees - Matt 3:10.”

44 Library and Archives Canada, Robert Sellar Fonds MG 30 D 314 Volume 4, Page 54, “Lecture on Temperance,” 1872.

“Government is an ordinance of God appointed for the good of society, and designed to be a terror to evil, and a protection to the weak and well-doing. The very object of its existence is to protect the community against injury on the part of the unprincipled.”⁴⁵ For Wallace, the government should act to protect order and legislate to promote morality by protecting all members of the community.

While the religious side of the temperance movement was often led by conservatives, many members held liberal beliefs, and the Liberal party was viewed by many activists as the party of prohibition.⁴⁶ Liberals emphasized the limited nature of the restrictions resulting from prohibition and sought to demonstrate how legislation would only limit individual actions when such actions interfered with the rights of others. Toronto Methodist minister J.S. Ross stated in his pamphlet on prohibition that “Legal prohibition does not directly affect any man's personal liberty. No Prohibitory statute has been framed that proposed to treat with a man's personal habits or private appetite.”⁴⁷ Ross sought to demonstrate that members of the temperance movement did not intend for government legislation to interfere with private behavior, and that prohibition was compatible with individual freedom. Ross's idea reflects the liberal notion that state legislation should be targeted at promoting the greatest good for everyone, not limiting individual freedom when it does not harm others. The only time individual liberty could be restricted was when exercising such freedom impinged the freedom of others.

Similarly, the campaign materials of many temperance organizations, regardless of their ideology, relied heavily upon quotes from philosophers and politicians associated with the liberal political tradition. The most prominent examples are those of the Ontario Temperance and Prohibitionary League (OT&PL) and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Both utilized

45 Robert Wallace, *The Lesson or Statistics, or, Facts and Figures on the Temperance Question* (Toronto, S.R. Briggs, 1883), 13.

46 J.A. Stevenson, *Before the Bar: Prohibition Pro and Con* (Toronto, J.M. Dent, 1919), 57.

47 J.S. Ross, *An Appeal for the Immediate Suppression of the Liquor Traffic* (Toronto, William Briggs, 1893), 8.

the writings of English philosopher John Stuart Mill to persuade voters during the 1898 plebiscite campaign. The use of Mill is noteworthy, as for Victorian liberals in Canada and Britain, John Stuart Mill demonstrated the challenges intellectuals faced in adapting liberalism to new conditions of both industrialization and urbanization.⁴⁸ The two organizations relied upon the authority vested in Mill by liberals when they printed on their leaflets a quote which read, “My liberty ends when it begins to involve the possibility of ruin to my neighbour.”⁴⁹ Despite it being unclear whether Mill actually wrote this phrase, he was seen as a figure whose influence could be used to gain broad support. Furthermore, other pamphlets distributed by the OT&PL, as well as the Dominion Alliance, featured quotations from economist Adam Smith, political philosopher and writer John Locke, British Liberal leader and Prime Minister William Gladstone, and British statesman and Liberal Party member Sir William Harcourt.⁵⁰ All of these men were associated by many Victorians with a political tradition that placed a primacy on the values of freedom and liberty.⁵¹

The OT&PL also relied upon quotes from British bishops from both the Church of England and the Catholic Church to further bolster their cause. Temperance supporters sought to portray prohibition as a cause that had support from all major Christian denominations, rather than have it perceived as a cause unique to Evangelicals. In doing so, the temperance movement was responding to critics such as Trinity College Provost Goldwin Smith, who argued that prohibition was simply a means for forcing a particular religious view onto Canadian society. Rather, temperance activists wanted to demonstrate that their movement had broad support and was not a means of using state power to force people to adhere to certain beliefs.⁵²

48 Hall, “Variants of liberalism,” 59.

49 Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, *Living Issues for Living Men: Campaign Leaflets # 9* (Toronto: WCTU, [ca.1889]).

50 Library and Archives Canada, Ontario Temperance & Probationary League Fonds, MG 55/28 No.10, “Campaign Pointers #10 – Famous Philosopher: Some of their Opinions.”

51 Leach, *British Political Ideologies*, 70-85.

52 Library and Archives Canada, Ontario Temperance & Probationary League Fonds, MG 55/28 No.10, “Campaign

Many individual temperance activists also invoked prominent thinkers and politicians associated with liberal thought. For example, Samuel Chown relied upon quotes from John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* when addressing a crowd of Dominion Alliance Supporters in Montreal.⁵³ Similarly, William Burgess invoked William Gladstone when introducing and summarizing his case against providing compensation to alcohol producers.⁵⁴ Despite the conservative ideology of many of these temperance activists and groups, temperance advocates almost exclusively relied on figures who were proponents of freedom in their own writings. In attempting to appeal to liberal values within Canadians political culture, the movement utilized the writings of men who were viewed as synonymous with these values.

The Temperance Movement's Understanding of Freedom

The temperance movement relied on these liberal values, particularly and most importantly freedom, in justifying its political program. Members of the movement argued that prohibition would serve to protect and enhance the freedom all Canadians enjoyed by eliminating what they saw as the greatest threat to citizen's liberty, namely, the production and consumption of alcohol. While the temperance movement did articulate the need for laws to protect the common good, supporters of the movement consistently refused to portray said laws as being in opposition to freedom. Rather, reflecting the view of British political thinker John Locke, temperance activists argued that without a developed system of law there could be no freedom. Locke argued that liberty was the natural state for humans, but he did not advocate for unlimited freedom.⁵⁵ Instead, he stated that the law was essential to enabling freedom. Locke specifically wrote that:

Pointers #7 – English Divines: On the Liquor Question.”

53 United Church of Canada Archives, Page 3, 7, “Anniversary Address to Quebec Branch of Dominion Alliance at the American Presbyterian Church of Montreal: How to Win the Battle.”

54 William Burgess, *The Liquor Traffic and Compensation: A Chapter of the Prohibition Controversy* (Toronto, Rose Publishing Company, 1885), 5,26.

55 John Locke, “Second Treatise on Civil Government,” in *Treatise of Civil Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Edited by Charles L. Sherman (New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1937), 16.

Freedom then is not... a liberty for every one to do what he lists, to live as he pleases, and not to be tyed by any Laws. *But* Freedom of Men under Government, is, to have a standing Rule to live by, common to every one of that Society...⁵⁶

Locke's ideas were also reinforced by eighteenth century French political thinker Baron de Montesquieu. Montesquieu believed that, "Liberty is a right of doing whatever the laws permit."

⁵⁷ Both writers stated that law was essential to freedom, rather than in opposition to it, a perspective that was subsequently adopted by the temperance movement. Prohibition was further presented specifically as a means of enhancing freedom for all, in three specific ways. First, intoxication was seen to remove an individual's ability to reason, and so by preventing drunkenness, prohibition would preserve the rationality of all individuals. Second, the temperance movement argued that its proposed legal limitations on alcohol in fact preserved individual freedom by protecting the rights of those who had chosen to abstain. Finally, because prohibition was reflective of God's will for society, activists argued that such legislation would necessarily protect individual liberty, as they believed that true liberty came from God.

The rhetoric used by the temperance movement was shaped over time by the arguments of anti-prohibitionists who depicted prohibition as an unjust restriction of personal freedom. One man who made such arguments was Goldwin Smith, a prominent critic of prohibition until his death in 1910. Specifically, when critiquing the Scott Act, Smith wrote, "There is just now, in certain quarters, a disposition to renounce liberty as selfish isolation and to invoke the paternal despotism of the state."⁵⁸ For Smith, actions by the state to restrict liberty were comparable to despotism. While he acknowledges that the state had positive intentions, the attempt to force good behaviour with law was unjustified. Horse race journalist E. King Dodds also made a

56 Locke, "Second Treatise on Civil Government," 16.

57 Charles de Secondat Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Trans. Thomas Nugent (New York, MacMillan, 1949), XI, 6.

58 Goldwin Smith, *Temperance vs. Prohibition: An Address on the Scott Act* (Toronto, [n.p.], 1885), 23.

similar argument, writing, “Let every citizen of Canada opposed to fanatical legislation, every elector who values his individual liberty vote against such a miserable law as the Scott Act.”⁵⁹ Like Smith, Dodds saw temperance legislation as a means of restricting individual freedom. By characterizing prohibition as the action of fanatics and despots, both men sought to stigmatize the temperance movement and prevent the passage of prohibitory legislation.

Much of the criticism of the temperance movement stemmed from its appeals for prohibition based on the common good. Certainly, some temperance advocates did use language that argued for preserving order, however, such arguments were not viewed by temperance supporters as irreconcilable with the concept of freedom. Rather, they reflect a different ordering of principles within a hierarchy of concepts, not an outright rejection of one in favour of the other. Clergy members William MacKay and J.S. Ross both echoed the ideas of John Locke when they emphasized that legal restrictions on individuals were necessary to ensure a civilized society. In a pamphlet published in the 1870s, MacKay wrote, “We live not in a savage society but in a civilized community, and in such a state every man's liberty is limited by the good of society.”⁶⁰ Twenty years later, Ross echoed MacKay's statement when he wrote, “Whenever a person becomes a member of society, he must part with some of his natural rights, should he desire to secure social advantages.”⁶¹ Both men's arguments reflect a strain of temperance thinking, informed by Locke, Montesquieu and Blackstone, that emphasized an individual's needed to be governed by a legal regime in order to live in a functioning society and receive the benefits it bestowed.

Temperance supporters argued that without prohibition, the basic rights of all people could not and would not be protected. Specifically, advocates argued that alcohol posed an equal

59 E. King Dodds, *The Scott Act, Reasons Why the Electors Should Vote Against it: Temperance by Act of Parliament, A Farce* (Toronto, [n.p.], 1880), 5.

60 MacKay, *The Text Book for the Campaign*, 17-18.

61 Ross, *An Appeal for the Immediate Suppression of the Liquor Traffic*, 18.

danger to freedom as did the slave trade from Africa to North America, a practice which could be considered the very antithesis of freedom. Methodist preacher and author H.T. Crossley went so far as to state that the use of alcohol was worse than the slave trade, for alcohol enslaved all people, regardless of their race, sex or age. In his pamphlet *Mind Your Own Business*, Crossley stated, “The liquor traffic is infinitely worse than was negro slavery, which Britain and the United States have long since abolished for it enslaves men, women and youth of every colour, both the soul and body and destroys them for time and eternity.”⁶² By equating the liquor traffic with slavery, prohibitionists sought to demonstrate the dangers of the liquor traffic by emphasizing that it, like slavery, completely removed the freedom of those it ensnared. While not physically restraining individuals like slavery did, alcohol did prevent people from being free, and the fact that any restriction existed was a problem the state needed to address. Robert Wallace, another Methodist minister and Irish immigrant who preached for most of his career in Toronto, also compared the harms of the liquor traffic to those of slavery when he wrote, “The liquor traffic inflicts vastly greater injury on mankind than slavery ever did.”⁶³ The state had outlawed slavery earlier in the nineteenth century because it was a harmful and destructive practice. By equating the liquor traffic with slavery, prohibitionists sought to convince the population that the logic behind eliminating slavery applied equally to prohibition. Since both destroyed an individual's freedom, a consistent application of law by the government dictated that alcohol too must be banned.

Members of the temperance movement also sought to respond to the charge that the use of legislation to limit people's actions necessarily restricted freedom. Minister William MacKay attacked the idea that any legal restrictions infringe on a person's freedom. Rather, some

62 Crossley, *Mind your own Business: Or Six Reasons for Abolishing the Bar* (Toronto, Crossley and Hunter, [ca.1890]), 1.

63 Robert Wallace, *The Scott Act and Prohibition: The Hope of Canada* (Toronto, W. Briggs, 1885), 28.

restrictions were viewed as necessary and effectively enhanced freedom. He rhetorically asked, “If it is not inconsistent with the liberty of a free country to prohibit the sale of unwholesome *meat*, by what process of reasoning do our opponents show that it is inconsistent with that liberty to prohibit the sale of unwholesome drink?”⁶⁴ Since critics of prohibition presumably agreed that some laws governing conduct were necessary and acceptable, MacKay sought to persuade them that prohibition was simply an extension of existing legal practices and therefore justifiable using similar logic. Rather than challenging existing values, MacKay wanted to prove that prohibition was in fact consistent with them. Samuel Chown further defended prohibition from critiques by arguing that the law should not be conceived of as an impediment to liberty, but rather, as being inspired by freedom. In a sermon on temperance he argued that “The idea of law interfering with liberty is a misconception of law, it is the breath of liberty which conserves [law].” By building off of the accepted idea that law was necessary for a functioning society, Chown sought to demonstrate that temperance legislation was inspired by freedom, not opposed to it. Like MacKay, Chown wanted to convince Canadians that prohibition was simply a natural extension of existing laws, not a new restriction placed on individual freedom.

Members of the movement persistently argued that their goal was not to restrict the freedom of individuals. In their written works, temperance advocates emphasized that prohibition was not designed to interfere with the freedoms enjoyed by Canadians. Rather, the state would only intervene when there were obvious harms to innocent third parties. Rev. Robert Wallace of the West Church in Toronto argued in his pamphlet on The Scott Act that “If men choose to injure themselves, we cannot help it; all we can do is try and persuade them of the folly of it and to show them a better way. But if they attempt to murder others, we are bound, in obedience to the Divine Law to prevent them, even by the strong arm of the civil law.”⁶⁵ Wallace

64 MacKay, *Textbook for the Campaign*, 17.

65 Wallace, *The Scott Act and Prohibition*, 29.

demonstrates the logic behind the shift in the movement's focus from personal intervention towards a state-centric approach. Alcohol use and abuse was increasingly seen as a problem which affected all members of society and could only be effectively dealt with through legislation. Alexander Sutherland also emphasized the idea that alcohol production and distribution created harms that affected many people beyond the individual drinker. Sutherland stated that “A man may have a certain kind of 'right' to drink what he pleases, especially if it injures no one but himself; but he can have no right to engage in a business which is a grievous injury to large number of his fellow beings.”⁶⁶ Sutherland and Wallace both justified prohibition by emphasizing the fact that it sought to regulate practices which caused harm to other individuals. They were careful to present the purpose of prohibition as being the protection of others, not restrictions on people's choice of whether to consume alcohol or not.

However, such an approach did not mean that they approved of moderate drinking in the privacy of one's own home. Rather, by allowing moderate drinking, weak individuals were still exposed to the temptation of alcohol and the liquor traffic's power remained unbroken. In a sermon from the 1890s on temperance, Methodist minister Alexander Irwin, who was born in 1866 in Invermay, Ontario, and preached in Toronto, argued that “The moderate drinker is in the stockyards leading others to slaughter.”⁶⁷ Samuel Chown also emphasized his opposition to moderate alcohol consumption. In his sermon on the Bible verse Joshua 4:6, “What mean ye by these stones?” he stated, “If moderate drinkers complain that their rights are infringed upon it is for them to devise a plan by which they may have their drink without injury to the common welfare.”⁶⁸ Temperance advocates sought to portray all drinking as harmful, as it allowed alcohol

66 Alexander Sutherland, *A Plea for Total Abstinence* (Toronto, Toronto Christian Total Abstinence Society, [ca.1880]), 2.

67 United Church of Canada, Alexander Irwin Fonds, 1986.151C, Box 2, File 347, Page 6, “The Moderate Drinker.”

68 United Church of Canada Archives, Samuel Chown Fonds, 1986.008C, Box 5, File 123, Page 4, “What Mean Ye By These Stones? Josh 4:6.”

to exist in society. So long as alcohol was present, drunkenness would still exist and the liquor traffic would earn money by exploiting the intemperate.

Temperance arguments broadly reflected the principle that the freedom of some needed to be limited to ensure that the freedom of all was protected. They particularly emphasized the harms of alcohol to innocent third parties. Specifically, prohibitionists argued that women and children, whom they believed were in the majority, should be able to decide to avoid alcohol, and their freedom to abstain needed to be protected by the state. Robert Sellar articulated this concept in an address on temperance when he stated that “The great host of innocent men, women, and children who have drunken relatives also have rights and are in the vast majority.”⁶⁹ William MacKay further expanded Sellar's argument to include all members of society who chose to avoid alcohol. In his book, *The Textbook for the Campaign*, he wrote that “...wives have rights, children have rights, quiet peaceable members of society have rights, who wish to live in security of life and property, have rights, and these rights must be preserved.”⁷⁰ Both MacKay and Sellar demonstrated the connection between rights and freedom. To ensure freedom, individual rights needed to be protected by the state. Thus, although both men recognized that prohibition would restrict the freedom to drink for some, it would protect the rights of others. By doing so, the freedom of any individual to live without the corrupting influence of alcohol would be maintained.

Canadian Parliamentarians who were supporters of temperance argued that the proper role of the legislature was to create laws which protected individuals and mitigated the dangers that alcohol supposedly posed to freedom. Conservative Cabinet Minister George Foster stated throughout his career that he and the other members of the house were elected to protect the rights and freedoms of Canadians. In order to do so they needed to act in the interest of the

69 Library and Archives Canada, Robert Sellar Fond, Page 49, “Lecture on Temperance.”

70 MacKay, *The Textbook for Campaign*, 2.

majority. In a book written in 1884, Foster argued that “It is the height of freedom, and an exalted exercise of the grand principles of British equity, thus to protect that which is dearest and best to the many against the greed or the appetites of the few.”⁷¹ Such an attitude crossed party lines, as Liberal MP George Ross, in a speech to Parliament from 1874, stated, “When the choice is between the best interests of the many and the selfish interests of the few, I stand with the majority.”⁷² As ardent temperance advocates, Foster and Ross both thought that their support of prohibition and their duty to as Parliamentarians to protect citizens' freedom were consistent. By acting to protect the interests of the majority, the freedom of all was protected. Importantly, Foster also equated freedom with equality and argued that the two concepts were often connected, and thus promoting both was an important goal for society and by extension, Parliament.

George Foster and George Ross further emphasized the idea that legislating to protect the freedom of the majority was the right course of action for Parliament. Ross argued that the legislature had an obligation to take into account the rights of all its subjects and to legislate accordingly. In 1874 George Ross presented a petition in favour of prohibition signed by numerous women and minors. When speaking to the House of Commons regarding this petition, he rhetorically asked, “Are they not subjects of Her Majesty as surely as we are? Have they not only inherent rights as citizens but constitutional rights as members of the body politic?”⁷³ For Ross, any legislation passed had to be made with the interests of all subjects of the British Monarchy in mind. Freedom was contingent upon a shared basis of humanity and membership in a common society, and prohibition was presented as legislation which would properly reflect this

71 George Foster, *The Canada Temperance Manual and Prohibitionist's Handbook* (Montreal, Witness Publishing House, 1884), 85.

72 George Ross, *Address Delivered in the House of Commons of Canada, April 29, 1874, on the Motion for Adopting the Second Report of the Select Committee, on Prohibition* (Toronto, [n.p.], 1874), 16.

73 Ross, *Address Delivered in the House of Commons of Canada*, 4.

principle. Foster also argued that the conception of society and the role of Parliament portrayed by Ross was fundamentally correct, and corresponded with the existing understanding of how the institution of Parliament should operate. Foster wrote, “It is not tyrannical or un-British to look after and preserve the 'good of the greater number' even though the gains or appetites of the few be interfered with.”⁷⁴ For both writers, the needs of the majority, regardless of age or sex, were just as valid as those of male, drinking voters, and thus needed to be protected by the state.

To facilitate the freedom of all members of the population, the law needed to ensure said population was composed of rational individuals. However, alcohol consumption and the associated liquor traffic were seen to limit rational thought, as alcohol destroyed the rationality of drinkers. The temperance movement argued that any threat to a person's reasoning abilities necessarily imperilled the freedom of all, drinkers and non-drinkers alike. This view was expressed most directly in the 1898 plebiscite campaign literature published by the Dominion Alliance, where organization president Francis Spence wrote, “Liquor takes away the liberty of a person because he is not of right mind.”⁷⁵ For Spence, in order to be free one has to be able to think clearly, and, implicitly, soberly. George Foster also argued that alcohol posed a threat to the mental faculties of the population. In a speech in support of temperance given in Hamilton, University of New Brunswick professor and Conservative cabinet minister George Foster stated that alcohol “...breaks up the power and intelligence of the people.”⁷⁶ In the same speech he further went on to attack the liquor traffic when he asked rhetorically:

Does the dram shop promote intelligence among the people? If it does, throw your arms around it. Put the majesty of the law around it. Don't let it be harmed. But if the traffic is always the enemy of intelligence, pull it out, tear it down. Where is the consistency in building up an educational system and then

⁷⁴ Foster, *The Canadian Temperance Manual and Prohibitionists Handbook*, 84.

⁷⁵ Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic, *The Liberty Question* (Toronto: Dominion Alliance, 1898), 2.

⁷⁶ George Foster, *Scott Act ; address by Prof. George. E. Foster, of the University of New Brunswick, in Favour of the Act* (Hamilton, [n.p.], 1880), 2.

putting the protection of law around a giant who will tear it down?⁷⁷

Foster and Spence both portrayed alcohol and those who produced and distributed it as a threat to an individual's capacity to reason. Furthermore, by allowing others easy access to liquor, those who sold alcohol were equally as complicit in the destruction of the populace's rationality. Finally, the destruction of reason by alcohol is particularly problematic for these thinkers, as their assumptions regarding the value of freedom depend upon a prototypical, rational human.

Freedom, however, was not only contingent upon rationality when applied to secular questions, but also when dealing with moral issues. By corrupting the ability of people to engage in moral reasoning, their freedom to live as Christians was limited. Methodist minister, writer and publisher H.T. Crossley exemplified this idea in his published works. He stated that "The liquor traffic so blinds and distorts the moral sense of men that they have little or no regard for the truth."⁷⁸ The purpose of promoting freedom was to allow individuals to choose the course of action that brought them the greatest benefit. For Crossley and other religious temperance activists, the best course of action was following God's will. However, in order to do so, individuals needed to be able to understand and interpret the teachings of Christianity by using their moral reasoning to discern the truth. Alcohol, however, clouded an individual's moral senses, thereby preventing people from understanding God's will and acting in accordance with it. Thus the ability of people to properly employ their freedom to their own benefit was imperilled.

While believing that prohibition was essential to protect the individual's ability to discern God's will, members of the temperance movement emphasized that the purpose of prohibition was not to interfere with people's freedom of religion. In doing so, they were responding to critics such as Nova Scotia politician and Conservative cabinet minister Joseph Howe, who

⁷⁷ Foster, *Scott Act*, 3.

⁷⁸ Crossley, *Mind Your Own Business*, 3.

believed that temperance legislation was an attempt to force all Canadians to adhere to the religious beliefs of Evangelical Protestantism. Howe remarked, in a posthumous publication, that temperance legislation was flawed because “The right of private judgement [on religious matters] was denied. The right of one human being to coerce others into belief, as is now sought to coerce them into temperance, has been tried a thousand times and has failed as this attempt will.”⁷⁹ To counter such claims, temperance supporters advanced the idea that the purpose of temperance legislation was not in any way related to forcing notion of Christian virtue onto Canadians. Newspaper editor Robert Sellar stated in 1872 that:

Parliament enacts laws against thieving and other crimes not because of their injurious character in a religious point of view, nor because it seeks to make men virtuous by force but because such crimes are inimical to the well-being of society.⁸⁰

Sellar emphasized that laws restricting an individual's behaviour were not an attempt to force a particular religions beliefs onto Canadian society, but rather an attempt to protect the well-being of the majority. In order to do so, an individual's behaviour which oppressed others had to be limited. Furthermore, the criteria for deciding if an act was harmful was not religious doctrine, but rather secular reason. In the same address, Sellar went on to state that “It is beyond the power of Parliament to enact any law that will make men virtuous; any attempt to such an end, any interference with the conscience of men by the civil power, I would stigmatize as tyranny.”⁸¹ For Sellar, the individual moral beliefs of citizens should not be subject to legislation, and any attempt to do so would be tyrannical and opposed to people's freedom of religion. While it was important for the legislature to create a legal regime which gave people the freedom to pursue moral development, it was not the role of Parliament to force virtue onto any person.

While arguing that prohibition was not an attempt to use Parliament to legislate virtue,

79 Joseph Howe, *In Opposition to Prohibition and Coercion* (Toronto, [n.p.], 1898,) 7.

80 Library and Archives Canada, Robert Sellar Fonds, Page 30-21, “Lecture on Temperance.”

81 Library and Archives Canada, Robert Sellar Fonds, Page 32, “Lecture on Temperance.”

many temperance advocates did argue that temperance legislation would promote freedom because it reflected Christian principles of morality. Many activists argued that Christian morality and freedom were closely entwined, and therefore promoting one would necessarily promote the other. Dominion Alliance President Francis Spence explained the connection between religion and liberty in his campaign writings of 1898, stating that “True religion urges men on to liberty everywhere; and the liberty of the citizen follows the liberty of the Christian.”⁸² For the Dominion Alliance, people who adhered to the teachings of Protestant Christianity would be promoting freedom by living as Christians. Alexander Irwin also emphasized the connection between liberty and Christianity in his sermons when he stated that “...liberty is an individual Christian ideal.”⁸³ Both men argued that there was no contradiction between Christian principles and promoting freedom; both were a product of a moral life. The *Christian Guardian* also emphasized that liberal values were consistent with Christianity. In an editorial from 1878, the editor wrote, “The scheme of love and mercy which Christianity offers is liberal in the sense of being true and honorable alike to God and Man.”⁸⁴ Liberal values and Christianity, the writer argued, are both reflections of the truth and honour God. For all three writers, civic values such as freedom were derived from Christianity and were best promoted by following Christian moral dictates.

Freedom and Political Life

The temperance movement's understanding of freedom within Canadian society also extended to the political life of the dominion. Temperance activists argued that political freedom was exercised through, and protected by, the Canadian Parliament. Parliament was seen as the

82 Dominion Alliance, *The Liberty Question*, 2.

83 United Church of Canada Archives, Alexander Irwin Fonds, 1986.151C, Box 1, File 65, Page 1, “Sermon 129: Christian Liberty and Questionable Amusements, Gal. 5:13.”

84 Editorial Board, “Liberal Thinkers” *Christian Guardian*, 31 July 1878, 241.

arena in which the interests of all citizens were represented, and where ultimately, decisions reflecting the interests of the majority would be rendered through debate, deliberation and voting.

In Victorian Canada, Parliament was seen as the institution which was responsible for protecting individual freedom. Political debate in this context was viewed by many intellectuals as an essential component of freedom. John Stuart Mill, one of the most influential liberal thinkers, emphasized the importance of an unfettered debate. By allowing the freest possible expression of thought, conceptions regarding the ideal way of living would be continually challenged and either re-affirmed through the refutation of opposing arguments, or amended.⁸⁵ Within a Canadian context, Janet Ajzenstat specifically argues that the Fathers of Confederation, when creating the British North America Act, felt no need to create an American-style Bill of Rights, as they considered the creation of a federal, Westminster-style Parliament to be an effective method of safe-guarding citizens' freedom. Rather than having a set document detailing the rights of each individual Canadian, Parliament would be able to assess each individual piece of legislation so as to create the best possible laws.⁸⁶ However, due to the wealth and political influence of brewers and distillers, there was also a concern that Parliament could be corrupted by the influence of big business and its financial clout, and might therefore fail to properly fulfil the role prescribed for it. Money in politics was seen as having the potential to undermine the political freedom of all people to influence legislation, as only some members of society would be able to buy the result they desired. There was a continuing fear throughout the nineteenth century that money would come to replace reason as the basis for decision making. Additionally, it was understood that catering to the interests of a rich elite would serve to reinforce existing

85 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Watts & Co., London, 1930), 18-36.

86 Janet Ajzenstat, *The Canadian Founding: John Locke and Parliament* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queens University Press, 2007), 50-62.

class structures and patterns of authority and hence, this possible outcome was viewed as a serious impediments to the pursuit of freedom.⁸⁷

Without Parliament functioning properly, laws could be passed which restricted the actions of the majority, while protecting the interests of a destructive minority whose activities threatened the freedom and well-being of all. The temperance movement stated that if Parliament was operating correctly, it would pass prohibition, which advocates saw as a move to preserve and promote freedom for the majority. However, the movement was concerned that the money and influence of the liquor traffic was undermining the ability of Canada's legislature to act in the proper manner. Temperance supporters staunchly argued that the liquor industry was imperilling the freedom of all Canadians by making Parliament serve the interests of a monied minority. Temperance advocates stated that such corruption was harmful because it limited the freedom for all Canadians to engage in political debate and deliberation. By protecting Parliament from corruption, prohibition was presented a means of preserving political freedom for all Canadians.

Furthermore, the temperance movement argued that in order for Parliament to protect individual freedom, the rationality of individual voters and Parliamentarians needed to be sheltered from the corrupting influence of alcohol, and the liquor traffic in general. While Parliament had the power to legislate in a manner that would either restrict or enhance freedom, citizens themselves were tasked with electing responsible and effective Parliamentarians. In order to fulfil their role in the political process, voters needed to be able to reason and think critically, and alcohol was portrayed by temperance advocates as an impediment to an individual's ability to do so. Methodist Minister D. Brethour, writing in the 1890s, described the threat intemperance posed to Canada, stating that "Whatever injures character destroys the

⁸⁷ Robert Kelley, *Trans-Atlantic Persuasion: The Liberal-Democratic Mind* (New York, Knopf, 1969), 396.

citizen and makes his exercise of the rights of citizenship dangerous to the state. See the thousands of men who have sold their manhood for a drink of whiskey. Whatever injures citizenship destroys the integrity of the state.”⁸⁸ Brethour argued that within Canada, individual voters had a great deal of power to influence the composition and actions of Parliament, but that this power, if misused, could be dangerous. Conservative MP and cabinet minister George Foster also emphasized his belief that an effective Parliament necessarily depended upon the rationality of individual citizens. When speaking in Hamilton in 1880 he asserted that “The government in these lands rests upon the people.”⁸⁹ Both Brethour and Foster believed that the ability of citizens to rationally elect Parliamentarians and influence the composition of their government could be corrupted by the liquor traffic, thus resulting in an impediment of the freedom of the populace as a whole. If their own judgement was affected by these corrupting influences, then voters might elect MPs who would misuse the power of Parliament in order to pass laws that restricted freedom. A functional Canadian Parliament therefore rested upon the presumption of individual rationality, and any threat to that rationality necessarily imperilled citizen's individual freedom.

Beyond the obligation for individual voters to exercise their own rationality, elected leaders were similarly relied upon to make rational judgements regarding proposed legislation and its effects on individual freedom. However, if their judgement was impaired for any reason, then the Parliamentary system could not function, and instead there arose the possibility that unjust and unnecessarily restrictive laws could be passed. Consequently, the temperance movement argued that alcohol posed a particularly pernicious threat to the functioning of Canada’s political process. The specific potential for harm was emphasized by Samuel Chown in a temperance address given in Toronto in 1896. Chown relayed a long anecdote summarizing the irresponsible behaviour of a member of Parliament during debates in the chamber, concluding

88 D. Brethour, *Liquor Licenses and the Ballot Box: An Argument* (Thorold ON., [n.p.], [ca.1898]), 4.

89 Foster, *Scott Act*, 2.

that this disgraceful obstruction of the legislative process was caused by the “proximity of the sale of liquor to our legislative chamber.”⁹⁰ Just like all other people, politicians were susceptible to the temptations of drink, and Chown felt that forcing Parliamentarians to resist temptation only created conditions which led to a non-functioning legislature, limiting the freedom of all. Rev. Alexander Sutherland also specifically emphasized the danger of intoxicated Parliamentarians—both elected MPs and appointed senators—when he recounted an address given at a temperance lodge meeting. He noted the speaker having said that if the electorate did nothing then they would “Let this evil diffuse itself through the family circle... let the drunkard be honoured with a seat in Parliament and reel into the senate-chamber...and liberty is at an end...”⁹¹ To ensure that laws protected the freedom of all citizens, Parliamentarians needed to be sober and intelligent. Just as alcohol and the liquor traffic undermined the rationality of the electorate, the confounding influence of alcohol over the country’s elected officials meant an increased potential for the passage of laws that could restrict the freedom of all Canadians.

Additionally, to ensure a functioning and productive Parliament, voters and Parliamentarians needed to be able to influence debate and discussion by engaging in rational argumentation. Methodist minister Samuel Chown argued that brewers and distillers eschewed the traditional pathways of democratic negotiation, and instead relied on personal connections and the influence of their money to gain legal protection for their trade. Chown, when addressing the crowd at a demonstration in favour of the Scott Act in 1885, condemned what he referred to as “...the bribery in the part of the traffic.”⁹² In a sermon on temperance given at his church in Toronto, Chown expanded upon the idea that the presence of the liquor traffic obstructed

90 United Church of Canada Archives, Samuel Chown Fonds, 1986.008C, Box 11, File 280, Page 5, “Temperance Address: Horticultural Pavilion, Toronto, 19 April 1896.”

91 Alexander Sutherland, *The Canadian Temperance Reciter* (Toronto, A Miller, 1871), 215.

92 United Church Archives, Samuel Chown Fonds, 1986.008C, Box 11, File 270, Page 3, “Scott Act Demonstration 21 August 1885.”

freedom. He argued that “[The liquor traffic] has therefore ceased to make honest appeals to the electors and have turned with their enticing moneybags to our legislators.”⁹³ Instead of becoming rationally engaged in the political debate, those who stood to benefit from the continued existence of the liquor traffic bribed politicians to allow alcohol interests to dominate the legislative process. This subjugation of individual freedoms further served to undermine the idea of equality among citizens; as MacKay and Spence discuss, the ability of any citizen to influence the democratic process was constrained when those citizens with money could simply buy legislators. Thus, the legalized trade in alcohol meant that although all citizens had the theoretical freedom to vote and lobby Parliament, this freedom was meaningless, as the votes and voices of regular citizens were being overwhelmed by the money of the liquor traffic.

Temperance activists were similarly concerned that the rampant corruption associated with the money and influence of the liquor traffic would compromise Parliament's role in protecting freedom. The money and influence of the liquor traffic was believed to extend from individual ridings all the way to the Prime Minister's Office. Rev. William MacKay sought to demonstrate the influence he believed the liquor traffic had in a pamphlet regarding the 1894 Ontario plebiscite on prohibition. He wrote, “The traffic is a most powerful factor in the political life of this Dominion. It controls the party machinery from the ward meeting to the national convention. Candidates for office cringe and cower in its presence, and party leaders on both sides do it reverence.”⁹⁴ MacKay, without any evidence to support his assertion, believed that the influence of the liquor traffic cut across ideological, geographic and partisan divisions, and affected all Parliamentarians. He also suggested that without concerted action on behalf of temperance advocates, legislation would continue to reflect the interests of alcohol producers and distributors, as it was the industry who currently held the power to influence politics.

93 United Church of Canada Archives, Samuel Chown Fonds, Page 3, “What Mean Ye By These Stones?”

94 William MacKay, *The Plebiscite: How Shall I Vote?* (Woodstock, ON., [n.p.], [ca.1894]), 7.

In the subsequent national campaign for the 1898 Canada-wide plebiscite, Dominion Alliance leader Francis Spence, as well as Rev. Samuel Chown, tried to appeal to a broader base of voters using the spectre of a morally corrupting alcohol lobby that would otherwise increase its power. In the Dominion Alliance pamphlet *The Liberty Question*, Spence identifies alcohol as the biggest threat to Canadian's political freedom. He wrote that the liquor traffic was "...the deadliest venom that poisons politics. It is from the doors of the saloon to the low caucus back to the saloon, that the footsteps are traced that mean the destruction of liberty; for they mean the destruction of all civil dignity and of all the honour of citizenship."⁹⁵ In the minds of Spence and the Dominion Alliance, all Canadians should have the freedom to use their rights as citizens to engage with Parliament and seek to influence legislation, and the most effective means of doing so was through participation in political parties. However, the perceived control that brewers and distillers exercised over these parties meant that a citizen's ability to influence legislation was limited. Despite a lack of direct evidence, Spence sought to link the saloon and the intemperate behaviour which occurred there with the party caucus. If saloon owners and the producers who supplied them gained such great influence over the activities of political parties, then a party's ability to act as an arbiter of public interest and thus as a protector of freedom would be hindered. Activists therefore portrayed themselves as striving to prevent a concentration of political power in the hands of a small number of individuals. For Spence and others, the alternative was an inevitable decline in the significance of citizenship, as there would be less freedom for all (white male) Canadians to meaningfully influence the political process through their votes.⁹⁶

95 Dominion Alliance, *The Liberty Question*, 2.

96 "A History of the Vote in Canada: From a Privilege to a Right," Elections Canada, Accessed March 26, 2012, <http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=his&document=chap2&lang=e#2>.

Temperance and the Freedom to Use One's Property

In addition to the political implications of prohibition, the temperance movement saw the production, sale and consumption of alcohol as being a threat to an individual's free use of their property. An integral component of individual freedom for these activists was the ability for rational individuals to employ their resources in whatever manner they believed would be most beneficial. Laws restricting the use of property were only seen to be justified when a person's free use of their property caused harm to others. As the temperance movement believed that the alcohol industry caused unequivocal harm, they argued that legislation limiting the production and consumption of alcohol did not take away any basic right to the use of one's property, but rather, only limited a privilege granted by the state. Finally, prohibition was presented as a means of enhancing freedom of property by allowing all members of Canadian society greater freedom to use their property to their own benefit.

The philosophies underlying both liberal and conservative ideologies regarding property stemmed from their common Whig origins in the eighteenth century.⁹⁷ Whig ideas regarding the importance of property originated from the writings of seventeenth century British thinker John Locke. He argued that property was a natural right which existed before the state did, meaning that the state was not justified in removing it from an individual.⁹⁸ Eighteenth century British politician and political commentator William Blackstone also echoed Locke's view on the importance of property. In his writings, Blackstone described the right to property as absolute when he wrote, "The third absolute right, inherent in every Englishman, is that of property:"⁹⁹ For Blackstone, property was an inalienable right which could not be removed by the state. The writings of eighteenth century Scottish economist Adam Smith were also extremely influential in

⁹⁷ Leach, *British Political Ideologies*, 74.

⁹⁸ Locke, "*Second Treatise of Government*," V, 25.

⁹⁹ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England Vol.1: The Rights of Persons*, Edited by Wayne Morris (London, Routledge-Cavendish, 2001), XVI, 3.

shaping ideas regarding property. Due to the rational nature of humanity, people should be allowed to acquire assets and subsequently manage them, with the assumption that they would do so in a manner most beneficial to themselves.¹⁰⁰ Adopting the views of these writers, the emphasis the temperance movement placed on protecting the free use of property was reflective of the importance of property in nineteenth century Canadian political discourse. Both liberals and conservatives believed that preserving the free use of property was an essential component of freedom. By the late nineteenth century, liberals specifically viewed the preservation of private property as important, because it was through the pursuit of property that key personal characteristics, such as rationality, were formed.¹⁰¹ Victorian conservatives also closely linked property with freedom, and argued that without the free use of property, the historic rights enjoyed by individuals would be diminished.¹⁰² While subsequent scholars have disagreed with the primacy placed upon property within liberalism and conservatism in Victorian society, all have recognized that protection of property was seen as fundamental to preserving freedom.¹⁰³ Throughout temperance rhetoric, the movement demonstrated a desire to appeal to the concepts regarding property and freedom to justify their proposals. Thus, while prohibition was attacked as being opposed to classical notions of economics and freedom, the movement sought to demonstrate how prohibition was in fact a consistent application of these principles to the situation in late nineteenth century Canada.

While prohibitionists certainly did accept that banning alcohol would necessitate

100 Adam Smith, *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1976,) IV, 2.

101 McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework," 620.

102 Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 8-9

103 Both Robert Kelley in *The Transatlantic Persuasion: The Liberal Democratic Mind in the Age of Gladstone* and Eugenio Biagini in *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone* have argued that property was of less concern to Victorian liberals than previously understood, both recognize its importance, just not its dominance, over other values. Aughley, Jones and Riches in *The Conservative Political Tradition in Britain and the United States* argue that many conservatives saw property as being limited by rights and duties, however despite emphasizing the greater limitations to property, they still recognize its importance within conservative thought.

legislation controlling an individual's ability to use his own property, they felt that such restrictions were philosophically justifiable and supported by the precedent of existing limitations. In a collection of temperance speeches transcribed and edited by Rev. Alexander Sutherland, a speaker emphasized that all freedom came with corresponding restrictions. Sutherland recorded the speaker as stating that “We shall be told, perhaps, that this is a free country, and that the proposed law is a restraint on freedom. Free it is; but not for everything. It is not free to sell lottery tickets or to set up nuisances or to counterfeit the coin or to open houses avowedly of infamy.”¹⁰⁴ The speaker's remarks reflected the idea that even a free society necessarily controlled some uses of property. Restrictions on business were legitimate if it could be demonstrated that such activities harmed the material or moral character of the society. If legislation was seen to prevent economic harms (minting fake coins) or moral harms (prostitution), then the temperance movement argued that it could not be a violation of individual freedom. The speaker represents the temperance movement’s view that only when the law prevented beneficial uses of property could it be considered a restriction on freedom. Promoting an economically efficient and morally upright society by legislating the use of property was presented as a means of promoting freedom, not restricting it.

The existence of a licensing system for the sale and consumption of alcohol was one of the main justifications used by the temperance movement to support their idea that their proposed restrictions were not, in fact, violations of an individual’s freedom. The ability to produce and distribute alcohol was portrayed as being allowed only as a result of state licensing, not as being a natural freedom enjoyed by all. Methodist reverend and author H.T. Crossley reflected this argument in his book, *Mind your own Business: Or Six Reasons for Abolishing the Bar*. He stated that since only a small number of men were licensed to sell alcohol, the ability to

104 Sutherland, *Canadian Temperance Reciter*, 227.

sell liquor was not a right accorded to all citizens, but rather a privilege enjoyed by a few. He wrote that, “In a free country why should the one be licensed to that which the 999 of us are prohibited from doing? Let the 999, believing in British fair play, assert our right to prohibit the other fellow, and so we will have total prohibition.”¹⁰⁵ Crossley attempted to demonstrate that prohibition would simply be a logical extension of existing laws, as society had already accepted the principle of restricting the ability of a few to use their property in order to benefit the greater number of people. He also tried to emphasize the importance of equality before the law in preserving economic freedom. Laws governing commerce needed to be applied equally to all businesses. While each business could earn vastly different sums of money, they shouldn't be able to do so by exploiting a market others had no access to. Especially when exploiting that market resulted in the harms brought about by alcohol, it was imperative that the state limit these few businesses so as to limit their ability to profit from harming others. Simply banning the sale of alcohol completely would better reflect British ideas of equality by ensuring that the laws governing businesses applied equally to all.

The temperance movement not only argued that prohibition would not interfere with people's freedom to use their property, they also sought to emphasize how temperance legislation would actually allow greater freedom for all, businessmen and workers alike. They argued that the use of alcohol hindered economic activity, which limited opportunities for people to use their property for their own gain. The production of hard liquor was presented as a particularly egregious waste of valuable resources that could otherwise be more productively used in other endeavours. Rev. William MacKay believed that society's use of alcohol created depressed economic conditions. In a pamphlet written in 1893, he stated that “Not over-production but under-consumption is the principal cause of dull times and stagnation of business. And this

¹⁰⁵ Crossley, *Mind your own Business*, 4.

under-consumption exists because of the waste in strong drink.”¹⁰⁶ While honest businessmen were producing the materials necessary for society to function, the money that should have been spent on these beneficial products was instead being wasted on alcohol. Temperance advocates such as Samuel Chown defended the principle put forward by MacKay by arguing that even though the production of alcohol was an economic transaction, not all economic activity was equally beneficial. In a sermon on temperance, Chown emphasized this point by stating that “Every time ten dollars is spent at the saloon instead of at the merchants, the farmers and manufacturers are getting four dollars less than if the money went for furniture and carpets.”¹⁰⁷ Chown and MacKay both argued that there were direct economic harms from alcohol as businesses were deprived of revenue, and also that there were indirect harms as the economic inefficiencies inherent in 'the liquor traffic' caused all people to be poorer. In order to preserve the free use of property, people had to have a maximum number of options available to them. However, the decrease in prosperity caused by alcohol limited possible opportunities for the profitable use of one's property and thereby limited individual's freedom.

Many of the temperance activists made similar arguments as Chown and MacKay. In doing so, they specifically emphasized the infringement on business owners' free use of property caused by alcohol. Temperance writers discuss how those who ran non-alcohol related commercial enterprises were prevented from achieving maximal benefit from the use of their property. When speaking in the House of Commons in 1874, Liberal MP and future Premier of Ontario George Ross opined that alcohol use resulted in an unproductive labour force. He stated that “The real source of Canadian wealth is the brain and muscle of the people of this country, and the traffic destroys the brain and depreciates the muscle.”¹⁰⁸ Like Ross, newspaper publisher

106 William MacKay, *The Crisis: To the Work! To the Work!* (Toronto, [n.p.], 1893), 12.

107 United Church of Canada Archives, Samuel Chown Fonds, Page 6, “Who Slew All These? II Kings 10:9.”

108 Ross, *Address delivered in the House of Commons of Canada*, 13.

and editor Robert Sellar also sought to demonstrate the loss incurred to business owners due to intemperance. In his 1872 address on temperance, Sellar argued that “[In Canada] an industrious sober man is robbed of the interests of his capital, robbed of the profits of his work...by whiskey.”¹⁰⁹ Sellar and Ross both argued that those who made proper use of their capital by investing it in productive activities should be rewarded for their contributions to the economy. Instead, they did not see a proper return on their investment because the workforce they relied upon to produce goods or provide services was rendered ineffective by alcohol. Hence, the possible avenues for investment of capital were seriously limited, thus constraining the ability of businessmen to use their property to their own benefit.

Temperance was also portrayed by its supporters as having the potential to increase freedom for wage earners as well as capitalists. In order to attract working class support, temperance advocates emphasized these positive consequences to their working class audiences. In its campaign material, the Dominion Alliance sought to connect the limitations alcohol placed on business owners’ property to the well-being of their employees. In *The Final Appeal*, the Dominion Alliance stated that “The great amount of capital invested in the liquor traffic employs comparatively few men and is thus kept out of other investments in which it would employ a great many people, pay vastly more wages and benefit the people.”¹¹⁰ When money was invested in the production of alcohol and not other, more beneficial goods, not only was the final product harmful, but fewer people were employed in manufacturing alcohol than in other comparable industries, and those who were received lower wages. If prohibition was enacted, the funds invested in distilling and brewing would be redirected to other industries, and much of that money would be paid to workers in the form of wages. Greater job security and higher rates of

109 Library and Archives Canada, Robert Sellar Fonds, Page 64, “Lecture on Temperance.”

110 The Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic, *The Final Appeal* (Toronto, Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic, 1898), 3.

pay would provide the working class with an increased ability to interact with the market, giving them a greater range of choice with regards to how to live their life. Allowing each individual, regardless of their social status, to decide what course of action would be most beneficial to them served to promote individual freedom. Overall, the temperance movement argued that by eliminating the choice to consume alcohol, prohibition was providing a greater degree of overall choices, and thus freedom, for working class people.

Other activists sought to emphasize the dramatic effects of alcohol on individual economics. Poverty and poor living conditions were blamed on alcohol use, and it was argued that such negative aspects of society could be decreased through prohibition. George Ross, an MP in Alexander Mackenzie's government, put forward such ideas during his testimony in the Royal Commission of the Liquor Traffic. While testifying in 1894, Ross stated that “Poverty and degradation followed the use of intoxicating liquor to excess and I think it is our duty, legislatively in all events, to impose such restrictions upon the traffic as we can.”¹¹¹ Ross believed that the harms from liquor were easily observable, and necessitated legislative action so as to provide individuals with greater economic freedom. By protecting people from their base desires, temperance advocates argued that the legislature would be fulfilling its duty and allowing citizens to be freer by granting them a greater ability to interact with the market.

Beyond restricting the ability of people to use their property for personal benefit, members of the temperance movement also argued that wealthy property owners' freedom was limited by the necessity of collecting taxes to provide welfare for those driven to destitution by 'the liquor traffic.' In their campaign literature for the 1898 national plebiscite on prohibition, the Ontario Temperance and Probationary League (OT&PL) issued a series of pamphlets appealing to different sections of society. In their publication targeted at business owners, the group stated

111 George Ross, “Testimony of the Hon. George W. Ross,” in Canada, *Royal Commission on the Liquor Traffic Volume 4: Ontario* (Ottawa, SE. Dawson, 1895), 811.

that “To-day you lose the business that the liquor traffic gathers in: and you are taxed to support the paupers and the criminals that the liquor traffic makes.”¹¹² The OT&PL publications also emphasized that the poverty caused by alcohol abuse was a further drain on the resources of both private charities and the state coffers. In their appeal to fellow citizens, they argued, “Families in poverty because of drink have to be supported by the charity and the heavy taxation of those who are better off. We all suffer. We have to do without what we would buy if this terrible waste did not keep us so poor.”¹¹³ In order to convince business leaders and wealthy Canadians to support prohibition, the OT&PL relied on what they saw as an explicit threat to their property: direct taxation. If alcohol use continued unabated, then the financial consequences would have to be distributed amongst all people. No longer was the individual responsible for his or her own actions, but due to the nature of alcohol abuse, the costs would have to be borne by all. Those in a position to pay, namely business owners and capitalists, would be forced to contribute a greater proportion of their own earnings to cover the cost of caring for those impoverished by alcohol. Hence the long-term limitations to property use would be equal to the short-term loss of business.

The temperance movement attracted influential critics, who insisted that prohibition itself might well lead to the direct taxation of Canadian citizens. Some of the strongest critiques of prohibition came from people such as the Provost of Trinity College Goldwin Smith; Nova Scotia politician and newspaper editor Joseph Howe; and Queen's University professor George Grant. These men argued that the loss of tariff and sales tax revenue related to alcohol would force the state to rely on direct taxation to make up the budget shortfall.¹¹⁴ Temperance advocates

112 Library and Archives Canada, Ontario Temperance & Probationary League Fonds, MG 55/28 No.10, “Campaign Pointers #14 – Businessmen.”

113 Library and Archives Canada, Ontario Temperance & Probationary League Fonds, MG 55/28 No.10, “Campaign Pointers #15 – Fellow Citizens.”

114 For statements by all these men see Joseph Howe ed. *In Opposition to Prohibition and Coercion*, (Toronto, [n.p.], 1898), 7-26.

endeavored to convince the populace that these concerns were unfounded, and to position themselves not only as staunchly anti-alcohol, but also anti-tax. Reverend Samuel Chown responded to detractor's claims within the written text of a sermon on temperance, where he spent over two pages discussing how complete prohibition would not result in reliance on direct taxation as a means of compensating for the lost revenue from liquor tariffs and excise taxes.¹¹⁵ Chown's comments demonstrate his desire to associate alcohol use, not prohibition, with taxation. Both sides of the debate wanted to portray themselves as being the ultimate protectors of private property by being the ones truly against taxation. Direct taxation was an unjustified limitation on property, and Chown wanted to convince Canadians that the only way to avoid such an infringement on their freedom was to support prohibition.

Conclusion

Overall, the temperance movement relied on a discourse of freedom to justify its support of prohibition. Its arguments in favour of temperance legislation were shaped through dialogue with its opponents, as both sides in the debate sought to persuade the Canadian public by appealing to the values dominant in the political culture of late Victorian Canada. While some aspects of temperance rhetoric did emphasize the importance of community well-being and order, temperance activists did not see such concepts as being contrary to freedom, arguing instead that prohibition was entirely consistent with individual freedom. In fact, they insisted, not only would prohibition serve to protect an individual's pre-existing freedom, but by preserving rationality and moral reason, it would actually enhance everyone's freedom. Furthermore, by limiting the power of the liquor traffic, the ability for producers and distributors of alcohol to corrupt the political system was limited and the ability for all citizens to partake in the political

¹¹⁵ United Church of Canada Archives, Samuel Chown Fonds, 1986.008C, Box 5, File 122, Pages 7-8, "Shall the Throne of Iniquity have Fellowship with Thee? Psa 94:20" [ca.1890].

system was protected. Finally, prohibition was presented as a means of promoting the free use of property for all, businessmen and labourers alike.

Despite setbacks and the ultimate failure to have the results of either 1894 Ontario Plebiscite or the 1898 national plebiscite recognized by the Ontario or Canadian Parliaments, the temperance movement was uniquely powerful and successful. The WCTU was the largest non-partisan political association in the country, and the movement did manage to force one of only three national plebiscites/referendums in Canada history.¹¹⁶ Consequently, it is particularly revealing to examine the movement's appeals to freedom to justify its political agenda, and to understand what its rhetoric and its impact demonstrates about Canadian political culture.

While Ian McKay has argued that property was the dominant value within Canada during the height of the liberal order, an analysis of the temperance movement's rhetoric serves to complicate his assertion. While the movement did discuss the importance of protecting private property, it also focused on the importance of protecting freedom. Even the discussion regarding property often sought to demonstrate the benefits of prohibition for all classes, not just capitalists. For prohibitionists, protecting property was about promoting the free use of property for all people, and working men's wages were equated with the capital investments of business owners. Furthermore, the movement framed its arguments regarding property and prohibition through a lens of freedom. Prohibitionists' strong emphasis on freedom demonstrates that the concept had equal currency in Victorian Canada as did property and, for an increasingly enfranchised working class, possibly a greater appeal than bourgeois notions of property.

As well, the rhetoric employed by the movement reflects a tendency within Canada for liberal values to be adopted and applied in a communitarian manner. Robert A.J. McDonald has argued that there was a tendency within Canada for liberal values to be interpreted in a

¹¹⁶ The other two being referendums on national conscription in 1942 and The Charlottetown Accord in 1992.

collectivist fashion, with a strong emphasis being placed on democracy and community in addition to liberty.¹¹⁷ Often such an adoption also entailed an increasingly vocal criticism of the Canadian political system, as was certainly the case with the temperance movement. Much of their rhetoric focused on how Parliament had been rendered unrepresentative and dysfunctional by corruption. While nonetheless demonstrating a strong belief in the fundamental basis of the institution, the temperance movement expressed a strong desire to “clean up” politics. When temperance supporters applied the principles of freedom and political equality to analyze the actions of Parliament in the late nineteenth century, its efficacy was often found wanting. The temperance movement, however, would not be the last to make such a claim about the failings of Parliament. Much of the political rhetoric of the movement was later adopted by groups like the Farmers Movement in Alberta and Ontario, who, instead of criticizing the liquor traffic, turned their attention to the banks and trusts of Central Canada. As well, the Progressive Party in the early 1920s used similar rhetoric to criticize the monopoly power of the railways. Taking an even more radical position, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation of the 1930s used the principles of freedom and equality to attack the capitalist system as a whole. While these later movements were associated with the left wing of the political spectrum, the ideas they adopted had also been integral parts of temperance rhetoric, a movement seen to be right wing. The fact that values such as freedom could be applied by such diverse movements raises questions regarding the differences between right and left, liberal and conservative, within Canadian politics at the turn of the twentieth century. While temperance as a political cause has disappeared from Canadian politics, the rhetoric still remains, even if no self-respecting activist will again invoke the phrase “tears of blood”.

117 Robert McDonald, “Variants of Liberalism and the Liberal Order Framework in British Columbia.” in Jean-Francois Constant and Michel Ducharme (ed.) *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 331-332.

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