

## **Unmaking Manly Smokes: Church, State, Governance, and the First Anti-Smoking Campaigns in Montreal, 1892-1914**

Jarrett Rudy

Volume 12, numéro 1, 2001

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/031143ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/031143ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

### Éditeur(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

### ISSN

0847-4478 (imprimé)

1712-6274 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

### Citer cet article

Rudy, J. (2001). Unmaking Manly Smokes: Church, State, Governance, and the First Anti-Smoking Campaigns in Montreal, 1892-1914. *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, 12(1), 95–114. <https://doi.org/10.7202/031143ar>

### Résumé de l'article

Cet article examine une série de campagnes contre le tabagisme de la Women's Christian Temperance Union de Montréal, qui faisaient partie des campagnes locales, provinciales et fédérales en faveur d'une limite d'âge à l'usage du tabac et de l'interdiction de la cigarette. Les campagnes montréalaises ont connu des échecs percutants comparativement à celles entreprises dans d'autres provinces. D'après l'article, si l'exclusion des femmes de la politique officielle et le symbolisme tout particulièrement masculin associé à la cigarette représentent des facteurs importants pour expliquer la défaillance des campagnes de la WCTU de Montréal, c'est la démographie religieuse de la ville qui explique la spécificité du cas. En effet, l'article met en évidence le credo évangéliste et social de la WCTU de Montréal et les racines théologiques des anti-prohibitionnistes de la ville. Enfin de compte, le problème est replacé dans un débat au sujet de l'ordre libéral du début du XXe siècle et au rôle approprié de l'Église et de l'État dans la formation morale des individus.

## Unmaking Manly Smokes: Church, State, Governance, and the First Anti-Smoking Campaigns in Montreal, 1892-1914

JARRETT RUDY

**B**etween 1890 and 1914, the Dominion, Provincial, and local organizations of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) led Canada's first campaigns for anti-smoking laws. These campaigns led to the passage of several age-restriction laws at the provincial and federal levels, yet they were considered a defeat by most WCTU supporters. The campaigns were particularly unsuccessful in Quebec. In the 1890s, when the targets of WCTU legislative efforts were provincial governments, Quebec was one of only two provinces (the other being Manitoba) that did not legislate age restrictions for smokers. In 1914, the Quebec WCTU was the only provincial union to pull out of the Dominion WCTU cigarette-prohibition campaign. Support for these Dominion and provincial anti-smoking campaigns was particularly weak in Montreal.

Despite these failures, the Montreal WCTU anti-smoking campaigns provide insights into at least three kinds of questions that elucidate the dynamics of what historian Ian McKay has called the "liberal order" of governance in Canada.<sup>1</sup> First, it is a useful case study of women's public activities and the difficulties that faced women who sought to influence formal politics before enfranchisement. Indeed, if, like Mary P. Ryan, we deem formal political representation in the nineteenth century to be a ritual of increasingly class-inclusive male power, then the WCTU was challenging fundamental assumptions underlying that ritual of supposed male power at the heart of late-nineteenth-century liberal governance.<sup>2</sup> Discursively, WCTU members fastened their public campaigns to the private sphere, taking on the role of mothers concerned about what doctors considered to be the degenerative effect of smoking on boys. Social gospel-inspired churches provided these women an important platform for personal participation in the public sphere.<sup>3</sup>

---

1 Ian McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review* 81/4 (December 2000): 617-645.

2 Mary Ryan, "Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 259-288.

3 On this theme, see, for example, Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

Secondly, the weakness of the Montreal WCTU's legislative anti-smoking campaigns serves to highlight some of the more controversial aspects of the social gospel before the First World War. The WCTU's anti-smoking position originated in a particularly gendered vision of social gospel Protestantism concerned about national racial degeneration.<sup>4</sup> Because of the WCTU's proposed infringement on individual rights – in the case of age restrictions, the rights of parents and, in the case of prohibition, of smokers and commerce – its call for the state to play a role in the moral formation of individuals was far more controversial than has been acknowledged by much of Canadian social gospel historiography.<sup>5</sup> In Montreal, a minority of people thought the state should play this role.<sup>6</sup> While at least one historian has asserted that French Canadian opposition was the root of the failure of the anti-smoking movement, few historians have sought out the reasons French Canadians were antagonistic to this WCTU cause.<sup>7</sup> French Canadians opposed cigarette prohibition because of their Roman Catholicism, and the French language provided an insurmountable obstacle for the WCTU. Still, in Montreal, the weakness of the anti-smoking movement was the result of more than just the opposition of French Canadians. In particular, Protestant denominations that were less influenced by the social gospel also opposed prohibition measures.

A third reason that the WCTU's campaigns to restrict tobacco consumption failed, beyond the factors specific to Quebec, can be found in the dominant cultural meaning of smoking and its relationship to the liberal order. During the years immediately before the First World War, according to societal norms, smoking was an everyday ritual of the liberal order.<sup>8</sup> Like no other ritual of con-

---

4 Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), especially chapter one.

5 See Allen as well as Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996) and Sharon Cook, "Through Sunshine and Shadow": *The Women's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).

6 Fernande Roy outlines the debates around liberalism in Quebec in *Progrès, Harmonie, Liberté. Le libéralisme des milieux d'affaires francophones de Montréal au tournant du siècle* (Montreal: Boréal, 1988). Since Roy's book, others have stayed within the parameters she sets out. See Yvan Lamonde, *Louis-Antoine Dessaulles, 1818-1895: un seigneur libéral et anti-cléricale* (Saint-Laurent: Fides, 1994); Yvan Lamonde (dir.) *Combats Libéraux au XX<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Montreal: Fides, 1995).

7 Ruth Dupré, "To Smoke or Not to Smoke: that was the Question": *the Fight over the Prohibition of Cigarettes at the turn of the century* (Montreal: Cahier de recherche, École des Hautes Études Commerciales, 1997).

8 See my "Manly Smokes: Tobacco Consumption and the Construction of Identities in Industrial Montreal, 1888-1914," (Ph.D. thesis: McGill University, 2001). For other "everyday rituals of political order," see John Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990); Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto:

sumption, smoking, if done “properly,” reflected and served to legitimize beliefs about inclusion, exclusion, and hierarchy on the basis of gender, class, and race that were at the core of nineteenth-century liberalism.<sup>9</sup> The process of the legitimation of these values occurred in legislatures as well as on a day-to-day level. The tension between liberal preoccupations with self-possession and rationality, on one hand, and smoking’s addictive nature, on the other, made smoking a particularly useful and tenacious ritual of liberal values. The threat of addiction, of which there was an awareness in the nineteenth century, made smoking a surmountable, but not insignificant risk, and thus, a particularly meaningful display of rationality, self-control, and proper liberal masculinity.<sup>10</sup> The WCTU, in its opposition to smoking, was not opposing the liberal order. Rather, these women were opposing the notion that smoking was a ritual of the liberal order. In sum, by looking at the WCTU and its opponents, this article explores the unique and sometimes-contradictory alliance between cultural groups in Montreal and the extent to which the liberal order shifted due to collectivist demands for a new relationship between the (male) individual and the state.

## I. Opposing Tobacco

The WCTU’s concern over smoking was part of a larger concern over national physical and mental degeneration.<sup>11</sup> For example, smoking was seen as endangering the nation’s military ability by hindering the physical development of boys. They pointed to the experience of other countries as cautionary tales. The WCTU’s “Catéchisme de Tempérance” cited a German law that forbade the sale of tobacco to minors (under sixteen years old) because smoking stunted the growth of German youth into strong soldiers.<sup>12</sup> In the House of Commons, Robert Holmes quoted a British Parliamentarian who alleged that the defeat of the Spanish in the Spanish-American War and the French in the Franco-

---

University of Toronto Press, 1997); Mary P. Ryan, and *Civic wars: democracy and public life in the American city during the nineteenth century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); David Scobey, “Anatomy of the promenade: the politics of bourgeois sociability in nineteenth-century New York,” *Social History* (May 1992): 203-227.

9 My comparison of these consuming rituals is drawn from Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, ed., *Drink in Canada: Historical Essays* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993); Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992); and Jordan Goodman, Paul E. Lovejoy and Andrew Sherratt, eds., *Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

10 Rudy, “Manly Smokes.”

11 Matthew Hilton has made this argument for Britain. See *Smoking in British Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 162-175.

12 Société chrétienne de tempérance des dames de la province de Québec (WCTU), “Catéchisme de tempérance à l’usage des familles et des écoles de la province de Québec,” pp 13-14. Reproduced in the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions (CIHM) collection, fiche number 26045.

Prussian War “was easily traceable to the habit of cigarette smoking.”<sup>13</sup> Another MP quoted an American doctor who claimed that three times as many army recruits during the Spanish-American War were rejected than had been in the Civil War because they lacked “the vitality necessary to make a good soldier,” with the cigarette apparently being the cause.<sup>14</sup>

Another WCTU pamphlet, “Testimony Concerning the ‘Cigarette’,” argued that smoking put the country’s businesses at a disadvantage. It cited American businessmen who would not hire employees who smoked cigarettes and Montreal MLA Michael Hutchinson who observed that, “The boy who smokes Cigarettes [sic] is handicapped when seeking a situation. He must take second place every time; and rightly so.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, the nation’s business would also be condemned to second place in a competitive market. Liberal ideals of self-control were front and centre in the mind of Montreal MP Robert Bickerdike when he noted that “we are all agreed that the boy who is addicted to the cigarette habit cannot succeed in this country.”<sup>16</sup>

According to the WCTU, smoking also contributed to the moral degeneration of the race and nation. Smoking played a part in the construction of male delinquency, as the WCTU claimed that smoking led boys to steal tobacco or to steal money to buy tobacco. The Reverend Elson I. Rexford of the High School of Montreal wrote that any group that worked “to discourage the use of tobacco by our boys is entitled to receive the active support of all who are interested in the development of good Canadian Citizenship.”<sup>17</sup> Occasionally this sentiment was expressed in terms of race. The Montreal *Witness*, for example, editorialized, “How infinitely more should the country sacrifice a luxury which is degenerating our race!”<sup>18</sup>

While the language of the WCTU and its supporters often invoked secular medical authorities, medical advances did not explain the timing of these anti-smoking campaigns. Rather, it was the rise of the social gospel, and its urge to create Heaven on Earth, that propelled the WCTU to organize and oppose smoking.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, in terms of the total Protestant population in Montreal, a

13 House of Commons *Debates*, 1 April 1903, p.827.

14 House of Commons *Debates*, 23 March 1904, p.338.

15 WCTU, “Testimony Concerning the ‘Cigarette’,” CHIM collection, fiche 73873, 11.

16 House of Commons *Debates*, 1 April 1903, pp.820-821.

17 WCTU, “Catéchisme de Tempérance,” 4 and 16.

18 Montreal *Witness*, 28 March 1903, 4.

19 In the nineteenth century, the most significant medical discovery related to tobacco was the isolation of nicotine as a poisonous element in 1828. The link between the cigarette and lung cancer was established in 1950. See the essays in Stephen Lock, *et al.*, *Ashes to Ashes: The History of Smoking and Health* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998). A parallel to social gospel interest in the consequences of smoking can be found in the rise of eugenics among social gospelers. See Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990).

disproportionate portion of the WCTU's membership came from the Presbyterian, Methodist, and smaller social gospel-influenced churches. One of the few existing Montreal WCTU membership lists broke down the 1888 membership by church: Presbyterians made up 44.8 percent; Methodists, 24.9 percent; Congregationalists, 9.6 percent; and Baptists, 4.3 percent. Anglicans, less influenced by the social gospel, made up 12.7 percent of the membership. In comparison, the 1891 Census enumerated Montreal's Protestant population at 45 percent Anglican, 34 percent Presbyterian, 15.6 percent Methodist, 3.5 percent Baptist and 2 percent Congregationalist.<sup>20</sup>

The WCTU's criticisms of smoking were part of a female strand of the social gospel belief that stressed the role of women in reforming and protecting Canadian society. A key element of this reform agenda was altering male pastimes.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, WCTU literature frequently went beyond questions of children's smoking to call for a reform of activities seen as masculine. In its "Catéchisme de Tempérance," designed to be read in schools and homes, the Montreal WCTU asserted that smoking was a waste of money and that it was especially harmful to the poor as it took bread off their tables. The pamphlet maintained that smoking led men to drink and to enter vice-filled areas.<sup>22</sup> At the turn of the century, the WCTU also successfully campaigned against men smoking on tramways as unfair male control of space.

In response, some 45,000 Francophone and Anglophone men of all classes came together and petitioned the municipality to allow smoking.<sup>23</sup> Men did not respond well to women's attack on smoking. The Quebec WCTU narcotics division superintendent remembered that in her first three years in the position, she had learned "to walk softly, act thoughtfully...[and be] 'Wise as serpents and harmless as doves,' if any real good is to be accomplished."<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, she reported to her Dominion counterpart that many members "hesitate in coming out openly on this question for fear of annoying some one [sic]."<sup>25</sup>

To reform men morally and protect the future of the nation, the WCTU began its campaigns by focusing on preventing boys from smoking. Doctors provided important support for WCTU beliefs about the dangers of boys' smoking. Medical men were unanimous in their belief that smoking was perilous until boys reached maturity, at which point moderate smoking, an exhibition of

20 Montreal WCTU, *Annual Report* (1888), 19. These annual reports are housed in the Rare Book Room, McGill University Library. Canada, *Census*, 1891, pp. 204 and 312-13.

21 Cook, "Through Sunshine and Shadow", pp. 6 and 75-133.

22 "Catéchisme de tempérance," 13.

23 Rudy, "Manly Smokes," 67-72.

24 J. MacL. Metcalfe, "Report of the Department of Narcotics," *12th Annual Report*, Quebec WCTU (1895), 65.

25 Sara Rowell Wright, "Report of Department of Narcotics: Quebec," *8th Report of the Dominion WCTU* (1895), 87.

self-control, was considered benign.<sup>26</sup> The WCTU claimed that it was its duty as mothers to protect boys from tobacco. Yet even WCTU members seemed to be failing in this quest to prevent boys from participating in what was widely understood as a rite of passage to manhood.<sup>27</sup> Their frustration is summed up in WCTU activist Annie L. Jack's poem "A Lesson Learned":

My boy learned to smoke,  
Who taught him the filthy act?  
And who will own at the judgement day  
In the teaching they took a part;  
I tried to keep him pure  
And clean as boy should be,  
But in the world he fell so low  
And nothing can comfort me.

Is that the babe I've kissed?  
O vile polluted breath,  
And tainted blood with the poison weed,  
That leads to a slow, sure death.  
My bonnie, sweet-mouthed boy,  
Tobacco stained to-day,  
We need more strength in this hour of need.<sup>28</sup>

The WCTU promoted the use of the state to compensate for this failure on the part of parents. This use of the state differentiated believers in the social gospel from the Evangelical Protestantism and Revivalism that had been developing in North America since the 1830s. Christians who adhered to early Evangelical Protestantism saw the relationship between God and the individual as supreme.<sup>29</sup> In order for individuals to stop smoking, they had only to ask Christ for help and they would lose their desire to smoke.<sup>30</sup> The extent to which Christian denominations supported WCTU anti-smoking motions varied according to how far these motions went in limiting individual freedoms. In the hope of saving the nation, those influenced by the social gospel were not only willing to limit the right of parents to govern their children, they were also willing to prohibit the sale of cigarettes to adults.

---

26 R.B. Walker, "Medical Aspects of Tobacco Smoking and the Anti-tobacco Movement in Britain in the Nineteenth Century," *Medical History* 24 (1980): 391-402. For Montreal examples and loss of self-control as addiction, see Rudy, "Manly Smokes," 35-38.

27 Cook, "Through Sunshine and Shadow," 84.

28 Annie L. Jack, "A Lesson Learned," *8th Annual Report, Quebec WCTU* (1891), 39.

29 Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion*, 138.

30 H.T. Crossley, *Practical Talks on Important Themes* (Montreal: William Briggs Publishing, 1895), 194-200. For more on Crossley see Semple, *The Lord's Dominion*, 219-220.

The Methodist church was the denomination most willing to take up the entire WCTU anti-smoking agenda. Not only did their Sunday Schools encourage pupils to take the “Triple Pledge” against smoking, drinking and swearing, their churches held an annual “Cigarette Sunday” across Canada, when special lessons on the evils of smoking were delivered to children. In 1892, the Montreal Methodist Conference was the first citywide church to pass an anti-smoking motion.<sup>31</sup> The Methodists would continue to champion WCTU anti-smoking motions when these proposals moved from age restrictions on smoking to a complete prohibition of the cigarette. The Presbyterians showed similar support. The Montreal Presbyterian Recorder published anti-tobacco articles that coincided with the Quebec WCTU’s first tobacco age-restriction campaigns in 1892, and the church officially opposed smoking in 1908.<sup>32</sup> In 1912, a Presbyterian and a Methodist minister accompanied the WCTU delegation that met Prime Minister Borden, calling for the prohibition of the cigarette.<sup>33</sup>

This campaign was not restricted to the social elite or middle class. Some WCTU supporters could also be found among the working class. They expressed their disapproval using the “fire and brimstone” language that historians have found to be typical of turn of the century working-class revivalist groups like the Salvation Army.<sup>34</sup> T.C. Vickers, a worker with the CPR in Montreal, wrote Prime Minister Laurier in 1907, disappointed that Laurier had not introduced tobacco prohibition legislation. Vickers invoked the God-given collective right to fresh air. “[You] cannot walk the streets to Breathe the Beautiful fresh aire [sic] that a Loving God has made for us,” he complained. “But some Dirty Smoker thinks he has a Perfect right to Polute [sic] it.” Vickers encouraged Laurier to convert, “to come over on the Clean side.” For Vickers, it was not a matter of his own or Laurier’s opinions on tobacco, but the Lord’s, and this, he told Laurier, was written in the book of Revelations chapter IX, verses 17 to 19:

And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breast-plates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

31 *Sunday School Banner*, March 1904, p.iii. *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Fifth Session of the Montreal Annual Conference of the Methodist Church* (Montreal: William Briggs Publisher, 1892), United Church Collection, Archives nationales de Québec à Montréal (ANQ-M), p.84.

32 “Dr. Richardson on Tobacco,” *The Presbyterian Recorder* (December 1892): 330. “Digest of Minutes,” Thirty-Fourth Session of the Synod of Montreal and Ottawa, p.23. ANQ-M, 11-0-001-03-06-001B-01.

33 “To Prohibit Cigarettes,” *Montreal Weekly Witness* (20 February 1912): 3.

34 Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late- Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 157.

By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, with them they do hurt.<sup>35</sup>

Opponents of smoking were linked by a shared commitment to the social gospel. Thus, in places where social gospel denominations made up a large percentage of the population, the campaign was particularly strong. Indeed, in 1894, the Dominion WCTU reported that the Eastern Township Unions in Quebec, where social gospel Protestants were more numerous, were taking the lead in the province's anti-tobacco campaign.<sup>36</sup> Montreal, however, was not fertile soil for the WCTU. In 1891, denominations heavily influenced by the social gospel made up only 13.1 percent of the population and this number was in decline as the percentage of Roman Catholics rose.<sup>37</sup>

## II. Opposing Prohibition

In Montreal, important newspapers opposed regulating the age of smokers, arguing that it was a case of the state usurping the rights of parents. The *Montreal Gazette*, for example, argued that the state could not fulfill these responsibilities: "The chances are that the bill will not catch the boy. Attempts to substitute the statute book for the parental rod have not hitherto been terribly successful."<sup>38</sup> Later it linked banning children from theatres and invoking curfew laws with anti-cigarette laws as attempts "to do by statute what can only be effectively done by home influence, by a father's or a mother's precept and advice."<sup>39</sup> *Le Canada*, the Montreal Liberal Party daily, editorialized in 1907 that "we must leave to parental authority, exercised directly or delegated to the professors and school masters, the responsibility of taking measures to eradicate a vice which does not interest society but the individual."<sup>40</sup> *La Patrie* invoked parents' rights over their children: "Les gens ont le droit d'être libres en cette matière et pour la répression chez les enfants, c'est aux parents qu'il appartient de l'exercer."<sup>41</sup>

---

35 T.C. Vickers to Wilfrid Laurier, 6 March 1907, Laurier Papers, National Archives of Canada (NAC), MG26 G vol 452, microfilm reel C-845, pp.121093-7.

36 *7th Annual Report of the Dominion WCTU*, (1894), 76. Archives of Ontario (AO), MU 8398.3.

37 Canada, *Census*, 1891, 1901, 1911.

38 *Montreal Gazette* (20 February 1893): 4.

39 "Children and Theatres," *Montreal Gazette* (3 April 1903): 4.

40 "The Cigarette," translated in the *Canadian Cigar and Tobacco Journal* (May 1907): 17, from *Le Canada*, 12 March 1907.

41 "Contre les cigarettes," *La Patrie* (4 December 1907): 4.

The dominant Christian churches in the city were also reticent about the use of the state to police individual morality. The Anglican church, the largest Protestant denomination in Montreal (10.8 percent of population in 1891) and the Roman Catholic church, the largest religious group in the city (73.2 percent of the population in 1891), held superficially similar positions on tobacco. The Anglicans gave limited support to the WCTU campaign against boys' smoking, but opposed prohibition.<sup>42</sup> In 1899, when a motion opposing children's smoking went to the floor of the sessional meeting of the Montreal Anglican Archdiocese, there was great controversy. Dr. D.L. Davidson,<sup>43</sup> an Anglican with a Methodist background, declared that "no man had a right to foul God's fresh pure air with tobacco smoke"<sup>44</sup> before moving the following:

That this Synod deplores the rapid extension and abuse of tobacco and cigarette smoking amongst all classes of the community and in particular amongst the Clergy of the Church, and amongst the young; and should express the hope that all members of the Church, Clerical, and Lay, may, by example and precept, do what they can to restrain the growing evil.<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps purposefully, the resolution avoided any suggestion that the state take on the role of a parent. Some openly mused about the influence of the social gospel within the Anglican Church. Dean Johnston of Montreal, for example, recounted that when he came to Canada in 1859, out of seventy clergymen in the Synod, only twelve did not smoke. The same, he said, was true in 1899, yet there seemed to be "a remarkable setting-in" against smoking and even more so against intemperance. There was a growing "recognition on the part of the clergy that an indulgence in smoking and drinking was detrimental to the progress of Christian work."<sup>46</sup> In contrast to the followers of denominations heavily influenced by the social gospel, many Anglicans would not support the prohibition of any tobacco product. Layman Mr. A.G.B. Chilton maintained that smoking fouled "God's Fresh pure air" only as much as onions did. Furthermore, the Reverend Mr. Clayton, a clergyman from Bolton, did not believe "that the person who occasionally indulged in a glass of wine or a quiet smoke was cursed by the d---l and was on the road to h---l. He strongly discountenanced the abuse of liquor or tobacco, but did not believe that either were harmful if indulged in moderation."<sup>47</sup> J.I. Cooper, historian of the

42 Canada, *Census*, (1891), 312-313.

43 J.I. Cooper. *The Blessed Communion: the Origins and History of the Diocese of Montreal, 1760-1960* (Montreal: Archives' Committee of the Diocese of Montreal, 1960), 118-119.

44 *Montreal Star* (18 January 1899): 7.

45 *40<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the Synod of the Diocese of Montreal* (17 January 1899): 34-35.

46 *Montreal Star* (18 January 1899): 7.

47 *Ibid.* For another affirmation in a more popular source that smoking was not considered a sin, see, "Etiquette," *Montreal Family Herald and Weekly Star* (5 February 1895): 6.

Anglican Church in the diocese of Montreal, has examined the diocese's attitudes to prohibition, finding that "Officially, Anglicanism did not go beyond enjoining moderation and insisting on individual responsibility..."<sup>48</sup>

Roman Catholics occasionally spoke out against children's smoking, putting it in terms of racial degeneration. In 1887, for example, *Le Monde Illustré* gave a prize for the best essay on the "Influence pernicieuse du tabac sur l'avenir des races." Among the judges of the eighteen entries were Abbé Marcoux, the Vice-Rector of Laval University, and writer Raphaël Bellemare.<sup>49</sup> In 1892, the Archbishop of Quebec, Cardinal Elzéar-Alexandre Taschereau, supported the Quebec WCTU's call for a ban on children's smoking. Many other prominent Roman Catholics added their voices to the age-restriction campaign. Conservative Premier L.-O. Taillon quoted from a journal of hygiene during debate over a 1893 bill to limit smoking by boys, noting that tobacco was harmful to all and thus especially to boys. Later, the future Liberal premier F.-G. Marchand supported prohibiting children from buying cigarettes, saying "that cigarette smoking led to the degeneration of the race."<sup>50</sup>

Adult smoking, however, was never defined as a vice. In Montreal, for example, while the Roman Catholic Church was concerned about morality and especially about children becoming "le réceptacle de tous les vices," lists of vices in the Diocese of Montreal's official declarations included blasphemy, debauchery, going to cabarets, and drunkenness – but never smoking.<sup>51</sup> Strikingly, Roman Catholic priests and temperance organizations in Montreal confined themselves to concerns over alcohol abuse and occasionally gambling, but never smoking.<sup>52</sup> From 1905 to 1910 the most powerful temperance movement in Montreal, La Ligue antialcoolique, never expanded its interests to tobacco, and even its position on alcohol was for moderation not prohibition. What is more, while campaigning for the "suppression" of alcohol, the Ligue

48 Cooper, *The Blessed Communion*, 125.

49 X.Y.Z., "L'Influence Pernicieuse du Tabac," *Le Monde Illustré* (31 December 1887) : 275; *Le Monde Illustré* (21 January 1888): 293.

50 *Montreal Gazette* (21 November 1895): 1.

51 See *Les Mandements: Lettres Pastorales, circulaires et autres Documents publiés dans le Diocèse de Montreal* (Montreal: Arbour et Laperle) from 1890 to 1914. For examples of list of "Vices" see *Tome II*, "Lettre Pastorale de Nos Seigneurs les archevêques et évêques des Provinces ecclésiastiques de Québec, de Montréal et Ottawa: Dangers des Mauvaises Compagnies," p.662. Les Archives de l'Archevêché de Montréal.

52 See numerous letters in the dossier "Campagnes de Tempérance par les évêques de Montréal: Correspondance Générale, 1882-1906," *Les Archives de l'Archevêché de Montréal*. For other Catholic temperance organizations in Montreal see the "Nouveau Manuel de la Ligue du Coeur de Jesus" in the dossier on the "Ligue du Sacre-Coeur (fédération des), 1905-1924" and "Société de Tempérance de l'église St.Pierre" in the dossier entitled "Société de Tempérance et de charité établies dans le diocèse de Montréal," all at *Les Archives de l'Archevêché de Montréal*.

sought to limit liquor licenses, not call for prohibition.<sup>53</sup> The Montreal Irish Roman Catholic newspaper, the *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, also supported a position of moderation and not prohibition, while the editor of the *Journal de Françoise* called on the Fédération Nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste to support age-limit legislation but oppose prohibition of the cigarette. As with alcohol, it was only the *abuse* of tobacco that was a sin and as such, tobacco *consumption* fell within a conception of liberty that held one could consume all things that God put on the Earth.<sup>54</sup> Several Roman Catholic leaders opposed prohibition of alcohol on these grounds. In 1898, Canon P.-J. Saucier from Rimouski, for example, opposed prohibition because “Une loi de prohibition serait un attentat à la liberté naturelle puisqu’elle interdirait l’usage licite, en soi, d’un bien que Dieu a créé.”<sup>55</sup> In 1925, two French Canadian doctors echoed Saucier’s argument in an article on the possible health hazards of tobacco, saying that man had the “liberté dans l’usage des biens créés pour l’homme! L’usage très modéré du tabac est à peu près indifférent.”<sup>56</sup>

While both Anglicans and Roman Catholics opposed prohibition as an incursion on their rights, they arrived at this position along different paths. For many Anglicans, whether the question was prohibition of alcohol or tobacco or the excesses of capitalism, individual rights stood as a bulwark against “Romish” despotism. In the late nineteenth century, Anglican individualists came into conflict with social gospellers who sought to improve the collective moral environment. And while there were several social gospel advocates within the Montreal Anglican Church, proponents of individual responsibility and rights remained in control.<sup>57</sup>

In contrast to the Anglican position, the Roman Catholic use of individual rights to oppose the prohibition of tobacco was part of the Catholic response to what it saw as increasing materialism. The opinions of *La Patrie* editor J.I. Tarte illustrate this position. Tarte, a non-smoking Montreal MP, a leader of the Dominion Alliance for the Suppression of Alcohol, and a devout Roman Catholic, contended that because moderate smoking and drinking were not health problems, prohibition was inappropriate. Furthermore he proposed, “Prohibition has not been very popular with us in Quebec...[not] because we drink more than the people of other provinces, but because we believe in free-

53 Jean Hamelin and Nicole Gagnon, *Histoire du catholicisme québécois: Le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, tome 1, 1898-1940* (Montreal: Boréal Express, 1984), 175-230.

54 “Our Ottawa Letter” *The True Witness and Catholic Chronicle* (11 April 1903): 4; Françoise (Robertine Barry) “Sauvons l’Enfance,” *Le Journal de Françoise* (18 January 1908): 310; Hamelin and Gagnon, *Histoire du catholicisme québécois*, p 19.

55 Hamelin and Gagnon, *ibid.*, p.198.

56 Pierre Fontanel, “Pour et contre le tabac,” *L’École sociale populaire*, 133-134 (1925): 23.

57 For a recounting of the two positions by a Montreal church leader see Herbert Symonds, *A Memoir* (Montreal: Renouf Publishing Co., 1921).

dom."<sup>58</sup> Tarte's position as a leader of a temperance movement at the same time as he opposed prohibition may seem contradictory. In fact, it made sense within late-nineteenth-century Roman Catholic doctrine on the relationship among the Church, the state, and the moral formation of the individual. The Roman Catholic Church opposed state interference in the moral formation of individuals. In the second half of the nineteenth century, as a challenge to increasingly popular secular and materialist views of the relationship between humanity and the world, Pope Leo XIII released a series of encyclicals to reassert the role of God and the Church in these relations. Historians Jean Hamelin and Nicole Gagnon have shown that the Pope appropriated the language of the French Revolution, speaking broadly in terms of rights and liberties as well as the equality of individuals before God. This equality before God never implied social or material equality between individuals. Rather, freedom allowed for the capacity to do right. Clerical authority was essential to this notion of liberty because it was the clergy who *taught* the individual how to make decisions.<sup>59</sup> At the centre of the Roman Catholic position was the belief that, through prohibition, the state was denying the Church its role in building morally strong, self-governing individuals who would be able to enter a world where the state would not be the individual's only moral guide. *La Patrie*, for example, argued that to restrict personal freedoms was acceptable only in the worst scenarios, and neither the abuse of alcohol nor tobacco was in this category. What was worse, prohibition would deprive the individual of "les fruits qu'assurerait une réforme inspirée par la modération et susceptible de rallier mieux l'appui de toute les bonnes volontés."<sup>60</sup>

The fact that the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches – the two largest churches in Montreal – did not view tobacco as a danger meant that the WCTU's first task was to raise awareness. Here, Montreal's particular linguistic duality worked against the organization. Indeed, while the WCTU did have a small French division, I have only found one WCTU anti-smoking pamphlet in French, and most of its proselytizing was done in English. Much more pervasive were Francophone newspaper editorials, such as those quoted above, which opposed both age restrictions on smokers and prohibition. Educational programs had to be a priority for WCTU members as well. J. MacL. Metcalfe, the WCTU Quebec Narcotics Superintendent, reported in 1894 that after sending a letter to WCTU members with the opinions of nine "leading physicians and scientists as to the evil effects resulting from the use of tobacco," she had

---

58 Elva Desmarchais to Archbishop Paul Bruchési, 15 March 1907. WCTU Dossier, Les Archives de l'Archevêché de Montréal; "Joseph-Isreal Tarte," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, XII (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 1013-1020; "Lois Prohibitives," *La Patrie* (18 October): 4. House of Commons Debates, 1 April 1903, p.842.

59 Hamelin and Gagnon, 18-19.

60 "Lois Prohibitives," *La Patrie* (18 October 1907): 4.



Figure 1

WCTU worried that “[numerous] cities in Ontario have obtained more signatures than the whole of Quebec.”<sup>63</sup>

Even without a Narcotics Superintendent, the WCTU sponsored educational events opposing tobacco. By 1896, the WCTU’s educational campaign in Montreal included anti-smoking lectures by physicians and WCTU members, and the distribution of anti-smoking literature.<sup>64</sup> Over the next eighteen years, the various Montreal WCTU locals in conjunction with local Methodist churches set up Anti-Cigarette and Anti-Tobacco Leagues organized primarily for boys. Among the earliest was the Westmount Anti-Cigarette Club, which by 1897 had forty members, about twelve of whom attended the Club’s bi-monthly meetings.<sup>65</sup> By 1905, there were three more Anti-Cigarette Leagues in Montreal, one with the Western Union, and two large leagues numbering 350 members established by the Fairmount Union. The latter organized picnics and winter socials “to hold the boys together and...[to give] new zeal” as well as get the interest of their parents.<sup>66</sup> Children who took “The Pledge” against smoking and joined the League had their pictures published as part of the *Montreal Standard’s* Anti-Cigarette Campaign (figure 1).<sup>67</sup>

61 J. MacL. Metcalfe, “Report of the Superintendent of Narcotics,” *11<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*, Quebec WCTU (1894), 79-80.

62 *Annual Reports*, Montreal WCTU, 1884-1899, Rare Book Room, McGill University.

63 “Executive,” 1 December 1902, Montreal WCTU Minute Book, 1902-06, OA F885, MU 8414.6.

64 *13<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*, Quebec WCTU (1896), 65.

65 *15<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*, Quebec WCTU (1897), 75.

66 *22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report*, Quebec WCTU (1904-1905), 78-79; *24<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*, Quebec WCTU (1906-1907), 66.

67 “The Standard’s Anti-Cigarette Campaign,” *Montreal Standard* (30 March 1907): 6.

### III. Legislative Campaigns

The Quebec WCTU's campaign to use the state to stop smoking began in 1892, and between 1893 and 1895 it succeeded in having four bills presented to the Quebec legislature. Each of the bills would have made it illegal for children under 15 to smoke "[in] any public street, road highway, or building" under the penalty of a \$2 fine. Moreover, no adult could sell tobacco to anyone under 18 without a written request from a parent or guardian.<sup>68</sup> These bills were part of a broader movement. In 1890, New Brunswick became the first Canadian province to set an age of majority for smokers.<sup>69</sup> A year later, British Columbia passed a law prohibiting minors from buying or being given tobacco and in the spring of 1892, both Nova Scotia and Ontario followed.<sup>70</sup>

The Quebec WCTU would never have the legislative success of its sister associations across Canada. Still, the provincial campaigns demonstrated numerous ways in which women influenced the male public sphere. In preparing the campaign, Quebec WCTU-president Mary Sanderson corresponded with the Quebec and Montreal Presbyteries, the Protestant Ministerial and Methodist Ministerial Associations of Montreal, the Royal Templars and Good Templars, and each MLA asking for their support.<sup>71</sup> Narcotics Superintendent J. MacL. Metcalfe wrote WCTU county presidents across Quebec, urging them to lobby their MLAs. Each MLA was sent a pamphlet that detailed the harmful effects of tobacco.<sup>72</sup> Eventually, a bill made it through the Legislative Assembly, but died on the order paper in the Legislative Council.<sup>73</sup> Further efforts to legislate age restrictions failed to pass through the Legislative Assembly, convincing the Quebec WCTU of the futility of securing such legislation in the province.<sup>74</sup> It petitioned twice more after the turn of the century,

68 *Montreal Gazette* (20 February 1893): 3.

69 "A Bill intituled [sic] an Act to Prohibit the Sale of Cigarettes to minors," *Journals of the House of Assembly of New Brunswick*, 1 April 1890, p. 60.

70 "An Act to Prohibit the Sale or Gift of Tobacco to Minors in Certain Cases," *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of British Columbia*, 20 April 1891; "Minor's Protection Act," *Journals of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia*, 25 March 1892; "An Act Respecting the Use of Tobacco by Minors," *Journals of the House of Assembly of Ontario*, 29 February 1892, p. 47. Similar proposals were considered in at least eight American state legislatures, see Cassandra Tate, "The American Anti-Cigarette Movement: 1880-1930" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 1995), 133.

71 J. MacL. Metcalfe, "Report of the Superintendent of Narcotics," *10<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*, Quebec WCTU (1892-93), 65.

72 Her letters to County Presidents of the WCTU produced limited effect. Out of eighty letters, she received only thirteen replies, with six of these indicating that they were too busy with other WCTU business. Metcalfe, "Report," *ibid.*, 65.

73 *Montreal Witness* (27 February 1893): 6; *Montreal Gazette* (27 February 1893): 4.

74 *Journeaux de l'Assemblée Nationale*, for the second attempt see 10, 16 and 21 November 1893; for the third attempt see 27 and 29 November 1894; and the final bill, see 8 and 20 November 1895. *Montreal Gazette* (21 November 1895): 1. *14<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*, Quebec WCTU (1897), 54.

but by 1907 it was opposing all attempts by the Dominion WCTU to move the fight back to the provincial level.<sup>75</sup>

While the WCTU faced legislative failures in provinces like Quebec and Manitoba, elsewhere it succeeded in passing age-restriction laws. Nevertheless, in these provinces, the laws proved ineffective and tougher measures were soon deemed necessary. MPs from Ontario and Nova Scotia, for example, claimed that anti-smoking laws in their provinces were dead letters.<sup>76</sup> Deciding that age-restriction legislation had proven "worthless," in 1899 the Dominion WCTU turned its attention to obtaining federal legislation that prohibited the manufacture, importation and sale of cigarettes to all Canadians, a restriction of trade that fell under federal jurisdiction.<sup>77</sup> For the good of the country, it was argued, adult men would have to give up cigarettes. The *Montreal Witness* compared the prohibition of cigarettes to the banning of margarine. Margarine was banned "for the sake of commerce" even though, as a cheap butter substitute, it would have nourished the "poor man."<sup>78</sup> M.K. Richardson called on MPs to cast aside "that bugbear of interference with personal liberty." Was self-sacrifice not, he asked, the most admired quality of the individual?<sup>79</sup>

In addition to pushing for prohibition rather than age restrictions, the federal campaign differed from provincial campaigns by focusing on prohibition of the cigarette only, rather than of tobacco products more generally. The problem with singling out the cigarette in the 1890s was that few people smoked them, choosing instead other forms of tobacco. By the turn of the century, however, there was statistical evidence that cigarette smoking was on the rise. The WCTU, for example, quoted excise statistics that showed a boom in cigarette sales from seventy-six million in 1898 to 134 million in 1902.<sup>80</sup> Cigarettes, the WCTU argued, were more dangerous than other forms of tobacco because the tobacco in cigarettes was milder than that used in cigars and smoked in pipes. The cigarette, the Dominion WCTU executive wrote to the *Witness*, "whets without satisfying the appetite" and is therefore more addictive. As well, the let-

---

75 Anti-smoking lobbying on the provincial level in Quebec was limited to two petitions: the first on 28 February 1902 to forbid tobacco sales to anyone under 18, submitted by "Mary E. Sanderson and others"; and the second on 12 May 1905 by the Quebec WCTU. For the Quebec WCTU's opposition to moving the cigarette prohibition campaign to the provincial level see their *24<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*, Quebec WCTU (1907), 12-13.

76 House of Commons *Debates*, 1 April 1903, p.830.

77 Cover letter to pamphlet "Testimony Concerning the 'Cigarette.'" Annie O. Rutherford, Annie M. Bascom and Jennie Waters to MPs, 25 April 1903. Available on Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions, fiche 73873.

78 *Montreal Witness* (28 March 1903): 4.

79 House of Commons *Debates*, 23 March 1904, p.344.

80 WCTU, "Testimony Concerning the 'Cigarette,'" back cover. For a discussion of the rise of cigarette smoking and the changing meaning of the cigarette, see Rudy, "Manly Smokes."

ter continued, cigarette smoke was more likely to be inhaled with its poisonous nicotine drawn “into the infinitely delicate lung tissues...”<sup>81</sup> The focus on the cigarette had a strategic advantage. It was widely believed that boys were the primary consumers of cigarettes, so supporters of the WCTU claimed that the prohibition motion was harmless to adult men. Reminding the House that there were other forms of tobacco that an individual could smoke, W.S. Maclaren noted, “if gentlemen cannot forego the pleasure of smoking cigarettes for the purpose of helping the boys of this country, I am mistaken in the calibre of the men who occupy seats in this House.”<sup>82</sup>

When the cigarette-prohibition petition came before the House of Commons in April 1903, WCTU representatives were in the gallery to watch over the MPs.<sup>83</sup> Despite its lobbying, the WCTU was still an outsider to this political process, with none of its members in Parliament and no suffrage rights for women. This gender inequality was pointed out by Mortimer Davis, the President of the American Tobacco Company of Canada, which, at the time, was the country’s largest cigarette manufacturer. Davis wrote the Minister of Fisheries reminding him of his long support for the Liberal Party and of the large number of male voters who would be upset if cigarettes were outlawed. According to Davis, 36,000 merchants and wholesalers opposed the bill, and their tobacco shops were a “rendez-vous, really, for store-keeper’s customers, to hang around the store and discuss politics, etc., with their friends.”<sup>84</sup>

During debates on smoking over the next five years, anti-prohibitionists in Parliament argued that prohibition was a female invasion of the male sphere of politics, an affront on individual (male) liberty and a vicious attack on male leisure activities. Some members attacked the bills as evidence of women’s interference in affairs that they did not understand. E.B. Osler, a Toronto MP rebuffed “my lady friends who are so interested in this matter” by stating that “there is more evil wrought among the youth of this country, by bad cooking than by the use of tobacco...” Instead of lobbying, women should start teaching cooking courses to girls. Prime Minister Laurier, in a more diplomatic tone, echoed Osler by suggesting that the women of the WCTU would be better off educating, thus not questioning male freedoms, rather than pushing for prohibition legislation.<sup>85</sup>

81 “The Cigarette Evil,” *Montreal Witness* (26 March 1903): 12.

82 House of Commons *Debates*, 23 March 1904, pp.339-40. Others continued on the theme of outlawing only cigarettes, not all tobacco products. See *Debates*, 1 April 1903, pp. 830-831, and *Debates*, 16 March 1908, p. 5103.

83 “Anti-Cigarette Motion Adopted,” *Montreal Gazette* (2 April 1903): 7.

84 M.B. Davis to R. Préfontaine, Laurier Papers, NAC MG25 G vol 272, microfilm reel C-802, p.75090-7509. The letter is undated but its positioning in the Laurier Papers suggests it was written in 1903. For more on Davis and the American Tobacco Company of Canada, see Rudy, “Manly Smokes.”

85 House of Commons *Debates*, 23 March 1904, pp. 354 and 363.

Between 1903 and 1908, the WCTU succeeded in guiding four cigarette prohibition resolutions into Parliament, yet with the exception of one, all died "procedural deaths."<sup>86</sup> The watershed moment for the WCTU and its supporters came in 1908 when the Laurier government derailed the cigarette prohibition movement. After another bill was introduced on March 16, 1908, calling for the prohibition of the importation, sale, and manufacture of cigarettes, A.H. Clarke of South Essex, part of Ontario's tobacco belt, turned the tables on the WCTU and proposed an amendment to the bill.<sup>87</sup> Instead of cigarette prohibition, Clarke called for changes in the Criminal Code to stop minors from smoking all types of tobacco.<sup>88</sup> With the support of Laurier and other ministers, the bill that restricted anyone under the age of sixteen from buying tobacco or smoking in public was passed with a vote of sixty-one to fifty-one.<sup>89</sup>

Taken at face value, the law seems like a victory for the WCTU. Yet this assessment must be questioned since some of the strongest supporters of cigarette prohibition, like Robert Bickerdike, voted against the bill.<sup>90</sup> What is more, we should remember that the WCTU itself had abandoned its campaigns for age restrictions because it had found these to be hollow victories. Put in the context of the Montreal liberal order (and not coincidentally the Canadian liberal order), the law was a symbolic entry of the state into a domain previously considered the sole "jurisdiction" of parents. This was an acceptable compromise since there was some support, as I have shown, among Roman Catholics and Anglicans. Age restrictions were certainly more widely acceptable than prohibition as they did not put the smoker's rights into question, and more importantly, did not extinguish the right of the free exchange of commodities. The 1908 compromise demonstrated a hierarchy of rights within the Canadian liberal order that put commercial freedom over total parental freedom.

That the victory of collective social reform over individual rights was symbolic rather than real became clear with the enforcement of this law. Though WCTU supporters voted against the bill, the WCTU gave the new measures a period of grace to see if age regulations would be enforced more effectively than the provincial acts of the 1890s. While the WCTU was still active in anti-smoking educational campaigns and continued to call for prohibition of the cigarette, the Act gave it a new focus: agitating for enforcement of the age-restriction law. Three of its significant activities included giving copies of

---

86 This legislative path is summed up in House of Commons *Debates*, 16 March 1908, pp.5088-5091.

87 On the Ontario tobacco belt, see Lyal Tait, *Tobacco in Canada* (Canada: T.H. Best Printing Company, 1967), 59-72.

88 House of Commons *Debates*, 16 March 1908, p.5123.

89 "Anti-Cigarette Bill," *Montreal Star* (16 July 1908): 4; House of Commons *Debates*, 16 March 1908, pp.5133-5134.

90 See vote division, House of Commons *Debates*, 16 March 1908, pp.5134.

the law to tobacco dealers, making sure they understood the law's provisions, and lobbying the police for its enforcement.<sup>91</sup>

In Montreal, "the Act to Restrain the use of tobacco by the young" was sporadically enforced. In the first year there was only one conviction. The following year, there were 133 convictions. But in 1911, convictions dropped to four.<sup>92</sup> If a child was caught with cigarettes, the offender was brought before a judge of the Recorder's Court, or, after 1912, a judge of the newly created Juvenile Court. The culprit was usually reprimanded and a promise extracted not to smoke any more. The judge then pushed the accused to reveal the origin of the cigarettes. If the source was divulged, the judge looked for another witness to corroborate the evidence. Only after having corroboration would the judge proceed with a prosecution of the dealer.<sup>93</sup> By February 1912, it was not clear if officers were actually enforcing the law or if people were even aware that it existed. When Alderman Drummond asked council if there was a law to restrain children from buying cigarettes in Montreal, the question wove its way through several levels of city officials and had to go to the Chief Lawyer of the City before it could be affirmed that indeed there was a law and all that was necessary for its enforcement were orders from the Chief of Police.<sup>94</sup> In 1912, convictions rose to twenty-five and in 1913 dropped to twenty-two. In 1914, after the Juvenile Court hired two special officers, the count rose dramatically to eighty-two.

The difficulties of convicting tobacconists pushed the police to use entrapment to gather evidence.<sup>95</sup> Yet the consequences of entrapment could be far from the intentions of those looking for better enforcement of the law. Tobacconist James Stephen sold cigarettes to an eleven-year-old boy and was promptly charged with selling tobacco to a minor by a special officer. Realizing that the boy and the police officer were making the rounds of all local tobacconists, Stephen called his cousin, also a tobacconist, alerting him to the coming visitors. When the boy attempted to buy cigarettes at the cousin's tobacco store he "was subject to a hearty thrashing" before the officer could intervene.<sup>96</sup>

91 Daisy Cross, "Anti-Narcotics," *26<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*, Quebec WCTU (1908-1909), 64; Sophia Black, "Anti-Narcotics," *27<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*, Quebec WCTU (1909-1910), 63.

92 Recorder's Court Reports, 1909-1911, Archives de la Ville de Montréal (AVM).

93 "Minutes," Commons' Commission of Cigarettes, 23.

94 *Minutes*, City Council, Montreal, 26 February 1912, p.51; *Procès verbal*, Bureau des Commissaires, AVM, 23 March 1912, p.19.

95 At the Commons Commission on the Cigarette F.X. Choquet denied using entrapment only to be contradicted by Owen Dawson. See "Proceedings and Evidence of the Select Committee appointed to Inquire and Report as to the expediency of making any amendment to the existing laws for the purpose of remedying or preventing any evils arising from the use of the cigarette," *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Commons*, No. 3 (1914), 23 and 45.

96 *Canadian Cigar and Tobacco Journal* (November 1913): 37.

By 1914, perhaps with hopes of finding a more sympathetic ear with the Conservative Party in power, the Dominion WCTU again prepared for a campaign to prohibit the cigarette. During preparations, the Quebec WCTU again fell out of line with the Dominion efforts. Provincial president Mary Sanderson asserted that anti-smoking legislation "had been, in her opinion, practically useless" and the provincial Narcotics Superintendent argued that the tobacco prohibition campaign had received so many "turn downs" from the government that it would be better to spend their time, energy, and money on educational campaigns.<sup>97</sup> The Quebec pullout was symptomatic of the reticence of Quebecers to using the state to intrude on individual rights. Sharon Anne Cook, in her study of the Ontario WCTU during the same period, argues the WCTU was divided between supporters of progressive evangelism (most obvious in the federal and provincial hierarchies of the WCTU who subscribed to social gospel beliefs of collective cleansing of society), and a more traditional evangelicalism of local unions, which saw "salvation as being personal and experiential, rather than societal..."<sup>98</sup> One of the dividing lines between the two positions was an interest in using the state for projects of moral regulation. In the case of the Quebec WCTU cigarette-prohibition campaign, the dividing line is also apparent, with the only difference being the provincial hierarchy took the traditional position, a position that was more easily reconciled with liberal notions of freedom of the individual.

The Dominion WCTU's cigarette-prohibition campaign continued, in spite of the Quebec union's absence. But instead of letting the question go to a vote, the Conservative government diverted the issue to a Commons' Commission on the Cigarette that was to look into amending the 1908 age restrictions or to suggest other ways the "Evils Arising From the Use of Cigarettes" could be prevented. The Commission heard testimony from Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa "experts" on boys smoking. But no WCTU members were considered experts. Instead, officials linked to juvenile courts and reformatories as well as insane asylums gave testimony; six out of ten of them were from Montreal. These reformers were interested in making tobacco age restrictions more effective rather than invoking prohibition. The Commission submitted two reports without making any recommendations for change, claiming that they had heard much theory but little empirical data.<sup>99</sup> In June 1914, the Parliamentary session ended and the committee took leave and never resumed its work, as concerns over tobacco were eclipsed by the First World War.

---

97 Florence E. Woodley, "Quebec will not be Found Wanting," *Canadian White Ribbon Bulletin*, (April 1914): 59.

98 Cook, "Through Sunshine and Shadow," 13.

99 "Minutes," Commons' Commission of Cigarettes, pp.2 and 6.

The social gospel movement in general and the WCTU in particular were not successful in their efforts to label smoking a “vice” on the national front. After lengthy legislative and educational campaigns, the WCTU could not convince Parliament that the cigarette was so dangerous to the country that it would have to be prohibited. The age-restriction law it had succeeded in promoting was not enforced and would be forgotten until the 1980s.<sup>100</sup> Part of the WCTU’s failure to win stronger legislation may have been because it had no members in Parliament. However, with the support of the churches influenced by the social gospel, they had not only pushed their cause into the male public sphere of formal politics, they had also attacked an almost exclusively male habit, and in Parliament, MPs expressed nothing short of anger towards these women. In the end, the Montreal and Quebec WCTU was worn down by this legislative fight, and retreated to education campaigns and Bible studies.

There were other significant obstacles to the WCTU’s efforts for social reform in Montreal. The movement was weakened by the dominance of Christian denominations that were less influenced by the social gospel, as well as the fact that most WCTU activism was conducted in English. The Anglican Church for the most part did not see tobacco as a vice, and regardless, was not won over to the collectivist spirit that defined the social gospel. For them, the individual was still paramount in deciding one’s own moral future. The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, came to a similar position regarding the individual, but from a radically different theological direction. As part of a response to growing materialism and secularism, the Church reasserted itself in the everyday lives of Roman Catholics by appropriating a language of individualism that did not imply equality of individuals on the earth, but equality before God. The moral will of the individual was to be formed through Church instruction, and freedom was the individual’s right to make morally sound decisions. To impose cigarette prohibition was to deny the individual’s right to make a moral decision as well as to limit the Church’s role in Quebec society. The combination of the demographic weakness in Montreal of the most important promoters of the WCTU, their unilingual nature, and the rejection, to a great extent, by the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches of state involvement in moral training of individuals, meant that dominant notions about smoking as a sign of respectable and mature masculinity were less challenged by the WCTU in Quebec and Montreal than elsewhere in Canada. What is more, the Montreal WCTU anti-smoking campaigns provide insights into the alliances, compromises, and hierarchies of rights within the Canadian liberal order.

---

100 Robert Cunningham, *Smoke and Mirrors: The Canadian Tobacco War* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1996), 35.