

## Title:

More about the Prohibition

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## Summary:

Prohibition - the legal enforcement of abstinence from alcoholic beverages - is not an American invention.

## Keywords:

## Article Body:

Prohibition - the legal enforcement of abstinence from alcoholic beverages - is not an American invention. The USA was preceded by the Aztecs, ancient China, feudal Japan, the Polynesian islands, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Russia, Canada, and India, and all the Muslim countries (where prohibition is still the law). All secular prohibition laws have been repealed within 10-20 years from their introduction.

Some prohibition laws - Finland is an example - were the result of lobbying by breweries. These enterprises wanted to divert demand from stiff drinks to the softer varieties of alcohol - for instance, to beer.

Prohibition in the USA was not sudden. Temperance movements flourished there in the 1820s - a century before the passage of the Constitutional Amendment. By that time, pure alcohol consumption per person reached 27 liters (about 7 gallons). Massachusetts had a prohibition law between 1838 and 1840. Maine followed in 1846-1851 and then was imitated by a host of other states. Alcohol consumption per head dropped to 8 liters (2 gallons).

The Anti-Saloon League spearheaded another successful drive to prohibit the manufacture and sale of liquor between 1906-13. It pointed to the existence of well over 100,000 drinking, prostitution, and gambling establishments (saloons) throughout the USA in 1870. In 1873 women across the country - the true victims of drunken men - marched from church services to saloons and demanded their closure (The Women's War).

The USA had a Wartime Prohibition Law during World War I (intended to conserve grain stocks). According to the Encyclopedia Britannica:

"By January 1920 prohibition was already in effect in 33 states covering 63 percent of the total population. In 1917 the resolution for submission of the Prohibition Amendment to the states received the necessary two-thirds vote in Congress; the (eighteenth) amendment was ratified on Jan. 29, 1919, and went into effect on Jan. 29, 1920. On Oct. 28, 1919, the National Prohibition Act, popularly known as the Volstead Act (after its promoter, Congressman Andrew J. Volstead), was enacted, providing enforcement guidelines."

So the Volstead Act was not about the Prohibition. It merely dealt with the enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment. It was actually vetoed by President Wilson - but to no avail. It defined "intoxicating drink" as any libation containing more than 0.5% (that's HALF a percent) of alcohol. This draconic threshold was amended to 3.2%, just before the Amendment was repealed.

Prohibition inevitably brought on bootlegging. Criminals like Al Capone (see our First Book of Factoids) made 60 million US dollars a year in the 1920s. In 1933, Utah was the 36th state to ratify the Twenty-first Amendment to the Constitution to repeal the Eighteenth. But prohibition continued to be enforced in a few states until 1966!

Contrary to distorted media reports, Prohibition was very popular. By 1934, annual alcohol consumption per capita slumped to 0.97 gallons (3.7 liters). Though the crime rate during this period did rise - it did not explode spectacularly. Actually, the Prohibition Party, established in 1869, still exists and fields candidates in most states of the Union.

The Amendment was repealed on two grounds:

I. Economic - Prohibition was said to inhibit economic activity and job creation during the Depression era.

II. Legal - The sporadic and arbitrary enforcement of the law threatened individual liberties and the integrity of police forces and the courts, claimed the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment (AAPA).

Alcohol consumption never really recovered. In 1975, it stood at 10.2 liters (2.7 gallons) per head.

Amendment [XVIII] [1919]{15} Section 1--After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage

purposes is hereby prohibited.

Section 2--The Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Section 3--This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.

Amendment [XXI] [1933] Section 1--The eighteenth article of amendment to the Constitution of the United States is hereby repealed.

Section 2--The transportation or importation into any State, Territory, or possession of the United States for delivery or use therein of intoxicating liquors, in violation of the laws thereof, is hereby prohibited.

Section 3--This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by conventions in the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.