

QUOTATION

ABIGAIL SCOTT DUNIWAY ON AVERSION THERAPY FOR SMOKING AND DRINKING

Abigail Scott Duniway (1843-1915) was an early Pacific Northwest suffragette. One of her most significant victories was winning the right to vote for women in Washington Territory in 1883. However, women's voting rights were soon jeopardized by the powerful Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Realizing they needed the women's vote in order to prohibit alcohol, the WCTU mobilized women to work for the vote. This action galvanized the rich and powerful liquor industry to move to prohibit women from voting.

Although she was pro-temperance, Duniway opposed prohibition because it threatened the women's vote. In a July 29, 1886 editorial in her newspaper, *The New Northwest*, Duniway offered her cure for drunkenness, with mention also of smoking:

We have known for years that drunkenness may be cured by simply overdosing the patient and confining him to a diet of "whisky straight" till he gets sick enough of the stinking fluid to imagine he is throwing up the soles of his feet. We have seen a small boy cured thoroughly, and for all time, of the smoking habit by his mother, who, catching him with a cigar stub in his mouth before he had become inured to the habit, had the nerve to compel him to keep smoking without cessation until utterly disgusted, nauseated and ill.

If a boy under our control should show evidence of becoming dissipated, . . . when we caught him in a drunken stupor we'd wrap and strap him securely in the sheets and blankets and proceed at once to inoculate his system through and through with alcoholic drinks. We'd set a bowl of whisky over a cane-seated chair with a lighted spirit lamp beneath to keep the liquor fumes in circulation through the closed room; we'd boil his potatoes in brandy and doctor his beefsteak with rum; we'd sprinkle the bedding with gin and wash his face in beer. . . . If our patient were a beginner, twenty-four hours of such treatment would sufficiently inoculate him to effect a life-long cure. But if he were an old soaker, we'd keep him under treatment nine days, and when we were ready to let him go free, he would be free indeed, for he would at once and forever of necessity discard intoxicants, since he could no longer endure even the smell of them.

Brethren and sisters of the Prohibition party, this treatment is infallible. It discounts party platforms, and when practiced will make temperance conventions unnecessary.

Not only was Duniway prescient about aversion therapy but also about politics. Pressures exerted by the liquor industry led the Washington legislature to repeal women's right to vote in 1887, and it was not until 1912 that women regained this right.

Biographical material adapted from: "Abigail Scott Duniway: The making of a NW suffragette," by Phebe Jensen, which appeared in *The Seattle Weekly*, December 12-18, 1984, pp. 29-31. Contributed by Laurence Miller, Department of Psychology, Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington 98225.