Wets, Drys, and Hypocrites: Women and the Repeal of Prohibition

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**WONPR and WCTU**

- WONPR: Women's Organization for National Prohibition Repeal
- WCTU: Women's Christian Temperance Movement
- The main concern for both sides: the safety and well-being of Americans,
- The WONPR advocated for the repeal of Prohibition
- WCTU sought better enforcement of Prohibition.
- Women flocked to the repeal movement in the 1920s and 1930s because Prohibition failed to live up to the expectations set by temperance groups prior to the ratification of the 18th Amendment.

**WONPR Background**

- Founded by Pauline Morton Sabin in 1929
- Morton was active within the Republican party before leaving to form the WONPR
- Was originally a supporter of Prohibition then saw how it was enacted
- For women who felt like the WCTU did not represent them
- Had members from all political parties and from different social and economic classes
- did not affiliate their organization with a political party or any certain type of woman.
- National membership of 450,000 with members in 38 states by 1932

**WONPR and WCTU**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Support</th>
<th>WONPR</th>
<th>WCTU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanted to Reduce Crime Rates associated with bootlegging</td>
<td>Wanted to reduce crime rates associated with drunkeness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for Safety of the family</td>
<td>Concern for mothers and children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangers of Speakeasies</td>
<td>Uphold Christian values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanted to enjoy drinking alcohol legally</td>
<td>Drinking alcohol is unhealthy and can lead to addiction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Promotion Tactics used by both organizations**

- Posters and print advertisements
- Frequent chapter meetings
- National Conferences of members

**Promotion Tactics used by WONPR**

- National Polling of political candidates
- Public protests and demonstrations
- Subcommittees to gain support of certain demographics
- single focus of the organization

**Promotion Tactics used by WCTU**

- Focused on religious appeal
- History of success

**Attacks against WCTU from WONPR**

- WONPR upset with their boycotting tactics, felt their boycotts of wet business owners limited free speech
- WONPR saw them as out of touch due to the fact the WCTU believed prohibition could still work
- Didn’t like how the WCTU claimed to represent all women

**Attacks against WONPR from WCTU**

- Saw them as sinful
- Felt their reasons for wanting repeal were selfish
- tied Drinking to other immoral activities like being sexually promiscuous.
- tied the concept of Temperance to good motherhood and Republican Motherhood

**Conclusions**

- The 21st amendment was passed in 1933 by state ratifying conventions.
- The WONPR ended soon after the passage of the 21st amendment.
- WCTU continued to lobby for individual temperance.
- As they exercised their political freedom, women of the WONPR and the WCTU were able to influence the American political system.

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**Acknowledgments**

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