

the fact that Sheppard was one of the great rhetorical geniuses of American history.¹

As a rhetorical strategist, Sheppard achieved tremendous political power and leverage. In applying effective communication, he implemented two strategies. His first strategy was to arrest the attention of his audience. In a democracy, Sheppard believed that there was no such thing as a captive audience, and that crowds needed to be inspired in order to listen. He therefore made a conscientious point to always engage and entertain his prospective listeners. His second strategy was to moralize politics. This second tendency enhanced the first, because crowds were more likely to get excited, he believed, when major issues of right and wrong were at stake. By making political issues a battle of morality, Sheppard was also able to bring constituencies into the political process, especially during his period, the

-Saloon League and church

groups. As the rhetorical point man of prohibition, Sheppard was able to orchestrate a monumental swing against popular beverages, and personally write the amendment that outlawed their sale and distribution.

With a father, John Levi Sheppard, who himself was a rising political leader of Texas, Sheppard learned early on about the need to project and

er hosted leading lawyers, ministers and businessmen of Northeast Texas, and Sheppard, who lacked access to his father when he was in Washington, had to speak up in order to gain his

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Aside from attempting to verbally inspire these groups, Sheppard went out of his way to deliver orations whenever possible to the local Methodist Epworth League, or to groups of visiting alumni. He began to realize that it paid to project. And so, he used his growing knowledge of communication as a tool to gain leverage.

1897 when he first began to effectively combine his ability to arrest attention, with an ability to moralize issues. Students at the University of Texas at this time resented that fact that while there was a state holiday for Texas Independence Day on March 2nd, the campus remained open. President George T. Winston, from North Carolina, refused to recognize the before raised the issue, but as a senior he was ready to stigmatize Winston as a foreigner who did not understand one of the greatest victories of liberty in modern history. It was no longer just an issue of the students wanting relief

saw himself as a holy instrument with a unique devotion to make the world a better place. At the same time, he remembered stories, and had even one vivid memory of how alcohol had caused the murder of a resident near Wheatville during his boyhood days. In battling alcohol, Sheppard could show America his passion as a Southern Christian. During his college years, Morris gave up pleasure like coffee, tea, and tobacco and began to take particular offense towards alcohol. Then, when taking a psychology class, he

⁷ The image had tremendous impact on young Sheppard. He began to conceptualize an alcohol-free nation, and a sober society. He created a holy obsession that he earnestly pursued for the rest of his life.

The rhetorical genius within Morris proceeded to thrive after he graduated from Yale in 1898. After practicing law in Pittsburg, Texas, he moved to Texarkana to work at his fathers law firm. There he stayed until a tragic event t

he had the rhetorical ammunition to motivate and convince. Despite the fact
seat, and miraculously, he won it. He was only 27, and the youngest
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shaven, when he went to take his oath, some of the older congressmen
mistook him for an errand boy.⁹ They soon learned, however, that Morris
Sheppard would become one of the most potent speakers not only in the
House, but also the Senate. The *Dallas News* described the young
aceful of gesture, fluent of speech, and master of his

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In Congress, Sheppard moralized issues, and captured attention. He
became involved in various committees, but struggled to accomplish his
long-term goal. This was because the Speaker of The
unimportant committees. Thus, Sheppard was unable to accomplish anything
truly significant. The tables turned, however, when Cannon lost his power in
an uprising in the House known as the Insurgents Revolt of 1910.¹¹ Cannon
lost his power to allocate Representatives to the committees he wanted, and
as a result, Sheppard was able to move up the ladder of influence. Sheppard

now had the means to attract attention on the national level as he truly wanted. He decided to run for the Senate.

Having an almost unearthly work ethic, he nearly defeated himself. He poured himself into his speeches, became a workaholic, and had a nervous breakdown. Nevertheless, the tide in Texas was running in favor of a more morally fervent, progressive type of Democrat. The incumbent Senator, Joseph Weldon Bailey had not only shocked the electorate by once

One group that Sheppard desperately needed was the WCTU, or the
alcohol and the saloon, the WCTU was a very reliable ally as well as the
world. As their moral credentials
being against prostitution, lewd novels, and gaudy entertainment were
unassailable, Sheppard would make the WCTU his foremost national ally.
In a heartfelt letter to the WCTU leader after his election in 1912, Sheppard
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however, in turn, would strive to translate their sentimental arguments into
economic and political clarion calls, to abolish poverty and the illicit trade of
women.¹²

In order for Prohibition to succeed, Sheppard needed to attract a male
audience. Women at this stage could only persuade and not vote. Sheppard,

against them and damning publicity should they refuse. Wheeler was

right-hand man and chief ally in pressuring people into
accordance with his regime. Yet, prohibition needed a language that could
succeed on the national level, giving voters stark decisions between good

and high ground he knew he had to have, Sheppard would not pander and
threaten like Wheeler. He therefore would be the White Knight that people

attracted attention. Wheeler had an innate ability to maneuver men, or more
specifically, politicians. From early on in his childhood, Wayne Wheeler
regarded inebriation with disgust and abhorrence. After being stabbed with a
pitchfork by a drunken man, Wheeler made a point of resisting the liquor
traffic. He entered the Anti-Saloon League in 1894 when he became the

organizer for the group. Possessing the ability to debate and argue effectively

The last major ally that Sheppard recruited was Andrew Volstead. Volstead, a Representative from Minnesota, helped promote Prohibition on a congressional level. As the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, he wielded a respectable amount of influence among his constituents.¹⁵ As a Norwegian ethnic, Volstead also provided a link to the masses of immigrants making it seem that prohibition was more an uprising against corrupt saloon owners, than wine-contribution was his investment in the Prohibition Enforcement Act, which was commonly called the Volstead Act. The act projected the details on the enforcement of the 18th amendment thereby establishing consequences for violations. Because Sheppard joined forces with Andrew Volstead, he was able to further project his vision and maintain it.

In his effort to moralize politics, Sheppard made some discerning choices. He most allied himself with the most moral agent

This strategy was necessary not only to instigate Prohibition, but also to maintain it. Hence Sheppard began to coin phrases to demonize alcohol, expressions that would appear to diverse groups of people. He once called phrase that would not have occurred to the conventional piety of Anna Gordon of the WCTU or to the wine-loving Volstead or to the busy Wheeler it was an invention of the man who had had practice creating categories of abhorrence. Sheppard could also reach out to the more Sheppard knew that he had to speak to the democracy as a whole, so he did not stick to Biblical metaphors and talked usually in a neo-scientific language of concern to the educated classes and consumers. He referred to

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Sheppard was such a moralist that he even appealed firstly to moral pride and only secondly, and by extension to national pride. In 1914, he from the liquor traffic, dollars stained with the tears of women and children,

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the world was at stake. He talked about the liquor trade that was damning

enlightened, ennobled, and made more moral. Sheppard slowly let it be known that the audience itself had become a great moral agent with a powerful agenda before it:

We must teach and teach again that taken even in small amounts by moderate drinkers it shortens life; that even the moderate drinker transmits the alcoholic tint to his offspring, polluting the helpless babe, profaning motherhood; that it destroys self-control; that it lowers vitality, a carrier of contagion; that it is a foremost cause of poverty . . .

As a Methodist, Sheppard knew that he could not only make alcohol evil, but turn it into a sin as well. Even though alcohol had been significant in cultural and religious practices for thousands of years, he sought to
n the Bible. One
of the ways he did this was by distorting scripture to support his cause. A splendid example of this would be in the following Congressional Address he gave,

They tell us of references in the Bible to intoxicating liquor!
There is a clear distinction observable throughout that Sacred Book between fermented and unfermented drinks. The former it

unsparingly condemns. The Bible itself finds one of its strongest foundations in the Ten Commandments, most of which are prohibitions, beginning with the prohibitory words also in effect, contemplating the various forms of the

It was in this vein of eloquent deception, that Morris manipulated

By subtly adding his own interpretation to the Bible, he created a drastic change in the way American Christianity functioned at the time. He collaborated with preachers and used churches as platforms. After convincing people that alcohol was evil, toxic, and dangerous, he needed little help to convince them further that it was, in fact, a sin. Once he transformed Prohibition from a political preference to a religious obligation, his moral quest had reached fruition. Because American Christianity began support from a group that

even after the U.S. adopted Prohibition, Sheppard still had to fight just as hard if not harder in order to maintain it. Although he managed to become the figurehead

Kenneth E. Henderson. *Profiles in Power Twentieth century Texans in Washington*. 2004, University of Texas Press, Austin. The Dolph Briscoe Center for American history, University of Texas at Austin.

¹² Reforming the World: Women in the Progressive Era. *Causes: The Women's Christian Temperance Union*.

<<http://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/progressiveera/wctu.html>> [Accessed November 11, 2012].

¹³ Alcohol, Problems and Solutions. *Wayne Wheeler*.

<<http://www2.potsdam.edu/hansondj/Controversies/Biography-Wayne-Wheeler.html>> [Accessed November 11, 2012].

¹⁴ Alcohol Problems and Solutions. *Wayne Wheeler*.

¹⁵ Alcohol, Problems and Solutions. *Andrew Volstead*.

<<http://www2.potsdam.edu/hansondj/Controversies/Biography-Wayne-Wheeler.html>> [Accessed November 12, 2012].

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The Dolph Briscoe Center for American history.

¹⁷ Karen Jeannette Salas, "*Senator Morris Sheppard and the 18th Amendment*."

¹⁸ Morris Sheppard Speech in the Senate of The U.S, *Progress of Prohibition In the United States*.

¹⁹ Congressional Record, January 16, 1940. The Dolph Briscoe Center for American history, University of Texas at Austin.

²⁰ Morris Sheppard Speech in the Senate of The U.S, *Progress of Prohibition In the United States*. Tuesday, December 15, 1925. Washington Government Printing Office, 1926. The Dolph Briscoe Center for American history, University of Texas at Austin.

²¹ *Enforcement Work on Prohibition Official Speech*, Congressional Record: 67th, 1st session. 1928. The Dolph Briscoe Center for American history, University of Texas at Austin.

²² Morris Sheppard *Scrapbook #3*. (1919-1922).

²³ Morris Sheppard *Scrapbook #3*. (1919-1922).

²⁴ Richard Bailey, "SHEPPARD, JOHN MORRIS," *Handbook of Texas Online*
<<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fsh24>> Published by the Texas
State Historical Association. [Accessed October 01, 2012].