



## Anti-Alcohol Industry 101: Overview of the Anti-Alcohol Industry in the U.S.

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Most people are completely unaware that an enormous and well-funded anti-alcohol industry exists in the U.S. It consists of a large number of interrelated organizations, groups and individual activists who are opposed in some way to alcohol and its consumption. Some want to return to Prohibition whereas most want to continuously reduce average consumption to lower and lower levels: "Less alcohol is always too much alcohol."

A major strategy in reducing alcohol consumption is to make alcoholic beverages more expensive and more difficult to obtain. "Availability is the mother of abuse" insists Joe Califano of the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA). <sup>1</sup>

The anti-alcohol industry and its supporters tend to assume that:

- The substance of alcohol is, in and of itself, the cause of all drinking problems.
- The availability of alcohol causes people to drink.
- The amount of alcohol consumed (rather than the speed with which it is consumed, the purpose for which it is consumed, the social environment in which it is consumed, etc.) determines the extent of drinking problems.
- Alcohol education should focus on the problems that excessive alcohol consumption can cause and should promote abstinence.

These beliefs lead those in the anti-alcohol industry to call for such measures as:

- Increasing taxes on alcohol beverages
- Limiting or reducing the number of sales outlets
- Limiting the alcohol content of drinks
- Prohibiting or censoring alcohol advertising
- Requiring warning messages with all alcohol advertisements
- Expanding the warning labels on all alcohol beverage containers
- Expanding the display of warning signs where alcohol is sold
- Limiting the days or hours during which alcohol beverages can be sold
- Increasing server liability for any problems that occur after alcohol consumption

- Limiting the sale of alcohol beverages to people of specific ages
- Decreasing the legal blood alcohol content (BAC) level for driving vehicles or other activities
- Eliminating the tax deductibility of alcohol beverages as a business expense.

The goal of the anti-alcohol industry as a whole is to establish cultural rather than strictly legal prohibition by making alcohol beverages less socially acceptable and marginalizing those who drink, no matter how moderately. Like the anti-alcohol activists who preceded them, the neo-prohibitionists of today (often called reduction-of-consumptionists, neo-drys, or neo-Victorians) often ignore the important distinction between the use and the abuse of alcohol. For the most part, they tend to view it as all bad.

A few of the major organizations and leaders of the anti-alcohol industry are identified here:

### **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation attempts to stigmatize alcohol, de-legitimize drinking, and marginalize drinkers. It spent over a quarter of a billion dollars (\$265,000,00.00) in just four years alone further developing and funding a nation-wide network of anti-alcohol organizations, centers, activist leaders, and opinion writers to achieve its long-term goal.

An in-depth report, *Behind the Neo-Prohibition Campaign: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*, demonstrates that "nearly every study disparaging adult beverages in the mass media, every legislative push to limit alcohol marketing or increase taxes, and every supposedly 'grassroots' anti-alcohol organization" is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). <sup>2</sup>

More information on the RWJF is found at [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Financier of Temperance](#)

### **Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA)**

CASA has a long record of producing highly questionable papers about alcohol that are later discredited. For example, a researcher "examined some of the references in (a) CASA paper and found the conclusions in the articles to be shockingly different from the way CASA depicted them." Report after report has been exposed as lacking credibility, leading *The Washington Times* to observe that CASA has a "proven disdain for the facts." <sup>3</sup> Understandably, scholars have a lot of negative things to say about the Center on Alcohol and Substance Abuse, "some of it

unprintable" observed Christopher Shea in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.<sup>4</sup>

More information about the CASA is found at [The Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse: A Center for Alcohol Statistics Abuse?](#)

### **Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY)**

The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) was set up and funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The stated mission of CAMY is to monitor "the marketing practices of the alcohol industry to focus attention and action on industry practices that jeopardize the health and safety of America's youth." It explains that "reducing high rates of underage alcohol consumption and the suffering caused by alcohol-related injuries and death among young people" requires limiting the appeal of alcohol beverages to young people and their access to them." In its own words CAMY seeks to create "public outrage" against alcohol advertising to achieve its objective.<sup>5</sup>

CAMY begins with an assumption which it then sets out to prove. In doing so it is clearly an activist group rather than an objective scientific organization seeking to learn the truth. Judging from CAMY's statements and activities to date, it's doubtful if the Center would ever to find any alcohol advertising or any marketing practice to be acceptable. This may be an example of the Burger King phenomenon: Pew and Johnson pay for the research and "have it their way."

Learn more about CAMY at [Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth : Its Objectives and Methods](#)

### **Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)**

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) is not a science center but, by its own admission, a public advocacy action center. CSPI demonstrates a continuing pattern of presenting alarming but erroneous and misleading statistics to promote its agenda. A major goal of CSPI is reducing the alcohol consumption of adults, even among moderate drinkers. A full-time director, George Hacker, and his staff work toward this goal through the group's Alcohol Policies Project.

Both CSPI and its Alcohol Policies Project are dedicated to "preventing alcohol" rather than "preventing the abuse of alcohol." They promote prohibitionist and neo-prohibitionist goals rather than public health goals. That's all the difference in the

world.

"CSPI is knowingly engaging in deceptive practices as they attempt to persuade the public and the media" and "if CSPI's efforts were an elementary school science project, young (Michael) Jacobson would have received an 'F' and would have found himself in the principal's office for cheating." <sup>6</sup>

To learn more about the activities of the CSPI visit [Center for Science in the Public Interest](#)

### **Coalition for the Prevention of Alcohol Problems**

The Coalition for the Prevention of Alcohol Problems vigorously promotes a temperance agenda and should more accurately be called the Coalition for the Prevention of Alcohol. It is a coalition of temperance groups co-chaired by George Hacker of the Alcohol Policies Project and Stacia Murphy of the National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence (NCADD). <sup>7</sup>

Members of the Coalition include the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon Church), the American Council on Alcohol Problems (earlier called the Anti-Saloon League), the Temperance League of Kentucky, the General Board of Global Ministries, and the Illinois Church Action on Alcohol Problems.

The Coalition's Steering Committee meets weekly in Washington to set its agenda and plan its political strategy. For more about the Coalition's organizer and leader visit [George Hacker of CSPI](#)

### **Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)**

Mothers Against Drunk Driving was created in 1980 to reduce drunk driving and the death and injury that it can cause. Over time, temperance forces have gained control of MADD and it has largely become anti-alcohol rather than anti-drunk driving. Candy Lightner, the founder and first President of MADD says "it has become far more neo-prohibitionist than I ever wanted or envisioned." She explains "I didn't start MADD to deal with alcohol. I started MADD to deal with the issue of drunk driving."

<sup>8</sup> More about MADD is located at: [Mothers Against Drunk Driving: A Crash Course in MADD](#)

### **Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AMA)**

The American Medical Association (AMA) first passed a resolution supporting abstinence from alcohol even before National Prohibition was imposed in 1920 and continues to support it to

this day.

Although the moderate consumption of alcohol is associated with better health and greater longevity than either abstinence or the abuse of alcohol,<sup>9</sup> the AMA remains a temperance organization. This may be because so many physicians see the consequences of alcohol abuse, although the vast majority of people drink in moderation that's beneficial to their good health.

For whatever reason, the AMA promotes a temperance agenda. It describes its Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse as "a national program office of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation."<sup>10</sup> Not only did the temperance-oriented Robert Wood Johnson Foundation establish the AMA's office with an initial \$5 million dollar grant but also it has poured many millions of dollars more into funding its activities.

For more about the Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs and other AMA temperance activities, visit [American Medical Association: Abstinence Motivated Agenda](#)

### **Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP)**

The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) is a massively-funded federal agency that aggressively promotes the reduction-of-consumption or neo-prohibition approach to reduce alcohol problems: "Less alcohol is always still too much alcohol."

Although it is a federal agency supported by taxpayers, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention has long been guilty of illegally misappropriating taxpayer money for lobbying, of censoring citizens with whom it disagrees, of self-servingly distorting statistics, and of using its power to abuse innocent Americans.<sup>11</sup>

Some observers think CSAP should be abolished. Learn more about the agency at [Center for Substance Abuse Prevention](#)

### **Marin Institute**

The Marin Institute for the Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems is a massively endowed organization that aggressively promotes reduction of consumption alcohol policies, equates alcohol with illegal drugs, and repeatedly reports as being accurate the often deceptive and misleading "research" and statistics generated by other anti-alcohol activist groups. The Marin Institute has been recognized for its anti-alcohol activities by the Prohibition Party.<sup>12</sup>

More about the organization can be found at [The Marin Institute:](#)

[An Anti-Alcohol Activist Organization](#), [Marin Institute Recognized](#), [Main Institute: Family Friendly = No Alcohol](#), and [Anti-Alcohol Industry Career Opportunity](#).

### **National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence**

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) was founded by the first female member of Alcoholics Anonymous and has a nationwide network of 95 Affiliates. However, it doesn't limit its activities to fighting the abuse of alcohol and drugs. It opposes the use of alcohol, even in moderation by adults of legal drinking age. NCADD's belief is that "As a society, we've got to do a far better job of persuading our citizens and our young people that alcohol use is a dead end, that they are playing Russian roulette, not only with their own lives, but with the lives of friends, neighbors, and loved ones." <sup>13</sup>

Resources: National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence. NIAAA Report Targets Dangers of College drinking. NY: National Council on Alcoholism and Drug dependence press release, April 9, 2002.

### **American Council on Alcohol Problems**

The American Council on Alcohol Problems is a federation of state affiliates promoting the reduction of consumption agenda. The Council was known as the Anti-Saloon League from 1893 until 1948, the Temperance League until 1950, the national Temperance League until 1964, and now as the American Council on Alcohol Problems. It partners with George Hacker's Alcohol Policies Project at the Center for Science in the Public Interest and other temperance groups. <sup>14</sup>

Resources: American Council on Alcohol Problems. Encyclopedia Britannica Online; Asbury, Herbert. *The Great Illusion: An Informal History of Prohibition*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1968 (Originally published 1950); Kobler, John. *Ardent Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1973; Krout, John A. *The Origins of Prohibition*. New York: Knopf, 1925.

### **Hacker, George**

Lawyer George A. Hacker has headed the temperance-oriented Alcohol Policies Project of the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) for three decades. He is Co-Chair of the Coalition for the Prevention of Alcohol Problems, whose members include the American Council on Alcohol Problems (the current name of the Anti-Saloon League) and many other prohibition and



temperance activist groups.

As part of his leadership role as an anti-alcohol activist leader, George Hacker has authored and coauthored numerous publications to promote neo-prohibitionism. Hacker's efforts have not gone unnoticed. For example, he is described as "an outspoken anti-alcohol activist by journalist James Thalman in Utah's *Deseret News* and as "the undisputed general" of the forces attacking alcohol by Michael Massing in the *New York Times*.<sup>15</sup>

To learn about his *modus operandi*, visit [George Hacker of CSPI](#)

### **Califano, Joseph A.**

Joseph Califano says he felt that he was on a genuine religious mission by creating the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) explaining that "for me, establishing and building CASA and committing myself to this battle against substance abuse was doing the Lord's work."<sup>16</sup> For Joe Califano, virtually any alcohol consumption is alcohol abuse. One observer reports that "Califano is essentially a reincarnation of the old temperance warriors."<sup>17</sup>

With messianic zeal Joe Califano and his Center have become well known for presenting highly suspect advocacy "research." To learn more about Mr. Califano visit [Joe Califano and His Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse \(CASA\)](#) and [The Evidence for Prohibition](#).

### **Jacobson, Michael**

Michael Jacobson established the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) in 1971, along with two lawyers from one of Ralph Nader's activist groups. Both lawyers soon dropped out so now, as Executive Director, Mr. Jacobson operates his own activist group.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest isn't a science organization but a special interest advocacy group for public policy. Although it assumes the mantle of science in order to obtain legitimacy for its activities and programs, most of the CSPI's "science" hardly reaches the level of a high school science project. And high school students don't have a political agenda for which they distort the evidence or misrepresent the facts as Michael Jacobson and his Center for Science in the Public Interest appear to do.

"Alcohol, even when consumed in moderation, is perhaps CSPI's

most hated product. The group's Health letter has asserted that 'the last thing the world needs is more drinkers, even moderate ones.'" <sup>18</sup> Jacobson wants hefty increases in alcoholic beverage taxes, increased restrictions on adult-beverage marketing, and even poster-sized warning labels placed in restaurants.

Michael Jacobson's actions are clearly consistent with the Nazi slogan, "Food is not a private matter," with which he would presumably agree. <sup>19</sup> He takes pride in being called the head of the food and beverage police.

For more on Michael Jacobson and his operation, visit [Michael Jacobson and His Center for Science in the Public Interest \(CSPI\)](#)

### ...And Many More

This is only a partial list of some of the major anti-alcohol groups and leaders. They are joined by an army of others, such as Facing Alcohol Concerns through Education (FACE), the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE), Join Together Online, Richard Yoast, Henry Wechsler, Jim Gogek, David Jernigan and Jim O'Hara, most receiving heavy financial support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The list goes on and on.

## The Anti-Alcohol Industry

The powerful anti-alcohol industry has convinced the public that, for instance,

- college student drinking is increasing, that
- the rate of alcohol-related traffic crashes is going up, and that
- alcohol advertising causes young people to begin drinking or to drink more.

The scientific evidence about these assertions is clear -- they are all false. In spite of the evidence, the anti-alcohol industry has managed to convince us otherwise. How do they do that?

Most people who read the classic book *How to Lie with Statistics* do so in order to become more intelligent consumers of statistical information. However, it would appear that many alcohol activists might read the book as a training manual or guide to action.

Understanding research and statistics is a challenge, which creates a situation in which deception becomes easy. And the tricks and techniques are numerous. Here's just a sampling.

## Spin Story to Journalists



Journalists have a hard job. They're very busy and few are competent in statistics and research techniques. So some activists make the journalist's job easier by preparing catchy headlines and memorable quotes within a well-written press release. Therefore the over-worked journalist doesn't feel the need to read the actual research report itself but relies on the "spin" given the story by the activist. The journalist can even abstract the activist's press release and have a ready-made story.

Case in point: One activist researcher titled a press release "Binge Drinking Continues Unabated on College Campuses." Many newspapers then used that title for their headlines on the story. However, that title was inconsistent with the findings of the actual report. In fact, so-called binge drinking actually declined significantly. An accurate and honest title would have been "Binge Drinking Drops Significantly on College Campuses" but that wouldn't create a media feeding frenzy. <sup>20</sup>

Alcohol activist groups have a difficult task promoting their ideas because the scientific evidence usually doesn't support their beliefs and proposals. For example, most such groups oppose alcohol beverage ads. However, decades of research by governments, health agencies and universities around the world fail to support their belief that such ads increase alcohol consumption, increase alcohol-related problems, or induce non-drinkers to begin drinking. The research does demonstrate repeatedly that alcohol beverage ads can increase a brand's market share, which grows at the expense of its competitors, who lose market share. <sup>21</sup>

The solution is obvious: Spin the story in a well-written, although misleading and deceptive press release.

### **Play to the Press**

The media want something sensational to report and the temperance cause demands that things be getting worse... there must always be an epidemic. If a survey reveals no increase in drinking or drinking problems, the determined activist can always find something about which to be alarmed.

For example, when there's nothing alarming in the overall figures, some activists carefully examine all subgroups and categories. Then they can usually find something to report. Perhaps it's an increase in drinkers among Asian-American students from, say, two up to three percent. Then the headline can read "Epidemic in Drinking among Asian-American College Students." There may have been declines among other students, but that can be ignored.

Another way the anti-alcohol industry plays to the press is by submitting and re-submitting the same report or the same "news" over time.

### **Buy Public Relations**

Most research reports are published in journals without any fanfare. Those for which the university or organization issues press releases are likely to get some press coverage. However, the use of professional public and media relations companies can dramatically increase visibility. It can even turn insignificant findings into front-page news.

A prime example of "bought news" is that of Henry Wechsler. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has poured about \$6,500,000 into Mr. Wechsler's College Alcohol Study project to date. One million of that sum has been used to buy publicity: "That blew it out of the box," says Marianne Lee, project director of the College Alcohol Study at the time. "We came out one day, and there were seven TV cameras outside the School of Public Health. We were taking calls from Australia." <sup>22</sup>

Henry Wechsler made the media rounds, appearing on TV shows, including Nightline and Good Morning America, wrote newspaper editorials, and issued news releases on his studies. A million dollars can buy a lot of publicity, even if the findings are not new and have been earlier published by many others.

### **Present Advocacy as Science**

Another technique routinely used by alcohol activist groups is to present advocacy reports as though they were scientific reports. Such groups, being political rather than scientific, usually refuse to submit their reports to peer review, which is contrary to the way real science operates.

In peer review, an editor or other neutral person submits the report to a number of peer experts in the subject of the research. These authorities read the report to determine if it

Meets minimum acceptable standards in terms of the research methods used, the statistical analyses performed, the logic of the analysis, and other essential criteria. Approval by peer experts reduces the chances that the findings are erroneous.

Peer review is fundamental to science. Without it, there is absolutely no reason to have any confidence in the findings of a report. Peer review is the major mechanism science uses to maintain quality control. It's a fundamental defense against incompetence, quackery, pseudo-science, and downright dishonesty.

Without peer review, a political report full of erroneous and misleading statistics can be passed off to the public as a scientific report. That's exactly what many alcohol activist groups do.

### **Present Deceptive "Facts"**

The effects of alcohol ads is a good example. The amassed scientific evidence clearly doesn't support the restriction or abolition of alcohol ads.

Activist groups typically react to this fact by ignoring it. They then inundate the public with misleading and deceptive “facts.”

- Activists present meaningless correlations. For example, several years ago, they made much of fact that alcohol ad expenditures had dropped for several years and that underage drinking had also dropped during that time. But they quickly became silent about the matter when alcohol ad expenditures increased but underage drinking continued to fall. [Note: Activists exploit the tendency to assume that a correlation demonstrates causation. For example, drownings and the consumption of alcohol are highly correlated, As one goes up the other does; as one goes down, the other does. But one doesn't cause the other. Both increase during hot weather. Similarly stork sightings have been highly correlated with births and skirt heights have been correlated with the height of the stock market. And the list goes on and on.]
- Activists present irrelevant facts. For example, they report on the proportion of people who believe that alcohol ads cause young people to drink. But large numbers of people believe in things that don't exist or aren't true. The simple fact that large numbers of people believe something doesn't make it true.
- Activists provide anecdotes, often emotional in nature. Thus, they appeal to emotion rather than reason or logic.
- Activists show photos of alcohol beverage ads that they don't like. Again, they appeal to emotion rather than reason or logic.
- Activists simply assert, contrary to the scientific evidence, that alcohol beverage ads cause people to begin drinking, or increase consumption, or create alcohol-related problems.

### **“Just Trust Us”**

Less common but highly effective is the distribution of a summary of research that has not been peer reviewed or published along with a press release. Because the agency prints the summary, reporters equate printing as equivalent to publication that has gone through the normal peer review process. The summary is treated as the study and is sent to anyone who requests a copy. However, the data and their analyses are not made available.

Similarly, Henry Wechsler has a reputation for publishing widely publicized studies what are often found to be weak, inadequate, or misleading.

Many alcohol abuse prevention researchers would like to question him about his research, conclusions, and assertions in a panel forum at a professional conference where public debate is possible. This is the way scientists typically address such matters. Unfortunately, Mr. Wechsler has consistently refused all such invitations. 23

Henry Wechsler's behavior reminds one of a person who responds to

congressional investigators with "I refuse to answer on grounds that it may incriminate me." This isn't the way science operates.

With good reason, most alcohol activist groups and their leaders are not held in high regard by scholars and other alcohol researchers.

### Manipulate Terms

The best example of the manipulation of terms is the misleading use of the term "binge." <sup>24</sup> To most people, binge drinking brings to mind a self-destructive and unrestrained drinking bout or bender lasting for at least a couple of days during which time the heavily intoxicated drinker "drops out" by not working, ignoring responsibilities, squandering money, and engaging in other harmful behaviors such as fighting or risky sex. This view is consistent with that portrayed in dictionary definitions, in literature, in art, and in plays or films such as the classic *Come Back Little Sheeba* and *Lost Weekend* or the more recent *Leaving Las Vegas*.

It is also consistent with the usage of physicians and other clinicians. As the editor of the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* emphasizes, binge describes an extended period of time (typically at least two days) during which time a person repeatedly becomes intoxicated and gives up his or her usual activities and obligations. It is the combination of prolonged use and the giving up of usual activities that forms the core of the clinical definition of binge. <sup>25</sup>

Other researchers have explained that it is counter-productive to brand as pathological the consumption of only five drinks over the course of an evening of eating and socializing. It is clearly inappropriate to equate it with a binge. <sup>26</sup>

How useful is such an unrealistic definition? It is very useful if the intent is to inflate the extent of a social problem. And it would please members of the Prohibition Party and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. But it is not very useful if the intent is to accurately describe reality to the average person.

It is highly unrealistic and inappropriate to apply a prohibitionist definition to describe drinking in the United States today. Perhaps we should define binge drinking as any intoxicated drinking that leads to certain harmful or destructive behaviors. Perhaps we should at least require that a person have a certain minimum level of alcohol in the bloodstream as a prerequisite to be considered a binger. Perhaps we could even require that a person be intoxicated before being labeled a "binger." But one thing is certain: the unrealistic definitions being promoted by some researchers are misleading and deceptive at best. <sup>27</sup>

Another example of manipulation is demonstrated by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY). It contends that alcohol ads are disproportionately found in youth oriented magazines.

To most people a youth-oriented magazine would have at least a majority of youthful readers. But to be clearly youth-oriented, perhaps the readership should be two-thirds young people, or perhaps three-fourths. But CAMY gives new meaning to lowering the bar. It defines anything above 15.8% youthful readership as a youth-oriented magazine?!<sup>28</sup> Without distorting the concept of youth-oriented, CAMY clearly wouldn't have anything newsworthy to report.

A third example of the manipulation of terms is found in the definition of "adult." In the US, people legally become adults at the age of 18. They can vote, serve in the military, marry, serve on juries, own businesses, adopt children, employ others, enter into legally binding contracts, have abortions, be imprisoned, be executed, fly airplanes, drive automobiles and other vehicles, and so on. However, many alcohol activists arbitrarily define adulthood as beginning at the much higher age of 21. Similarly, they define as children those under the age of 21. So a legal adult is defined as a child!

Alcohol activists routinely refer to college students to as "kids." However, virtually all college students are adults and 72% are age 21 or older. By calling young adults kids, alcohol activist groups attempt to deny their adulthood and to justify denying them the right to consume alcohol beverages.

The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth's Director of "Research," David Jernigan has even gone so far as to describe people under age 21 as babies!<sup>29</sup> According to his definition, about 300 babies have died fighting in operation Iraqi Freedom.

## Stigmatize Alcohol

Stigmatizing includes making statements such as these:

- Alcohol is the dirtiest drug we have. It permeates and damages all tissue. No other drug can cause the same degree of harm that it does.
- Alcohol is harmful to the body (no level of consumption indicated).
- Alcohol is a poison, and drinking it might lead to death.
- Alcohol is toxic (no level of consumption indicated).
- The effects of alcohol on men (no level of consumption indicated) are that hormone levels change, causing lower sex drive and enlarged breasts.
- Alcohol is a gateway drug leading people into illicit drug use.
- Alcohol (no level of consumption indicated) can cause deterioration of the heart muscle.

These statements, all of which are very misleading at best, were made by officials representing governmental agencies.<sup>30</sup> Significantly, the comments are not based on scientific evidence but instead seem to reflect a neo-prohibitionist effort to stigmatize alcohol.

The effort to stigmatize alcohol includes promoting the prohibitionist belief that there is no difference between moderate drinking and alcohol abuse--the two are portrayed as one and the same. This leads the U.S. Department of Education, for example, to direct colleges and universities to reject educational programs which promote responsible drinking among adults and instead favor a simplistic call for total abstinence. <sup>31</sup> It should be noted that two-thirds of undergraduates are of legal drinking age.

Alcoholic beverages are commonly stigmatized by referring to them as booze. For example, George Hacker's Alcohol Policies Project at the Center for Science in the Public Interest publishes "Booze News." <sup>32</sup> Thus, two 20-year-olds toasting their mutual commitment at their wedding with Champagne are seen by many alcohol activists as "kids boozing."

Stigmatizing alcohol also involves equating legal alcohol consumption with illegal drug use. For example, federal guidelines direct agencies to substitute "alcohol and drug use" with "alcohol and other drug use," to replace "substance abuse" with "alcohol and other drug abuse," and to avoid use of the term "responsible drinking" altogether. <sup>33</sup>

Alcohol is also frequently associated with crack cocaine and other illegal drugs by discussing them in the same paragraph. Often the effort is more blatant. A poster picturing a wine cooler warns "Don't be fooled. This is a drug." <sup>34</sup>

Technically, this assertion is correct. Any substance --salt, vitamins, water, food, etc.-- that alters the functioning of the body is a drug. But the word "drug" has negative connotations and the attempt is clearly to stigmatize a legal product that is used pleurably in moderation by most American adults.

In stigmatizing alcohol as a "drug," however, neo-prohibitionists may be inadvertently trivializing the use of illegal drugs and thereby encourage their use. Or, especially among youngsters, these zealots may be creating the false impression that parents who use alcohol in moderation are drug abusers whose good example should be rejected by their children. Thus, this misguided effort to equate alcohol with illicit drugs is likely to be counterproductive.

### **Prohibit "Mixed Messages"**

Anti-alcohol agencies and organizations caution against making statements that can send mixed messages about alcohol and drinking. But what is a mixed message?

All of the following the following accurate and true statements have been identified by the US government's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention as sending mixed messages and to be avoided. <sup>35</sup>



- Alcohol helps many people relax or be more sociable at parties.
- Any substance, in and of itself, is neither good nor bad. It is only the improper use, misuse, or abuse of substances that is bad.
- It's fine to relax with a beer at the end of a hard day. But know your limit. Many people use alcohol in social settings to relax and to celebrate special occasions. There is nothing wrong with social drinking as long as one stays within moderation and does not drive after drinking.
- If you want to teach your children to be responsible with alcohol, be a responsible drinker yourself.

None of these statements are incorrect. None of these statements mislead. They are offensive to the bureaucracy only because they are inconsistent with the abstinence ideology being promoted by the federal government.

All of the supposedly dangerous statements listed above are characteristic of societies in which drinking is common but alcohol abuse is uncommon.  
<sup>36</sup> Far from being dangerous, they are actually protective of alcohol abuse and they should be promoted rather than discredited. In reality, suppressing them promotes alcohol abuse!

Preventing "mixed messages" was also a tactic used by the Women's Christian Temperance Union. It taught that alcohol was a dangerous poison. Therefore, it refused to endorse any school book that correctly reported the fact that physicians often prescribed alcohol to their patients for its beneficial effects. That would send a conflicting "mixed message."<sup>37</sup>

### **Create and Fund Network of Activist Groups**

Most alcohol activist groups receive funding, partially or completely, from the temperance-oriented Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. To varying degrees, they can be seen as "front groups" for the Foundation, or at least part of the same loose organization. Some describe them as feeding from the same trough.

However, these groups tend to reference each other's reports as if they were truly independent and did not receive funding from the same common source. This is a violation of scientific ethics. But since they aren't scientific organizations, they apparently don't feel bound by such ethics.

The consequence is that weak and discredited reports continue to "echo" back and forth among the agencies, appear to be credible, and are more likely to be reported in the media. The media and public, of course, are duped.

Major players in the network include the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA), the Center on Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) and its Alcohol Policies Project, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY),

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the American Medical Association (AMA) and its Office for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (funded entirely by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation), Henry Wechsler, the Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free, the Trauma Foundation, the Marin Institute, the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, Join Together Online, ImpacTeen, A Matter of Degree, and Fighting Back. <sup>38</sup>

Here is a list of what appear to be grassroots organizations dedicated to reducing or preventing underage alcohol use:

- Pennsylvanians Against Underage Drinking
- Texans Standing Tall - A Statewide Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking
- Louisiana Alliance to Prevent Underage Drinking
- Oregon Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking
- Missouri's Youth/Adult Alliance Against Underage Drinking
- National Capital Coalition to Prevent Underage Drinking
- Minnesota Join Together Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking
- Georgia Alcohol Policy Partnership
- Puerto Rico Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking
- Indiana Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking
- Partners to Reduce Underage Drinking in North Carolina
- Connecticut Coalition to Stop Underage Drinking

In reality, all of these groups are part of the anti-alcohol Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's nation-wide program to influence alcohol policy at both the state and federal levels. <sup>39</sup> They're also important in the Foundation's efforts to create the illusion of massive and widespread grassroots support for its agenda.

### **Claim to be Moderate; Don't Reveal Radical Goals**

The Anti-Saloon League presents itself as being moderate by calling itself the American Council on Alcohol Problems.

The Coalition for the Prevention of Alcohol Problems sounds moderate enough, although it's actually a coalition of temperance groups.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving presents itself as moderate and, for example, claims not to be opposed to alcohol ads. <sup>40</sup>

But in reality, Mothers Against Drunk driving is actually calling for the removal and banning of any and all alcohol ads throughout the entire Boston subway system! Not simply a ban of ads that some people might consider to appeal to young people, but all ads for alcohol beverages. <sup>41</sup>

### **Pour Money into Promoting Agenda**

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has alone poured over 265

million dollars (over one-quarter of a billion dollars) into establishing funding and promoting a nation-wide network of organizations and individuals in less than five years to promote its temperance oriented agenda. That's over one million dollars per week spent to buy public acceptance of its temperance message.

As a result, nearly every study disparaging alcohol in the mass media, every legislative push to limit marketing or increase taxes, and every supposedly "grassroots" anti-alcohol movement was conceived and coordinated at the RWJF's headquarters. Thanks to this one foundation, the U.S. anti-alcohol movement speaks with one voice. <sup>42</sup>

For the RWJF, it is an article of faith that diminishing per capita consumption across the board can contain the social consequences of alcohol abuse. Therefore, it has engaged in a long-term war to reduce overall drinking by all Americans. The RWJF relentlessly audits its own programs, checking to see if each dollar spent is having the maximum impact on reducing per capita consumption. Over the past 10 years, this blueprint has been refined. Increased taxes, omnipresent roadblocks, and a near total elimination of alcohol marketing are just a few of the tactics the RWJF now employs in its so-called "environmental" approach.

The environmental approach seeks to shift blame from the alcohol abuser to society in general (and to alcohol providers in particular). So the RWJF has turned providers into public enemy number one, burdening them with restrictions and taxes to make their business as difficult and complex as possible. The environmental approach's message to typical consumers, meanwhile, is that drinking is abnormal and unacceptable.

The RWJF funds programs that focus on every conceivable target, at every level from local community groups to state and federal legislation. Every demographic group is targeted: women, children, the middle class, business managers, Hispanics, Blacks, Whites, Native Americans. Every legal means is used: taxation, regulation, litigation. Every PR tactic: grassroots advocacy, paid advertising, press warfare. Every conceivable location: college campuses, sporting events, restaurants, cultural activities, inner cities, residential neighborhoods, and even bars. <sup>43</sup>

The bottom line is this: the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and its vast organized network seek to marginalize and reduce drinking by driving it underground, away from mainstream culture and public places.

Unfortunately, that's what Prohibition did. And the result of marginalized, underground drinking, by whatever name it's called, is heavy episodic drinking and an increase in drinking-related problems.

## Conclusion

Instead of stigmatizing alcohol and trying either to scare or force people into abstinence, we need to recognize that it is not alcohol itself but rather

the misuse of alcohol that is the problem. The vast majority of American adults do in fact use alcohol in moderation to enhance the quality of their lives with no ill effects. The neo-prohibitionist attack on alcohol is proving to be not only deceptive and ineffective, but dangerously counterproductive in the effort to teach the responsible use of alcohol.

It's obvious that temperance activists of today are remarkably similar to those of the past in both their beliefs and methods.

### Additional Information

- [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Financier of Temperance](#)
- [Mothers Against Drunk Driving: A Crash Course in MADD](#)
- [Joe Califano and His Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse \(CASA\)](#)
- More: [Controversies](#)

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