

Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform



The Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform (WONPR) was founded in 1929 by a group of women led by Pauline Sabin, a wealthy and politically-connected socialite. Within a year, the organization attracted over 100,000 members, and by 1932 it had 600,000 members -- more even than the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment. The WONPR was especially aggravating to Prohibitionists because it demonstrated that women, who were traditionally thought to advocate Prohibition, could not be counted on for support.

Excerpts from the WONPR Convention, Cleveland, Ohio, April 23-24, 1930.

1. We are convinced that National Prohibition is fundamentally wrong. (a) Because it conflicts with the basic American principle of local home rule and destroys the balance established by the framers of our government, between powers delegated to the federal authority and those reserved to the sovereign states or to the people themselves. (b) And because its attempt to impose total abstinence by national government fiat ignores the truth that no law will be respected or can be enforced unless supported by the moral sense and common conscience of the communities affected by it.

2. We are convinced that National Prohibition, wrong in principle, has been equally disastrous in consequences in the hypocrisy, the corruption, the tragic loss of life and the appalling increase of crime which have attended the abortive attempt to enforce it; in the shocking effect it has had upon the youth of the nation; in the impairment of constitutional guarantees of individual rights; in the weakening of the sense of solidarity between the citizen and the government which is the only sure basis of a country's strength.

[quoted in David E. Kyvig, *Repealing National Prohibition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 123]



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