

PIERRE S. DU PONT AND THE MAKING OF AN ANTI-PROHIBITION ACTIVIST¹

RANJIT S. DIGHE

Abstract. This paper examines the motivations of perhaps the highest-profile crusader for the repeal of the U.S. national prohibition amendment, Pierre S. du Pont II. The paper uses du Pont's archived correspondence to bear on the question of what motivated his activism. The results are largely congruent with previous studies that linked du Pont's anti-prohibitionism to a broader conservative ideology, but this paper concludes that prohibition genuinely offended du Pont on several levels. Cultural factors were clearly important, as were collateral issues such as lawlessness and property rights, and these factors seem to have been what initially attracted du Pont to the repeal movement. While it is fair to say that he hoped prohibition repeal would be a defensive foothold against the growing power of the federal government relative to corporations and citizens, his anti-prohibition crusade was more than just an anti-government crusade.

The effort to repeal nationwide alcohol prohibition in the United States was largely a businessman's crusade, despite the fact that businessmen had tended to stay on the sidelines during the original push for national prohibition. Although business did not lead the fight for the Eighteenth Amendment, it is clear that the drive enjoyed the active support of many businessmen and the passive support of many more.² Yet a decade later, a big business-dominated group led the way in the fight for the repeal of prohibition. The group was the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment (AAPA), and its key figure was Pierre S. du Pont II.³ This essay explores du Pont's motivations in opposing prohibition. Why did he take such strong exception to prohibition as to devote most of his energies in the late 1920s and early 1930s to ending it? He had not raised any objection to the Eighteenth Amendment at the time of its passage or ratification; nor did he take up the cause of repeal until five years after prohibition had become law. This paper concludes that du Pont's opposition to prohibition was mostly ideological but rooted in several factors, not all of which were present when the amendment became law.

Historians have lately rehabilitated prohibition as part and parcel of progressive reform, and du Pont and many of his fellow repealists came to oppose it from that angle.⁴ The expansion of federal power under the Eighteenth

Ranjit S. Dighe is Professor of Economics, State University of New York College at Oswego.

Amendment and the Volstead Act tended to diminish (however minutely) the power of both the du Pont family and corporation, both based in a tiny state (Delaware) whose government was either compliant or too small to interfere with family or corporate prerogatives. The growth of the federal government and federal taxes during the Progressive Era and World War I had distressed du Pont, and prohibition would come to be associated with both higher enforcement expenditures and, to make up for the loss of liquor excise tax revenue, a higher income tax burden on the wealthy. Although national prohibition must have paled in comparison with other Progressive Era affronts, in time its enforcement problems, from law-breaking to corruption to the draconian solutions considered by du Pont's home state of Delaware, would push du Pont into the repeal camp. Du Pont came to view prohibition not merely as a blunder but as creeping statism, a measure all too much in keeping with the government-expanding reforms of the 1910s.

These motivations are similar to those described by David E. Kyvig and Robert F. Burk in their illuminating studies of the repeal movement and the du Ponts' national political activities. This paper differs from those studies mainly in that it emphasizes the origins of Pierre du Pont's anti-prohibition activism, rather than situating that activism within the repeal crusade as a whole (Kyvig) or as the opening wedge of the family's attempts to reshape the American polity along corporatist lines (Burk).⁵ In addition, this paper is more inclined to take du Pont's anti-prohibitionism as just that, rather than as the tip of a much broader agenda. Kyvig writes that du Pont and his fellow AAPA conservatives saw prohibition "as a danger to a satisfactory political order," but he does not explain why du Pont would single out prohibition.⁶ Other Progressive Era reforms like the income tax, the inheritance tax, and the Clayton Antitrust Act had dented the du Pont empire much more deeply and were reversible by Congress, so they might have seemed more logical targets than the Eighteenth Amendment, which appeared impregnable in the mid-1920s when du Pont joined the AAPA. Despite touching on deeper issues, du Pont's crusade against prohibition was essentially about prohibition itself and collateral issues such as lawlessness, heavy-handed enforcement, corrosion of property rights and individual rights, and shifting the burden of taxation.⁷ Burk offers several compelling reasons for du Pont's opposition to prohibition, but he tends to see it as a prelude to a larger crusade against mass democracy and toward a corporatist-elitist state. While Burk's overall thesis that the du Ponts were always looking to extend corporate influence is well argued, the AAPA remained a single-issue organization even after du Pont's reorganization of it.⁸ Pierre du Pont's reactionary elitism is evident in many of his letters, but so is an unmistakable passion for the issue of prohibition. His arguments against prohibition are diverse and opportunistic, so discerning his motivations from them is not always straightforward. This paper highlights the unique factors that converted du Pont to the repeal camp and turned him into an activist. The body of this paper begins with the du Pont family

and corporate background, finding several factors that would tend to militate against acceptance of prohibition, and in the next section finds Du Pont Company labor policies and history somewhat antithetical to prohibition. The next two sections cover the periods of the du Ponts' growing involvement in the repeal movement during the 1920s and early 1930s, with a focus on Pierre's myriad motivations, as gleaned from his prolific correspondence and public statements about prohibition. The final section examines the commonalities in Pierre's participation in the AAPA and the American Liberty League, and the continuity in his political outlook.

DU PONT FAMILY AND CORPORATE BACKGROUND

Pierre's ideology was naturally influenced by his family and company background, of which a few aspects seem particularly significant. The family's American line began with Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours, a nobleman and economist of the physiocrat school, a tradition associated with *laissez-faire*. Pierre admired his namesake ancestor, commissioning an extensive edited collection of his papers that would grow into a vast repository of economics and economic history books that is now the Hagley Library.⁹ Du Pont de Nemours was a moderate voice in the National Assembly during the first phase of the French Revolution, even serving as its president in 1790, but eventually came under suspicion as radicals gained the upper hand. He was imprisoned twice and at one point was even sentenced to the guillotine under Robespierre. In 1799 he left with his family for America, where his friends included Thomas Jefferson. Not surprisingly, Pierre S. du Pont II's correspondence reveals a contempt for political and economic revolutions and an idealization of America at the time of its founding, both of which seem particularly strong even for an American businessman of the time.

The Du Pont de Nemours gunpowder mill began in 1802, as the venture of Pierre Samuel's son Eleuthere Irenee. Built on the banks of the Brandywine Creek in Delaware, it would soon be America's largest powder plant. Both the company and the family would loom increasingly large over the tiny state of Delaware. A du Pont was elected to the Delaware legislature as early as 1815. In time, numerous other du Ponts would hold higher political offices, including two U.S. Senate seats. Even before the company's meteoric rise to the top of the chemical industry, it dominated its home state, perhaps to a greater degree than any other American company. One writer has called Delaware "the duchy of DuPont"; in this context, Pierre's repeated insistence on states' rights in his correspondence was basic self-interest.¹⁰

By the early twentieth century the family and the corporation had attained such power and riches that repeated collisions with Progressive Era laws, politicians, and courts were inevitable. In 1902 Pierre and two of his cousins purchased the company from a partnership of older du Ponts, reorganized it, and aggressively continued the company policy of acquiring much of the competition. Within a year they had created a near-monopoly in the explosives

industry. An antitrust suit against Du Pont was filed in 1907 and ended four years later with a Supreme Court decision against the company. Although the terms of the divestiture were generous and arguably made the company stronger by pushing it to diversify, Pierre would complain bitterly about the antitrust laws for decades to come. Even worse for Pierre was a 1917 federal court decision, on a suit brought by his cousin and former partner Albert, invalidating his secret purchase two years earlier of a controlling interest in the company. Pierre was able to regain control within the year, but he despaired that “a Court of Justice . . . [might take] from you the well earned fruits of your endeavors.”¹¹ World War I orders for gunpowder and dynamite catapulted the company to a whole new level and helped finance its emergence as the nation’s leading chemical manufacturer. The company also acquired a controlling interest in General Motors in 1917.¹² The war brought a backlash, however, even before the United States entered it. In 1916, two prominent senators accused the du Ponts of financing the pro-war “preparedness” drive. (Pierre vehemently denied the charge, but a 1919 Congressional investigation revealed that his cousin Thomas Coleman du Pont had co-founded the pro-war National Security League in 1915.¹³) Also in 1916, Congress passed a munitions profits tax, which the du Ponts felt targeted them. Top officials such as Secretary of War Newton Baker and Robert Brookings of the War Industries Board criticized the corporation as unreasonable in contract negotiations.¹⁴ Also of obvious concern to Pierre were the high income and inheritance tax rates that American entry into the war had brought and which came down only partially after the war. (Pierre wrote later of the inheritance tax, “Now that they are proposing to change this penalty on success to 40%, we may as well begin to accustom ourselves to say Lenin City instead of Washington.”¹⁵) Pierre reacted to the progressive whirlwind of Woodrow Wilson’s first term by donating \$92,500, the most of any individual, to Wilson’s 1916 opponent, Charles Evans Hughes. He donated \$12,378 to Warren Harding’s campaign in 1920. Although Pierre was keenly aware of the threat posed by the courts and Progressive legislation to the Du Pont empire, donations to sympathetic candidates were generally the extent of his political involvement at this time.¹⁶ Pierre was easily disappointed by politicians and partisan politics and made no donations in the 1924 presidential election.¹⁷

Despite Pierre’s political disillusionment, the family and the company came out of the war extraordinarily powerful. Longtime Du Pont and General Motors executive, and Pierre’s closest friend, John Jakob Raskob said that the Du Pont group, through its vast stock holdings, controlled a larger share of industry than any other business group. The family fortune skyrocketed from \$26 million in 1900, making them the sixty-fourth-richest family in America, to \$566 million in 1925, making them the fourth-richest clan, behind only the Rockefellers, Fords, and Mellons.¹⁸ Pierre served as president of Du Pont from 1909 to 1919 and as chairman of the board from 1919 to 1940. At General Motors he was president from 1920 to 1923 and board chairman from 1920

to 1929. By some accounts, he earned more and paid more in taxes than any other American in 1929. Pierre was arguably Du Pont's most significant and successful executive since its founder, with an influence that transcended his own companies, as detailed in Alfred Chandler and Stephen Salsbury's *Pierre S. du Pont and the Making of the Modern Corporation*.

Pierre was head of the du Pont family as well. As the oldest male among eleven children, he had been the male head of the family ever since his father's death in 1884, when Pierre was fourteen. His younger brothers Irene and Lamot called him "Dad" through their twenties, as would Raskob.¹⁹ Irene and Lamot would also play vital roles in the company and in the anti-prohibition crusade. Although Irene's anti-prohibition activism preceded Pierre's, once Pierre became committed to a cause, it was a given that he would be the family standard-bearer on it.

The du Ponts' French cultural heritage likely had some bearing on their anti-prohibition stance. Growing up, Pierre, Irene, and Lamot were accustomed to a dining room with wine on the table and liquor in an easily accessed sideboard. "Practically every [adult] member of my family kept and used liquor of various kinds," Pierre told a correspondent, "but I do not recall any exhibition of intemperance on the part of any of these men or women."²⁰ The du Ponts' religious background, or lack thereof, also set them apart from the prohibitionists, whose ranks were disproportionately Methodist and Baptist. In a letter Pierre said he did not belong to a church and neither had his father, "like many of the du Pont men." He added that when his ancestors came to the United States, fleeing the French Revolution, "France was quite devoid of observed religion and the du Ponts carried the idea to America... Notwithstanding the lack of formal observance in religious matters, I am pleased to think that the du Pont family has not made a bad record under that handicap."²¹

Raskob's Catholicism would put the du Ponts even more solidly on one side of the cultural divide over prohibition. Pierre and Raskob had known each other since 1900, when Pierre, who had briefly left the Du Pont Company a year earlier to become president of a steel rail company in Lorain, Ohio, hired the 21-year-old Raskob as a bookkeeper. Raskob's financial wizardry complemented Pierre's own strengths, and Raskob quickly became indispensable to Pierre. After a decade as Pierre's assistant, Raskob would succeed him as treasurer of Du Pont, arrange the loan from J. P. Morgan that allowed Pierre to buy a controlling interest in the Du Pont Company, and persuade him to buy into General Motors. The two quickly forged a close personal bond as well.²² Burk describes Raskob as "probably the closest in personality and outlook to Pierre" of all company insiders. As a devout Catholic and the son of Alsatian and Irish immigrants, Raskob was acculturated to the consumption of alcohol and well attuned to the anti-Catholic bigotry of some prohibitionists.²³ Pierre could relate, as his mother was one-fourth Jewish and his parents experienced prejudice from other family members as a result.²⁴ This sensitivity is evident in a letter by Pierre in early 1928 in which he wrote "if Governor Smith of

New York should appear as a candidate and the question of religion became a prominent issue, I should support him against those who claim that no Catholic may be made President of the United States.”²⁵

The du Ponts’ own alcohol consumption militated against an acceptance of prohibition. Their correspondence on this issue is not extensive but strongly suggests that they were moderate social drinkers. Records remain of Irene’s imports of cases of French wine, often fifty at a time, to his plantation in Cuba in the late 1920s and early 1930s.²⁶ Their estranged cousin Alfred prepared for prohibition by hoarding a vast stockpile of spirits, wine, and beer, which he said would be more than enough to last him until the end of his life.²⁷ Pierre and Raskob appear to have been less extravagant, each describing himself as “not much of a drinking man.” Still, Pierre noted that prior to prohibition, “I laid in a sufficient store to last what I thought was a reasonable time and let the matter go at that.”²⁸ Raskob’s files include a receipt in his handwriting for gin, Scotch, and rum during the prohibition period; and Raskob was a regular at the Tiger Room, a private Manhattan club that almost certainly served alcohol despite prohibition.²⁹ Pierre appears to have preferred wine. He kept a wine cellar at Longwood, his country estate, and maintained it himself.³⁰ The du Pont AAPA files include documentation of a purchase by Lamot du Pont of Wine Grape Juice from a large-scale distributor whose price list Lamot forwarded to Pierre. Pierre also sent thanks to a French Bordeaux distributor for sending him a price list.³¹ Pierre and his wife Alice hosted numerous parties at Longwood; whether drinks were served at these gatherings has not been documented, but certain statements of Pierre’s make it easy to imagine:

I am not at all certain that there has never been any good come out of drink. It would seem to me that the practically universal satisfaction of a human desire over a long period of years must have brought to the world a measure of pleasure and comfort that cannot be neglected. I cannot believe that all people drink through any vicious desire, for I have so many friends and relatives who have taken what seems to me a perfectly innocent pleasure with their drinking.³²

A consistent theme in Pierre’s letters and statements was that moderate drinking posed no threat. This belief, unremarkable by modern standards, was significant at a time when the American Medical Association and several reputable studies claimed just the opposite. From his own experience Pierre felt “quite satisfied that the very large number of our people use their drink properly, with no ill effect to their fellows or themselves.” He later told a physician-actuary, who claimed that every drink shortens a person’s life by twenty-five minutes, “Having reached the age of sixty-six years with a record of what I should consider moderate drinking, I am rather hopeful that your diagnosis is correct, for I cannot imagine anything worse than an overextended span of life.”³³

DU PONT COMPANY LIQUOR AND LABOR POLICIES

Prohibitionists had long argued that booze was bad for business, and many produced quasi-scientific studies showing drinkers to be less productive and more prone to accidents and absenteeism. Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick said a crucial factor in the Eighteenth Amendment's passage was "that American business found it impossible to run modern machines with drink-befuddled brains."³⁴ One would expect an explosives company to be particularly receptive to that argument, and indeed the Du Pont Company had demanded sobriety on the job from the first. A rules sheet posted in 1811 included this stricture: "no kind of spiritous liquors is allowed to be fetch and drinke in the factory. any of the men that would appear to be in a state of entoxication shall be dismissed."³⁵ Yet Du Pont did not prohibit its employees from drinking on their own time, so long as it did not affect their performance. The distinction seems to have been lost on some contemporaries and subsequent historians. For example, a former Du Pont employee who had become an officer in the Anti-Saloon League of New York wrote to Irene du Pont in 1915 for confirmation of a report he had heard that the firm had a strict no-drinking policy. Irene replied that the company "has no rule requiring its employees to be total abstainers. The notice you referred to was undoubtedly based on the fact that this Company manifestly could not permit employees on the plant under the influence of liquor."³⁶

Du Pont seems to have been relatively unafflicted by employee alcohol abuse, and its executives seemed to feel that whatever problems did exist could be handled internally. "In 1914 the abuse of liquor by the employe[e]s of the du Pont Co. had become negligible," Irene wrote in 1926. "Absenteeism on Monday [the infamous "Blue Monday" that followed a drunken weekend] was no greater than the average of the other days of the week and was under 4%." The company did take some small steps toward promoting temperance, as opposed to abstinence. In 1915 Irene confirmed that one of their plants had a "canteen"

where light wines and beer are sold, and the Superintendent exercises some degree of control. . . . No distilled spirits are sold and the bar is closed during working hours. The arrangement works satisfactorily and is not intended to encourage the use of drink, but to prevent men going to towns in the vicinity where they will partake of stronger beverages and doubtless in greater quantity.³⁷

The "canteen" system is also notable as a precursor of Pierre's and the AAPA's fixation on liquor-control systems as alternatives to prohibition.³⁸

Du Pont's "canteen" initiatives bore some resemblance to the company's labor policies in general. Although the company's anti-union tactics were extensive, including a 1,400-member police force and an employee spy network during World War I, the du Ponts and Raskob wanted a company in which workers would feel so well treated that they would not want to join a union. Du Pont had long cultivated a familial relationship with its workers, including the provision of employee housing and churches, death and disability benefits,

and, starting in 1904, a pension plan for salaried workers. As a pioneer in welfare capitalism in the early twentieth century, Du Pont became increasingly mindful of employee morale. Both Du Pont and General Motors were charter members of the clandestine Special Conference Committee (SCC), a group of a dozen of America's largest employers that met regularly to discuss labor issues. Raskob was actually the instigator of the group, which formed in 1919 in response to wartime and postwar labor problems such as unionization, strikes, and low productivity. The main issue was how to keep their companies nonunion, and the recommended approach was the welfare-capitalist approach: company unions, generous and stable wages, generous benefits, and attentiveness to employee relations. A later Senate investigation of the group emphasized the SCC's belief in the "cooperative" approach to labor relations. Prohibition, which Samuel Gompers and other labor leaders had denounced as class legislation, promised to poison those relations. Raskob made exactly that case in an open letter in 1928:

the great mass of our workmen and poor people feel that prohibition does not prohibit but is a scheme to deny them something which their more fortunate brothers with money can have almost at will. Is it any wonder they should rebel?³⁹

THE DU PONTS JOIN THE ANTI-PROHIBITION CRUSADE

Yet prohibition aroused virtually no opposition within the du Pont camp at the time of its passage. "I was not altogether unfavorable to National Prohibition prior to its enactment," Pierre wrote in 1924. In another letter he said he was too busy filling war orders to pay much attention to what was going on, and added that he was deceived by the prohibitionists' claims of overwhelming public support for their cause.⁴⁰

A more farsighted conservative was Captain William H. Stayton, a Baltimore lawyer who had become active in the steamship business. As the leader of the Navy League, a naval advocacy group, Stayton had greatly expanded his business and government connections during World War I. He founded the AAPA the day after the armistice was signed, November 12, 1918. At the time, as Stayton later told his friend H. L. Mencken, he viewed the new law as overly intrusive Progressive Era legislation. He was "particularly alarmed" not only by prohibition but also by a proposed amendment abolishing child labor, which he said meant "the management of the family would be taken out of the control of parents." Several other anti-prohibition stalwarts, including Columbia University President Nicholas Murray Butler and U.S. Senator James W. Wadsworth (R-N.Y.), joined the organized opposition to the child-labor amendment. Although the fledgling AAPA had been powerless against the tidal wave of state ratifications of the prohibition amendment, after ratification Stayton set his sights on expanding the association's membership, with an eye toward quality over quantity, soliciting the support of men of means who could use their influence to advance the cause. Stayton knew Raskob from his Navy League work and managed to recruit him and two of his fellow

Du Pont executives, Irenee and Lammot, in 1922.⁴¹

Pierre initially resisted joining the AAPA, but in declining he did declare himself “unconditionally against the principle of the Prohibition Amendment and the method of its enforcement.”⁴² He did not elaborate, but two letters from January 1924, in which Pierre emphatically rejected prohibition enforcement appeals, shed some light on his opposition to prohibition. They are typical of his correspondence in idealizing a nineteenth-century-style government that provides basic law and order and little else.⁴³ Prohibition was suspect both because it expanded the government’s reach into people’s private activity and because it was unenforceable. Pierre further assailed prohibition as “the worst kind of tyranny” of the majority and said it opened the door for “further curtailment of our liberties if a majority can be brought to bear on any subject.” At least “a very large minority of the people in this country” regard prohibition as an imposition, he said, implying that lawlessness could result: “The worst part of the present movement is that it has done more to bring the law into disrepute than any question that has ever risen, save perhaps the automobile speed laws and the Sherman Anti-Trust Law.” Pierre’s distaste for the Sherman act is not surprising in view of his company’s repeated brushes with it, and his various criticisms of it in several letters hint at the nature of his opposition to prohibition. The Sherman act, he complained, was basically unnecessary and, worse, was so vaguely worded as to give rise to inconsistent enforcement and adjudication. The antitrust laws would not be so harmful, he said later, if they were “definitely drawn so that those engaged in industry and otherwise may know definitely their limitations and responsibilities. It would be a great help to this country.”⁴⁴ To Pierre, setting the rules of the game was perhaps government’s most important and legitimate role, and laws like prohibition and the antitrust acts undermined that role because they could not be not enforced uniformly or consistently.

In two letters to his brother-in-law in June 1924, Pierre criticized the enforcement failures of prohibition even more harshly, again lumping it in with other laws (unnamed, but strongly resembling his descriptions elsewhere of the antitrust laws) that inevitably give rise to arbitrary and corrupt enforcement:

To my mind the worst of our troubles is the one least talked about, i.e., the present utter disregard for law; first, by the lawmakers; second, by the enforcers; and third, by those to whom the law applies. As a cold, hard fact we are rapidly assuming a position where we have no laws because what masquerades as such are either so indefinite that no lawyer or Court, let alone an ordinary man, can tell what they mean, or are so impossible of enforcement that it is foolish to attempt obedience, and the officers and Courts refuse to enforce literally. The net result is that we are getting to be as much at the mercy of the individual office holder as were people under the old system of France under the monarchy. This system is bound to lead, and had already led, to corruption of the worst kind.⁴⁵

Pierre also saw prohibition’s mendacious enforcement as inevitably leading to more general harassment of business and enterprise. In the same letter in

which he decried high inheritance tax rates, he added:

However, this is not the worst, for, judging from the fate of John Barleycorn dec (?) [deceased], the accumulation of fortunes will not be stopped by repressive laws. It will soon be a case of satisfying the financial 'bootleggers' who will swarm in our new Lenin City, both inside and outside of the hallowed precincts of the Treasury, where the Mellon crop will be supplanted by something of rank – yes, very rank – growth.⁴⁶

The du Ponts saw an even worse set of problems in Delaware's strict prohibition enforcement laws, and it was in reaction to those laws that they became activists. (This is somewhat ironic, as one of their criticisms of prohibition was that it trampled on states' rights.) Delaware, despite the rise of a du Pont political machine in the early twentieth century, was actually a dry state for much of its history. Delaware's supplemental prohibition laws, known as the Loose Law and the Klair Law, were considerably more draconian than the national Volstead Act, whose ban on alcoholic beverages exempted the personal possession of alcohol purchased before the Eighteenth Amendment took effect. The Loose Law of 1917 banned the possession of more than a quart of liquor or a dozen pint bottles of beer. The Klair Law of 1919 made it unlawful to "furnish" any intoxicating liquors and effectively banned the use of alcoholic beverages for medicinal purposes. Still more draconian was a proposed amendment, known as the Weer bill, before the state legislature in early 1925. The Weer bill would have amended the Loose Law to disallow the possession of any liquor at all, for the ostensible purpose of convicting bootleggers who skirted the Loose Law by keeping just one quart of liquor out in the open to attract customers.⁴⁷ It was the Weer bill that spurred the du Pont brothers to action.

Irenee had already been active in the Delaware division of the AAPA and responded enthusiastically to appeals to help defeat the Weer proposal. Irenee's 1925-27 correspondence finds him taking Delaware's "bigoted" enforcement laws rather personally. The Loose Law evidently hit close to home, as he wrote:

We further have a provision that anyone having in his possession more than a quart of alcoholic beverages at any time since 1920 has committed a crime. Certainly there is no crime in keeping that which you had at that time; it is a crime against nature to have destroyed it ruthlessly.⁴⁸

A gregarious man, Irenee knew many violators of the Loose Law and appears to have been one himself: "Personally I know of but two men in Delaware who did destroy or dispose of their liquor when the Loose Law was passed." In a letter to an acquaintance he wrote, "I am sure I would not inform against the bootlegger; I doubt if you would." As he saw it, the gravest problem was that enforcement could be, and had already been, selective and arbitrary:

It is a dangerous weapon to put in the hands of those in power who can use it for ulterior and improper purposes. It serves no good purpose. A small fraction of

those that have broken the law have been harshly treated and meted out punishment out of all reason to the nature of their offense.⁴⁹

He wrote later:

The Loose Law is invoked often but never honestly. It is used for political punishment to convict a man under suspicion of breaking the law as regards sale of liquor when they cannot obtain evidence against him.⁵⁰

Pierre agreed that the Weer bill was a “very radical” law; “like its brother the Loose Law it calls up grave question[s] of Constitutionality in its proposed seizure of property lawfully acquired.” He was unmoved by sponsors’ assurances that the bill was aimed at bootleggers and not individuals, for “its words are applicable, at the whim of a disgruntled person, to any innocent citizen.” March 1925 marked Pierre’s first foray into anti-prohibition activism, as he spoke out publicly against the Weer bill, which was defeated; deepened his involvement with the AAPA, apparently joining in that month; and began firing off letters about prohibition to a variety of officials. Prohibition-related inquiry and correspondence took up an increasing amount of his time, yet as late as August 1926, Pierre described himself as less “actively interested” in the AAPA than Irene was.⁵¹ By early 1927 Pierre was a member of executive committee of the Delaware AAPA and was working in vain for the repeal of the Loose and Klair Laws.⁵²

THE AAPA BECOMES “THE DU PONT GROUP”

Candidly, I think the word “reform” should not appear in any title that we may adopt. Reformers are not altogether welcome and, moreover, I believe that our endeavor is more in the line of getting back to first principles than trying to reform.

– Pierre commenting upon a proposed alternative to the AAPA⁵³

Before long the du Pont brothers were thinking nationally and acting nationally against prohibition. By 1923, now retired from active corporate management, Pierre had refocused his energies on public affairs, with prohibition increasingly dominating his attention. A master administrator, Pierre had found the AAPA’s organization and direction inadequate, and he took it upon himself to remake the group, starting with its executive committee, much as he had reorganized the Du Pont Company upon taking over in 1902. The reorganized AAPA was ready in early 1928, with a national executive committee with Pierre as chairman, Irene, Stayton, Cleveland builder Benedict Crowell, bankers Grayson Murphy and Charles H. Sabin, and Henry H. Curran, the association’s president. Lamot and Raskob were on the board of directors. The new AAPA leadership favored a large board of directors composed of recognized leaders in business and other professions. The board numbered 100 men in 1928 and grew to 374 by late 1931, its ranks drawn mainly from business and banking. In periodic pamphlets with names like *Who How Why of the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment* and *374 Men You Know*

Who Are Directing the Fight for Repeal of the National Prohibition Amendment, the group practically rested its case on the prestige of its supporters. The AAPA's pamphlets were widely distributed and often drew on thorough, if tendentious, in-house research. The group also made its case through radio addresses and articles in various magazines, and it made donations to wet politicians.

Under Pierre's executive committee chairmanship, the AAPA's public arguments against prohibition came to closely mirror those in Pierre's private correspondence. For example, the case against prohibition laid out in the four-paragraph "Resolution Adopted by the Board of Directors of the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment," adopted May 28, 1928, and reprinted in subsequent AAPA pamphlets, is basically the same as in Pierre's 1924 letters. Very likely, Pierre, as executive committee chair, authored the resolution. The piece is surprisingly narrow in its legalistic focus on prohibition as a "cancer" on the Constitution that involves the federal government in a task that belongs to the states. Incredibly, it does not mention the enforcement or compliance issue at all.⁵⁴

Pierre and the AAPA soon refashioned their attack into something more politically appealing. In a November 1928 magazine article Pierre emphasized two conventional objections to prohibition and downplayed the constitutional one:

These, then, are the fundamental objections to the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead law:

They are failures as a remedy for the drink evil.

They command no respect and scant observance because they disregard the wishes and rights of a very large number of people.

They were brought into being hastily, without proper approval, and, it seems to me, by methods that are not constitutional.⁵⁵

In a December 1929 radio talk entitled "A Business Man's View of Prohibition," Pierre took up the law-and-order theme, saying that people "flout the law, causing national scandal and giving concern to those interested in the public morals of the United States." He also declared the law fundamentally invalid because it lacks the consent of the governed. Sounding a rare populist note, but consistent with the Special Conference Committee's "cooperative" approach to labor relations, he reached out to working-class voters by denouncing prohibition as heavy-handed paternalism. Deriding the dry claim that prohibition has brought great benefits to "the working man" (his quotation marks), he said the "working men" must be allowed to decide for themselves whether they want prohibition. Echoing Gompers, he said the workers did not write the prohibition laws and added

these working men, so-called, and their families constitute pretty nearly ninety per cent of the people of the United States. Why are they unable to care for them-

selves? If ninety per cent of our own people must be protected against their own personal desires and inclinations by the decisions of the remaining ten per cent, the United States has ceased to be a Republic. The people do not govern themselves but are in the hands of dictators whose self assumed superiority decides personal as well as public affairs.⁵⁶

Elsewhere Pierre noted that he had polled his own workers and their wives and found 80 percent of them wanting a change in the law. Upon the release of the White House-appointed Wickersham Commission's report on prohibition in 1931, the AAPA quoted from the report's findings that workers tended to view prohibition as class discrimination:

In the nature of things it is easier to shut up the open drinking places and stop the sale of beer, which was drunk chiefly by working men, than to prevent the wealthy from having and using liquor in their homes and in their clubs. Naturally when the industrial benefits of prohibition are pointed out, laboring men resent the insistence of employers who drink that their employees be kept from temptation. (p. 34)⁵⁷

The AAPA's most famous arguments are probably its financial ones. For example, in a 1932 pamphlet the group claimed that restoring the excise taxes on liquor would raise so much revenue that the personal income tax could be eliminated.⁵⁸ The group usually did not go that far in its public statements; more typically it argued that personal and corporate income taxes could be greatly reduced, or that new liquor-tax revenues would be enough to pay off the national debt in a few years. Prohibitionists often seized on AAPA claims of tax savings to argue that the ulterior motive of the group's wealthy leaders was to lower their tax bills. To be sure, the AAPA regularly appealed to that motive, especially in their private communications, and had done so even before the du Ponts took control of the organization. A 1925 fund-raising letter promised, "You will save in reduced taxes, after the Volstead Law is modified, whatever sum you contribute now."⁵⁹ A 1927 open letter from the AAPA to the House Ways and Means Committee called for modifying the Volstead Act so as to raise revenue and permit substantial reductions in personal and corporate income taxes; an AAPA "Report to Members" highlighted that proposal under the heading "Tax Reduction."⁶⁰ Relatively few of the group's pamphlets dealt with tax issues, but opponents could easily point to exceptions like *Cost of Prohibition and Your Income Tax* (1929, 1930), at a time when only the richest 2½ to 5 percent of the population paid any income tax at all.⁶¹ (Such appeals may have made sense in a way, as the AAPA strategy all along had been to court "the substantial men of the community," as opposed to the general public.⁶²) Along similar lines, the Du Pont Company's Finance Committee voted in August 1933 to contribute \$5,000 to the AAPA, because after repeal "the taxes payable by this Corporation will be reduced by something in excess of One Million Dollars."⁶³ A jaded Pierre even commented in 1936 that his work to repeal prohibition was a "mistake" because he should have been working to repeal the sixteenth amendment instead, as the income tax had given rise to

great abuses of power.⁶⁴ Yet one should not make too much of that comment, which was made in the aftermath of Roosevelt's "soak the rich" tax increase of 1935 and probably without serious consideration of the political feasibility of income-tax repeal. In earlier letters Pierre had said the income tax was efficient, especially if made into a flat tax.⁶⁵ And tax-savings arguments are fairly rare in Pierre's voluminous anti-prohibition correspondence, both public and private, especially before 1928.

The stock-market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression put a premium on economic arguments. The depression, of course, gave the lie to the belief that prohibition produced prosperity, and as it deepened, people became more restless and eager for change. The AAPA responded adroitly, issuing pamphlets with titles like *Does Prohibition Pay?* and *Prohibition and the Deficit*. Whereas past fiscal appeals, such as *The Cost of Prohibition and Your Income Tax*, would have gained little traction among the 95 percent of households who paid no income tax, the rising tide of red ink worried many. As an alternative to large deficits or a broad-based regressive tax like a general sales tax (which Pierre himself favored), a reinstated liquor tax had mass appeal.⁶⁶ On the expenditure side, the AAPA had already seized on Prohibition Commissioner James M. Doran's 1928 statement that adequate enforcement would cost \$300 million a year, or about seven times the current amount; the prospect of such costs, especially in light of growing doubts that prohibition was enforceable at all, was disturbing. Partly because of the depression and partly because of the AAPA's efforts, repeal became an increasingly popular cause among businessmen. A *Bradstreet's* poll of 140 prominent businessmen in late 1931 found that 55 percent believed repealing the Volstead Act would help business and another 14 percent thought revising it would help business. Twenty-four percent thought repeal would not aid business, and 7 percent had no opinion.⁶⁷

Growing social unrest during the early years of the depression also aided repealists' arguments about law and order, and amplified concerns about working-class resentment of prohibition. The unrest included large-scale rent strikes in New York and Chicago, some of them organized by the Communist Party. Contemporaries worried that destitute Americans would commit crimes. At the same time, news reports of a prohibition-related gangster "crime wave" in the early 1930s etched their way into the public consciousness, likely causing people to associate prohibition with social instability.⁶⁸ The law-and-order issue also relates to one general point of popular consensus, namely that a return to "the saloon" was unthinkable. "Saloon" had long since ceased to mean merely an establishment that served alcoholic drinks and had come to mean a general den of iniquity and lawlessness. Even the speak-easies that had mushroomed under prohibition were not viewed as negatively as the saloons. Pierre and other repealists knew that a winning argument had to include a credible alternative to the old-time saloon. Aside from the politics of repeal, they seem to have regarded some form of state regulation of alcoholic beverages as desirable in its own right.⁶⁹ Whatever their motiva-

tion, pro-repeal advocates in the business community threw themselves into researching and recommending new systems of state liquor control. With considerable input from Pierre, the AAPA published numerous pamphlets that looked at liquor control systems in various other countries, generally finding all of them superior to prohibition, and particularly touting the systems in Sweden and Quebec. Pierre would play a direct role in liquor control after repeal, as Delaware Liquor Commissioner from 1933 to 1938.

AAPA members worked doggedly in the 1932 presidential election, which, unlike the 1928 election, went their way. Raskob, an economic conservative like the du Ponts, had joined the Democrats in 1928 to advance the repeal cause and because he saw his ideal candidate in Al Smith, with whom he had become good friends. Like Raskob, Smith was Catholic, wet, and pro-business. The scurrilous “rum and Romanism” reaction to Smith in some quarters before and during the 1928 campaign fortified Raskob’s conviction that repeal was a moral issue as well as a political one and deepened his devotion to Smith.⁷⁰ Smith tapped Raskob to chair the Democratic National Committee shortly after gaining the presidential nomination in 1928. After Smith’s defeat, Raskob made himself indispensable to the party through his efforts at organizing, publicity, and fundraising; never before had a Democratic party chair been so active in non-presidential-election years. He bided his time on the prohibition issue, waiting until after the 1930 elections, which were good to both Democrats and wets, to make an all-out appeal to Democratic candidates to declare themselves for repeal. Toward that goal he worked tirelessly, prodding contenders such as Franklin D. Roosevelt and even mailing an anti-prohibition letter and questionnaire in 1931 to the 90,000 contributors to Smith’s 1928 campaign. As he called the party’s nominating convention to order in 1932, Raskob publicly made the case for a strong repeal plank, and prevailed. Roosevelt, who had heretofore attempted to straddle this divisive issue, finally threw his full weight behind it. A Republican Citizens’ Committee Against National Prohibition, formed in December 1931 by Lamont du Pont and several other AAPA directors, was unsuccessful in urging the Republicans to come out for repeal at their convention, but the party’s vague “wet-moist-dry” plank allowed the AAPA to have it both ways.⁷¹ They could claim that they had pushed the Republicans to a wetter position than ever before (against repeal, but for allowing the people to consider an amendment to modify prohibition), and they could also say that the two parties offered a clear choice on the prohibition issue. The Republican-heavy AAPA declined to endorse a presidential candidate, but Pierre and Raskob contributed large sums of money to Roosevelt’s campaign, even though Roosevelt was neither’s first choice and even though Roosevelt did not reappoint Raskob as party chairman that summer.⁷² The AAPA naturally trumpeted November’s sweeping Democratic victories as a mandate for repeal, and few disputed that claim. In February 1933, two weeks before Roosevelt took office, both houses of Congress, with majorities of both Democrats and Republicans, quickly

approved a constitutional amendment repealing the Eighteenth Amendment and sent it to the states.⁷³

AFTER REPEAL

The fundamentally conservative nature of the AAPA was muted during the frenzy of New Deal activism that was 1933. The du Ponts and Raskob were too preoccupied with shepherding repeal through the states to worry much about the New Deal. Moreover, despite his doubts about Roosevelt, Pierre was determined to make the most of the considerable political capital he had earned with the new administration. The du Ponts helped write the National Recovery Administration (NRA) code for the chemical industry, and Pierre accepted Roosevelt's invitation to serve on the Industrial Advisory Board as well as the National Labor Board. But du Pont disenchantment with the Roosevelt administration did not take long to surface. Within a year he had resigned both positions. He later told a correspondent:

I went to Washington in the winter of 1933-1934 in the hope that the army of industrialists who invaded the Capitol would be able to help to guide affairs, but after a stay of six months I became convinced that the invitation to industrialists was a mere sham, without any intention of following their ideas, which were really those of the Democratic platform which had been thrown aside.⁷⁴

The statement is consistent with the view of Burk and others that Pierre soured on the NRA when it became evident that big business would not be able to control it. The last clause is a common point in Pierre's post-1933 correspondence: Roosevelt ran on a perfectly sane and conservative platform (including a balanced budget, sound currency, and a 25 percent reduction in federal expenditures) but abandoned it in favor of the socialistic New Deal.

Pierre would denounce Roosevelt and the New Deal just as vehemently as he had denounced prohibition. An early grievance was the administration's failure to raise any objection to a senator's call in February 1934 for an investigation of Du Pont and other munitions makers, which became the landmark Senate Munitions Inquiry of 1934-1936. The next month, Pierre found himself in the minority in a National Labor Board ruling that threatened to eliminate company unions at Du Pont and General Motors. He requested a personal meeting with the president but was put off for six weeks; at their meeting in late April, Roosevelt offered no tangible assurance on the matter. By the end of June, Pierre had severed his ties to the New Deal and the Democratic party; he spurned a party fundraising appeal on the grounds that he disagreed with the administration's policies.⁷⁵

On August 22, 1934, former AAPA and Democratic National Committee executive Jouett Shouse announced the founding of the American Liberty League, a successor to the AAPA that, unlike the AAPA, lacked a specific focus and placed its reactionary politics in the foreground. The League pledged its support for the Constitution, "sanity in government," "sound money," and states' rights, but seemed to define itself mostly by its overheated rhetoric

“against hare-brained experiments and un-American creeds... government waste, foolish spending, useless taxation, bureaucratic arrogance, unsound experiments, impractical policies.”⁷⁶ The League had been Raskob’s brain-child, and its membership looked uncannily like the AAPA’s, including the du Ponts. Other famous repealists in the Liberty League included Al Smith, Pauline Sabin, and James Wadsworth. The League was a big operation, with a staff of more than fifty persons in thirty-one rooms, producing a barrage of pamphlets, bulletins, reports, editorials, and press releases.⁷⁷

The American Liberty League was one of the great flops in American political history. Whereas the depression had made the American people more receptive to the AAPA’s arguments, it made them less inclined to listen to abstract arguments that the popular and energetic new president’s “relief, recovery, and reform” program was socialistic, unconstitutional, and foolish. Unlike the post-1928 AAPA, the League was tone-deaf to public opinion and inept in its timing. Possibly its leaders erroneously assumed from their repeal victory that the public wanted repeal for the same reasons they did and would support a more general crusade against big government. The plutocratic leadership of the League provided a perfect foil for Roosevelt, who said he welcomed their hatred. After Roosevelt’s landslide re-election in 1936, the League was effectively dead and it officially disbanded in 1941. Pierre’s political correspondence over the next decade is consistent in his near-despair that Republicans tend to take the New Deal’s reforms for granted instead of fighting to reverse them.⁷⁸

CONCLUSION

Pierre S. du Pont’s motivations for opposing prohibition were manifold. Some were cultural, rooted in his French heritage, his social circle’s enjoyment of at least an occasional drink, and his best friend Raskob’s Catholicism. Pierre’s constitutional conservatism was a long-held ideology geared toward preserving the American legal and institutional set-up that generations of du Ponts had come to revere and which, of course, had served them very well. Prohibition was arguably symbolic politics for many prohibitionists; Pierre’s opposition was largely symbolic as well, as the Eighteenth Amendment and its enforcement statutes signified government encroachment on social and economic liberties but had little effect on him personally.⁷⁹ The much-hyped issue of tax savings from repeal appears overblown, as Pierre made that argument relatively rarely in his extensive anti-prohibition correspondence. Pierre’s economic motivations seem more general, and hard to separate from his ideological motivations: prohibition represented a crude power grab by the government and necessarily reduced the influence of businessmen. Public acceptance of this unenforceable law would only invite the government to overstep its boundaries even further, as with the draconian enforcement proposal in Delaware that pushed Pierre into activism. To Pierre, prohibition raised the specter of the worst type of government of all: an intrusive, corrupt, central-

ized government strong enough to menace private property but too weak to defend it.

State University of New York College at Oswego
 ranjit.dighe@oswego.edu.

ENDNOTES

1. Apologies to Alfred Chandler and Stephen Salisbury, *Pierre S. du Pont and the Making of the Modern Corporation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971) and Maureen Orth, Janet Huck, and Peter S. Greenberg, "Making of a Rock Star," *Newsweek*, October 27, 1975 for the title. Following standard usage, "du Pont" refers to the family and "Du Pont" to the company.

2. The definitive account of the prohibition movement is K. Austin Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). Kerr says the Anti-Saloon League's manufacture and business committee, led by S. S. Kresge, "enjoyed a fabulous success" in attracting business support and had received contributions from about 14,000 businessmen by mid-1918 (154). James H. Timberlake, *Prohibition and the Progressive Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963) says most businessmen had come to support national prohibition by 1919 and that their support may have been indispensable to the Eighteenth Amendment's enactment. John J. Rumbarger, *Profits, Power and Prohibition* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989) goes the farthest, arguing emphatically and tendentially that the original anti-saloon movement, and to a lesser extent the temperance and prohibition movements, was led by profit-minded capitalists. The usual rationale for business support of prohibition was that an alcohol-free workforce would be more productive and less prone to absenteeism.

3. This is not to deny the vital contributions of other groups, such as the Voluntary Committee of Lawyers and especially Pauline Sabin's Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform (WONPR). Michael A. Lerner argues that the WONPR's grassroots efforts were vastly more fruitful than the AAPA's top-down strategy, in *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 275-88. But the AAPA began the campaign and poured the most resources into repeal. Moreover, as Catherine Gilbert Murdock notes, "the AAPA probably had some role in the formation" of WONPR; Murdock, *Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol in America, 1870-1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 141. Among the earliest AAPA members was Sabin's husband Charles, and Sabin was a longtime friend of AAPA stalwart and former U.S. Senator James W. Wadsworth, whose campaigns she had vice-chaired in 1920 and 1926 (David E. Kyvig, *Repealing National Prohibition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979; Murdock, *Domesticating Drink*, 139-40).

4. The case that prohibition was actually a Progressive reform appears most explicitly in Timberlake, *Prohibition and the Progressive Movement*. Richard F. Hamm, *Shaping the Eighteenth Amendment: Temperance Reform, Legal Culture, and the Polity, 1880-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995) concurs and notes several important structural similarities between the prohibition movement and other Progressive social reform movements, notably the movement to ban child labor (1-15, 189-91).

5. Kyvig, *Repealing National Prohibition* and *Explicit and Authentic Acts: Amending the U.S. Constitution, 1776-1995* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996); Robert F. Burk, *The Corporate State and the Broker State: The du Ponts and American National Politics, 1925-1940* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

6. Kyvig, *Explicit and Authentic Acts*, 278.

7. Pierre S. du Pont to Samuel Rea, Feb 1, 1928, File 1023 (unless otherwise stated, all subsequent letters by Pierre are from the Papers of Pierre S. du Pont II, File 1023, and all archival material is from the Manuscripts Collection, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.); Pierre to P. H. Callahan, May 22, 1928; Pierre to Mrs. W. J. Passmore, Oct 13, 1928; Pierre to Henry Curran, Aug 18, 1928; Irene du Pont to Frederic S. Withington, April 26, 1929, Pierre File 1023; statement against Delaware's prohibition enforcement laws, Feb. 13, 1927; Pierre to L. W. Mims, Aug 22, 1928; Pierre to August A. Busch, March 15, 1929; Pierre to Joseph Dickson, Oct.

30, 1931; Pierre to Edward P. Phreamer, Aug. 11, 1928; Pierre to Wm. P. Smith, March 19, 1928, Foundation Archives, Exhibit Files, Box 349.

8. The du Ponts' corporatism manifested itself more directly during this time in their involvement in business associations such as the National Association of Manufacturers, the Chamber of Commerce, the National Industrial Conference Board, and the Special Conference *Committee*. See Colin Gordon, *New Deals: Business, Labor, and Politics in America, 1920-1935* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 140-58.

9. Chandler and Salsbury, 588.

10. Gerard Colby, *Du Pont Dynasty* (Secaucus, N.J.: Lyle Stuart Inc., 1984), 46, 55, 148.

11. Chandler and Salsbury, 47-78, 282-300, 352 (including quote).

12. Chandler and Salsbury, 381-86, 433.

13. Colby, 184.

14. Chandler and Salsbury, 394-422.

15. Pierre to Paul B. Belin, June 4, 1924, Selected Correspondence of Pierre S. du Pont of Longwood and His Brother-in-Law Paul Beck Belin.

16. Daniel Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 297; Burk, 21-26.

17. Pierre to William R. Willcox, Dec. 4, 1919, Series A, File 765; Pierre to Mrs. Harry Whitney, March 26, 1924, Series A, File 765.

18. John K. Winkler, *The du Pont Dynasty* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1935), 324; "Wealth Classification: List of Families" for 1900 and 1925, A Classification of American Wealth; viewed 2005; URL: http://www.raken.com/american_wealth/encyclopedia.

19. Chandler and Salsbury, 16; Marc Duke, *The du Ponts: Portrait of a Dynasty* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1976), 200; Leonard Mosley, *Blood Relations: The Rise and Fall of the du Ponts of Delaware* (New York: Atheneum, 1980), 347.

20. Pierre to E. J. Jones, Sept. 2, 1932; Pierre to Samuel Fisher, July 5, 1926.

21. Pierre to Mrs. A. Montague Aichel, April 15, 1952, File 918-15.

22. Chandler and Salsbury, 39, 144, 313, 333-35, 435.

23. Chandler and Salsbury, 39; Burk, 7-8; Raskob to P. H. Callahan, June 4, 1928, reprint (in Pierre File 1023); "Raskob Charges Republicans Aid Anti-Catholic War," *New York Times*, Nov. 1, 1928.

24. Duke, 175-76, 272-73.

25. Pierre to F. Lynwood Garrison, Feb. 20, 1928, Series A, File 765.

26. Various correspondence, Papers of Irene du Pont, Series J, File 164(B).

27. Joseph Frazier Wall, *Alfred I. du Pont: The Man and His Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 465.

28. Pierre to P. H. Callahan, May 22, 1928.

29. Pierre to G. F. Heffelbower, Aug. 22, 1928; Raskob to P. H. Callahan, June 4, 1928, reprint (in Pierre File 1023); Raskob, Dec. 12, 1928, Papers of John J. Raskob, File 1917; Robert A. Slayton, *Empire Statesman: The Rise and Redemption of Al Smith* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 150, 194, 261.

30. Chandler and Salsbury, 313.

31. C. E. Barnes to Lamnot du Pont, May 26, 1926; Lamnot to Pierre, May 28, 1926; Pierre to O. Garros & Fils, Aug. 27, 1930.

32. Pierre to Mrs. Victor du Pont, Sr., June 4, 1931.

33. Pierre to A. J. Kiser, May 14, 1928, File 1023-78. The president of the American Medical Association, Charles H. Mayo, endorsed national prohibition in 1918, while delegates at the association's convention that year passed a resolution opposing the use of alcohol as a beverage (Timberlake, 47). Pierre to Dr. Arthur Hunter, Dec. 18, 1935.

34. Quoted in Timberlake, 80.

35. Eleuthera Bradford du Pont Collection, 1799-1834, File 30.

36. Irene to Cyrus Keen, Aug. 24, 1915, Irene papers, Series H, File 137.

37. Irene to William Allen White, July 3, 1926, not sent; Irene to Edward FitzGerald, Oct. 22, 1915, Irene papers, Series H, File 148.

38. The Du Pont Company has been accused numerous times of requiring total abstinence of

its employees, especially during World War I, but the charge is overblown at best and most likely wrong. The apparent basis is two flawed bits of evidence. First, the Senate's 1918-19 hearings on *Brewing and Liquor Interests and German Propaganda* include a four-paragraph report of a 1916 investigation by Camillus Kessler for the United States Brewers Association about Du Pont. The report stated that Du Pont's advertising manager told Kessler that the company had long "absolutely prohibited the use of intoxicants by their employees and, now with the rush of war orders, the prohibition ban has been drawn even closer" (U.S. Senate, Subcommittee of the Judiciary, *Brewing and Liquor Interests and German Propaganda*, Hearings, 66th Congress, 1st Session, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1919, 232). As with the query to Irene, this comment seems to reflect a confusion of on- and off-the-job drinking. The investigation appears to have been slipshod, as Kessler finished it in two days without accomplishing his purpose, which was to verify a newspaper story about a Du Pont "scheme to regulate the amount of alcoholic liquor used by its workmen by the establishment of a canteen system within its factories." The canteen system, of course, did exist, and refutes the absolute-prohibition claim made in the report.

A decade later, economist and prohibitionist Irving Fisher revived Kessler's charge of wartime private prohibition at Du Pont, in a press release for his ironically titled new book *Prohibition Still at Its Worst* (New York: Alcohol Information Committee, 1927). The press release also stated that private prohibition by employers "is indorsed by Pierre S. du Pont," a distortion of something Pierre had written in response to a query by Fisher. Pierre immediately protested that he had in no way endorsed private prohibition, saying that he had merely said an employer has the right to set his own hiring policies. (Fisher apologized, saying that an assistant had slipped in the word "endorse" and recognizing that "this change might not represent your exact position." Irving Fisher, "For Release Thursday, November 1, 1928"; Pierre to Fisher, Nov. 6, 1928; Fisher to Pierre, Nov. 15, 1928). Earlier in their correspondence Pierre said that the company did not have a total-abstinence rule but allowed:

It is quite possible that there was an exception to the above statement during the war when strenuous efforts were being made in every direction to get the best out of the men, whether they were willing or not. I shall look this up and let you know, but I do not consider the point of great moment (Pierre to Irving Fisher, Sept. 7, 1928).

Possibly what happened during the war is that Du Pont converted some of its beer-and-wine "canteens" to alcohol-free canteens; by 1919 the company had at least one non-alcoholic saloon, this one at its plant in Haskell, New Jersey (John C. Gebhart to Pierre, May 20, 1930, File 1023-47). At any rate, Pierre apparently never did get back to Fisher on that point, and two months later came Fisher's press release. Articles based on that press release ran all over the country (see, for example, "Says Du Pont Plant Had Drinking Ban," *New York Times*, Nov. 2, 1928). The damage was done, and the reports in the *Times* article and Fisher's book have been echoed and embellished by countless researchers. For example, Burk, citing Gerard Colby, who in turn cited the *New York Times* article, reports that Pierre "had enforced a dry rule in company plants during World War I" and that "[p]lant managers had been empowered to 'properly decline to employ a man who uses intoxicants at any time on or off the job'" (Burk, 35; Colby, 269).

39. Burk, 11-14; H. M. Gitelman, "Welfare Capitalism Reconsidered," *Labor History* 33 (1992), 24n; "A Resolution..." April 2, 1919, Pierre File 705; U.S. Senate, *Violations of Free Speech and Rights of Labor, Part 45: Supplementary Exhibits: The Special Conference Committee* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), 16789; Timberlake, 96; Raskob to P. H. Callahan, June 4, 1928, Pierre File 1023.

40. Pierre to Mrs. R. R. Pennock, Jan. 16, 1924, File 945; Pierre to John C. Chaney, April 5, 1929, File 1023-38.

41. Kyvig, *Repealing National Prohibition*, 42-3, 49, 80; Kyvig, *Explicit and Authentic Acts*, 258-61. As Kyvig notes, although the child-labor amendment passed both houses of Congress in the spring of 1924, the organized opposition was successful in derailing ratification at the state level.

42. Pierre to Stuyvesant Fish, May 24, 1922.

43. To be sure, Pierre's credentials as a laissez-faire conservative are open to question. By

modern-day standards, Pierre is no libertarian; consider this line, for example: “If some measure of drunkenness is a menace to future civilizations, let us sterilize the drunkard” (Pierre to Irving Fisher, July 27, 1928). And whatever the validity of the oft-repeated charges that the du Ponts beat the drums for American involvement in World War I so as to enrich themselves, the Du Pont Company was undoubtedly one of Big Government’s greatest beneficiaries during that episode. Sheldon Richman, “A Matter of Degree, Not Principle: The Founding of the American Liberty League,” *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 6 (Spring 1982): 145-67 argues that the du Ponts were too opportunistic in their relations with the government to have been true libertarians. Burk makes much the same case in *The Corporate State and the Broker State*. Even so, the themes of laissez-faire and small decentralized government are sufficiently strong and consistent in Pierre’s correspondence as to appear something more than mere humbug, even if Pierre did not always follow those ideals in practice. Perhaps it is best to regard Pierre as similar to countless other small-government conservatives who make an exception for the military budget, but *sui generis* in also owning a controlling interest in the world’s largest munitions company.

44. Pierre to Mrs. R. R. Pennock, Jan. 16, 1924; Pierre to Fred B. Smith, Jan. 19, 1924; both in File 945; Pierre to Thomas A. Painter, Feb. 13, 1936, File 1173.

45. Pierre to Belin, June 12, 1924, Selected Correspondence.

46. Pierre to Belin, June 4, 1924, Selected Correspondence.

47. “Summary of Laws Prohibiting Intoxicating Liquor...” mimeo, Feb. 16, 1926; John P. Nields to Pierre, Feb. 28, 1925.

48. Irenee to G. Layton Grier, June 9, 1926, Irenee File 122.

49. Irenee to E. W. Wootten, March 5, 1927; Irenee to William S. Pritchett, et al., Feb. 9, 1926; Irenee to Grier, June 9, 1926; all in Irenee File 122.

50. Irenee to Wootten, March 5, 1927, Irenee File 122.

51. Pierre to W. A. Simonton, March 13, 1925; Pierre to Claude A. Buckeley, Aug. 23, 1926.

52. Pierre to “The Employers of Labor in the State of Delaware,” Jan. 4, 1927; Geo. W. Arberger to Advisory Committee, memo, April 22, 1927.

53. Pierre to Julian Codman, Jan. 3, 1928.

54. Association Against the Prohibition Amendment (AAPA), *Who How Why of the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment*, pamphlet, undated (circa 1929), 7; AAPA, “A Businessman’s View of Prohibition,” pamphlet, Dec. 15, 1929, 11. Both from Papers of the AAPA, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

55. Pierre, “Why I Am Against Prohibition,” *Liberty*, Nov. 3, 1928, 14.

56. AAPA, “A Businessman’s View of Prohibition,” pamphlet, Dec. 15, 1929, 5, Papers of the AAPA.

57. Pierre to W. P. Smith, April 21, 1928; AAPA, “Handy Digest of the Wickersham Report,” pamphlet, Jan. 1932, 13, Papers of the AAPA.

58. AAPA, *32 Reasons for Repeal*, pamphlet, 1932, 30, Papers of the AAPA.

59. G. C. Hinckley to Raskob, July 2, 1925, Raskob File 102.

60. “Half Billion Income Tax Cut Possible – New Sources of Revenue Indicated,” AAPA flier; AAPA, “Report to Members”; both from Irenee File 122.

61. AAPA, *Cost of Prohibition and Your Income Tax*, May 1929 and Second Edition, July 1930, Papers of the AAPA; Mark H. Leff, *The Limits of Symbolic Reform: The New Deal and Taxation, 1933-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 96.

62. Pierre to L. F. Loree, May 9, 1928, File 1023-38.

63. M. D. Fisher to Lamot (memo), Aug. 8, 1933, Administrative Papers of the Du Pont Company.

64. Pierre to L. D. Staplin, Jan. 16, 1936, File 765; Pierre to Thomas A. Painter, May 15, 1936.

65. Pierre to American Taxpayers League, Oct. 18, 1927; Pierre to J. A. Arnold, Jan. 27, 1930; Pierre to J. A. Arnold, June 20, 1932, File 1119.

66. Pierre to Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., May 9, 1932, File 1173.

67. AAPA, *The Cost of Prohibition and Your Income Tax*, pamphlet, 1929, 1, Papers of the AAPA; *Bradstreet’s*, Nov. 7, 1931, 855.

68. Robert E. Weir, “Rent Strikes,” in *Class in America: An Encyclopedia Q-Z*, ed. Robert E. Weir (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007), 696-98; Ryan Johnson, Shawn Everett Kantor,

and Price Fishback, "Striking at the Roots of Crime: The Impact of Social Welfare Spending on Crime During the Great Depression," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. W12825, Jan. 2007, 1; Frederick Lewis Allen, *Since Yesterday* (New York: Bantam, 1965), 25.

69. Indeed, some researchers have argued that alcohol regulation was a form of capitalist control over the working class. In particular, see Rumbarger, *Power, Profits, and Prohibition*; and Levine, "The Birth of American Alcohol Control."

70. "Raskob Charges Republicans Aid Anti-Catholic War," *New York Times*, Nov. 1, 1928; Kyvig, *Repealing National Prohibition*, 84.

71. Robert Cruise McManus, "Raskob," *North American Review*, Jan. 1931, 10-15; Raskob to Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 31, 1931, Raskob File 1989; Raskob to "Dear Friend," Nov. 21, 1931, and enclosed letter and questionnaire, Pierre File 765-2; Kyvig, *Repealing National Prohibition*, 143-58.

72. Kyvig, *Repealing National Prohibition*, 167.

73. *Ibid.*, 172.

74. Pierre to Tom Garrett, Jan. 10, 1936, File 765.

75. Matthew Ware Coulter, *The Senate Munitions Inquiry of the 1930s* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997), 16, 139-42; Burk, 129-34.

76. "Why You Should Join the American Liberty League," brochure, quoted in Richman, 146.

77. William H. A. Carr, *The du Ponts of Delaware* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1964), 308-309.

78. Various, including Pierre to J. B. Detwiler, Dec. 20, 1949, File 765.

79. On symbolic dry politics, see Joseph R. Gusfeld, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1963).