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# Business Against Drunk Driving: The Neoliberal State, Labatt Brewery, and the Creation of the “Responsible Drinker”

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This paper examines the motivations and consequences of Labatt’s anti-drinking and driving campaign. The paper considers the economic and political conditions that enabled Canada’s largest brewer to execute a cause-advertising campaign and to establish itself as a “responsible corporation”—even when its leadership cared less about the deleterious effects of Labatt products and more about the company’s earnings. It examines neoliberal governance and the relationship between the public and private sector in tackling a prominent social problem—impaired driving—and how a for-profit business used its influence to create a new subjectivity: the “responsible drinker,” who did not drive while under the influence. It seeks to situate Labatt’s campaign within an increasingly neoliberal, individualistic political economy. This paper argues that Labatt’s actions were part of the neoliberal agenda toward “responsibilization” that shifted the responsibility for drunk driving away from regime-based institutions and onto the individual, allowing the neoliberal state to govern from a distance. It demonstrates that contrary to neoliberal rhetoric the state did not shrink during the late twentieth century but rather took on new regulatory functions.

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**Keywords:** Neo-Liberalism, Drunk Driving, Labatt Brewery, Responsibilization

## Introduction

On August 11, 1983, William M. O’Shea wrote a letter to Sid Oland, the president of Canada’s largest brewery, John Labatt Ltd. As the executive secretary of the Brewers’ Association of America, O’Shea was eager to express his support for Labatt’s recent cause-advertising campaign to reduce impaired driving. “I would like to congratulate you upon your ‘don’t drink and drive’ campaign,” O’Shea stated.<sup>1</sup> The letter was one of more than a hundred that Labatt received in support of its pioneering effort to combat drunk driving. When the campaign was launched in the spring of 1983 it became the first of its kind in North America, and governments,

1. William O’Shea to Sid Oland (August 11, 1983), box A08-053-365, Labatt Collection.

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businesses, law enforcement, and concerned citizens were watching. “I only hope your campaign may result in some of the brewers here in the States following your excellent example,” continued O’Shea. “In my humble opinion, we are either going to do something about this drinking and driving—or drinking and driving is going to do something to us.”<sup>2</sup> Sid Oland and the others at Labatt had already come to that cheerless but logical conclusion.

This article examines Labatt’s anti–drunk driving campaign and the mixed motives for launching it. It analyzes how one corporation intersected with the neoliberal reconfiguration of governance and government, the self and society, and the rise of “responsibilization” in its efforts to constitute a new neoliberal subject, a “responsible” citizen who did not drink and drive. It analyzes the internal debates at Labatt on the issue of drinking and driving and how its operation of responsibilization was rolled out. It argues that Labatt’s anti–drunk driving campaign both reflected and contributed to the growing influence of neoliberal political ideologies that shifted responsibility for dangers to public well-being from government agencies and corporations to the individual. At the end of the twentieth century, the issue of drinking and driving was reframed and reconfigured so that the fate of individual free agents—and the consequences of their undertakings—depended predominantly on their own decisions, actions, and abilities. In other words, within the system of neoliberal governance and responsibilization, the atomistic individual was increasingly expected to be the locus of responsibility. It further contends that Labatt was not motivated by some moral imperative to reduce impaired driving. Rather, the company’s decision makers cared first and foremost about protecting the company’s earnings. This was done by creating a new “neoliberal” political subjectivity to bolster its credentials as a responsible corporation and thereby spike the guns of government regulation. Finally, the article demonstrates that contrary to neoliberal rhetoric, which emphasized the need to curb government spending and shrink the state, neoliberal policies expanded the state’s capacity to police, punish, facilitate consumption, and develop other networks of governance and control.

## Neoliberalism, the Self and Society, and Responsibilization

There is a general consensus in the literature that the term “neoliberalism” refers to a set of ideals that involve a shrinking the state’s mandate, deregulation and privatization, a faith in markets to govern social life, and an increased emphasis on personal choice and freedom.<sup>3</sup> In the minds of neoliberals, the welfare of society was ensured not by central planning and government bureaucracy, as was thought to be the case during the Keynesian episode, but through the “enterprising” activities and choices of individual free agents, all striving to maximize their own advantage by cost-benefit analysis.<sup>4</sup> During the 1980s, neoliberal ideas and prescriptions were advanced by think tanks and absorbed into government policy.<sup>5</sup> For example, the Fraser Institute, which had been established in Canada in 1974, recommended policies that increased reliance on individual initiative and free markets to solve society’s most pressing problems.

2. Ibid.

3. Brenner, Peck, and Theodore, “Variegated Neoliberalization,” 182–222.

4. Bliss, “Rich by Nature, Poor by Policy,” 78–90.

5. Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe*.

Correlated with this was the tropism for minimizing the role of the state in economic activity. At the same time, neoliberalism was popularized in business schools and universities, helping to create a whole new generation of “Christian businessmen.”<sup>6</sup> On both sides of the Canada–U.S. border, businessmen claimed that their interests were threatened by stagflation, resurgent foreign competition, unionism, declining productivity, and government regulation. Buoyed by the economic theorizing of the Chicago school, North American businessmen demanded that the state become more supportive of their entrepreneurial efforts. By the early 1980s, an array of business leaders as well as conservative politicians and intellectuals believed that an increasingly powerful state threatened the survival of capitalism. For those living on both sides of the Canada–U.S. border, as the historian Bethany Moreton has recently written, neoliberalism “acquired over thirty-five years the status of common sense—a fact of nature as self-evident as gravity and considerably more certain than evolution.”<sup>7</sup>

The neoliberal veneration of the business sector and the demonization of the public sector, however, obscured the growth of government in specific arenas. Neoliberalism was not about institutional retreat or the subordination of public and private agents to the discipline of disembedded markets. Rather, it involved the creation, legitimation, and consolidation of new institutional capacities and mechanisms of control.<sup>8</sup> While some North American conservatives argued for minimizing state intervention, regional elites succeeded not by rejecting government but by using it to create the conditions that suited their corporate interests.<sup>9</sup> That is to say, despite the neoliberal rhetoric to the contrary, the state did not get smaller at the end of the twentieth century. Rather, it was reconfigured so as to operate in such a way that it benefited big business.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, the carceral state and the welfare state became increasingly intertwined as more and more North Americans found themselves under penal control. Neoliberal governments often appealed to voters with promises that they would be tough on crime. The provision of social assistance increasingly resembled the strategies of surveillance and discipline seen in correctional institutions.<sup>11</sup> Among the clearest manifestations of such strategies were the drug-testing of welfare recipients and the incarceration of individuals who were unable to pay fines and fees for minor traffic or “nuisance” offenses. As incarceration rates soared, neoliberal governments turned to the private prison industry, which it was hoped could house more people at a lower cost. Between 1984 and 1991, sixty-seven private prisons opened in the United States. The privatization of the carceral state in the United States suggests a growing symbiosis between the public and private sector management of particular populations—especially the poor, the working class, and people of color. Instead of stepping into the welfare state’s void or representing its antithesis, the growing carceral apparatus often built upon the

6. Moreton, *To Serve God and Walmart*.

7. *Ibid.*, 126–127.

8. Konings, “Neoliberalism and the American State,” 741–765.

9. Shermer, *Sunbelt Capitalism*.

10. Mettler, *The Submerged State*; Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Mazzucato, *The Entrepreneurial State*; Prasad, *The Land of Too Much*.

11. Kohler-Hausmann, “Guns and Butter.” On scholarship outside the historical discipline that examines the interaction between the welfare and the carceral systems, see Soss, Fording, and Schram, *Disciplining the Poor*; Harcourt, *The Illusion of Free Markets*.

welfare state, particularly through its efforts to enforce social norms through coerced rehabilitation and treatment.

During the same period, governments in Canada and the United States began “contracting out” or “privatizing” welfare services that had previously been public social service functions. In the United States, some states adopted the quasi-private role of organizing the efficient distribution of state-referred clients and ensuring sufficient marketing of provider services to demonstrate market demand. In the economies of North America, public–private partnerships were fostered by governments in the 1980s as a key strategy for social and economic development.<sup>12</sup> The policy exemplified the neoliberal capitalist enshrinement of “the supremacy of the private sector and market forces in nurturing development.”<sup>13</sup> To reduce government expenditures on public services and shrink its areas of responsibility, public–private partnerships were promoted as a means of avoiding the inefficiencies of the public sector. Policy mechanisms such as public–private partnerships were therefore developed as a form of neoliberalization.

Neoliberalism was not a return to an unadulterated form of capitalism governed by principles of classical liberalism.<sup>14</sup> Rather, neoliberalism collapsed the epistemological distinction between the economy and society and connected the state’s formal institutions in more functional ways to the networks of governance and control.<sup>15</sup> It was not solely *laissez-faire* but also the art of governance that extended the logic of the market to other areas of social activity.<sup>16</sup> The rationality of the market became the organizational principle for the state and society as a whole.<sup>17</sup> As Daniel Rodgers has observed, the market became “the social metaphor of the age.”<sup>18</sup> The market was no longer imagined as one domain among many. Rather, it was redefined to encompass nearly every aspect of social life.<sup>19</sup>

While neoliberalism’s “theory of political economic practices” has received a good deal of examination, we still know relatively little about how its logic was transformed into the “common-sense” way that people interpret, live in, and understood their world; that is, how they developed their identities.<sup>20</sup> We know even less about what role business played in constituting “common-sense” and neoliberal subjectivities.<sup>21</sup>

For those trying to make sense of these aspects of the neoliberal project, the work of Michel Foucault is useful.<sup>22</sup> For Foucault, individuals are to be understood as active subjects who construct themselves through processes of what he terms “technologies of the self.”<sup>23</sup> These

12. Mitchell-Weaver and Manning, “Public-Private Partnerships in Third World Development”; Beaugard, “Public-Private Partnerships as Historical Chameleons.”

13. Squires, “Partnership and the Pursuit of the Private City,” 197.

14. Blyth, *Great Transformations*, 4.

15. Houghton, “Becoming a Neoliberal Subject,” 615–626.

16. Burchell, “Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self,” 267–282.

17. Shamir, “The Age of Responsibilization,” 1–19.

18. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, 44.

19. Lemke, “The Birth of ‘Bio-politics.’”

20. Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2.

21. There are important exceptions, however. See, e.g., Milov, *The Cigarette*; Jacobson, “Navigating the Boundaries of Respectability and Desire.”

22. Jessop, “Constituting Another Foucault Effect.”

23. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 367.

technologies are the various “operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and ways of being” that individuals make in order to reach a “state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality.”<sup>24</sup> The emergence of these “technologies of the self” represented a fundamental shift away from direct government control through legalistic, centralized, top-down structures to indirect market-based structures of governance by which agents represented to themselves their own ethical self-understanding.

Various scholars have identified responsabilization as one “technique of the self” that set into action a reflexive subjectivity.<sup>25</sup> As a technique of governance, responsabilization is fundamentally premised on the construction of moral agency as the necessary ontological condition for ensuring an entrepreneurial mentality in the case of individuals and socio-moral authority in the case of institutions, such as corporations. Neoliberal responsabilization is unique in that it assumes a moral agency that is congruent with the attributed tendencies of economic-rational actors: that is, autonomous, self-determined, and self-sustaining subjects. The moral quality of these individuals is based on the fact that they rationally assess the costs and benefits of a certain act as opposed to other alternative acts. As such, they are required to be “entrepreneurs of the self.” As the choice of options for action is, or so the neoliberal notion of rationality would have it, the expression of free will on the basis of a self-determined decision, the consequences of the action are assumed by the subject alone, who is also specifically responsible for them. Responsibilization is therefore a governance technique that is designed to address the issue of governance and control that originates from freedom of choice and individual liberties.<sup>26</sup> Individuals and corporations increasingly conduct moral evaluations of their actions in relation to their potential effects, calculating decisions in ways that attempt to mitigate harm and risk and maximize benefit to themselves and others.<sup>27</sup> As such, responsabilization reorganizes collective responsibilities as private duties and private organizations and individuals are increasingly sanctioned to perform duties that previously fell under the purview of the state.<sup>28</sup>

In the responsabilization process, it is often the state that encourages people and communities to acknowledge their responsibility for governing their own risk. But sometimes, as this article demonstrates, corporations assume that role. To be sure, as Philip Scranton and Patrick Fridenson argue, “wherever a state exists it is already ‘in’—in markets, business, law, and more—and that business historians cannot without loss overlook this foundational condition for economic action and institutional development.”<sup>29</sup> But in the case of drinking and driving, Canada’s largest brewer took the lead role. Commentators have noted, however, that it is not always clear how these technologies are “rolled out” for the purposes of governing.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, one of the central puzzles in the literature revolves around how the process of neoliberal responsabilization actually proceeds. What follows seeks to shed light on this process.

24. Foucault, *Technologies of the Self*, 18

25. Shamir, “The Age of Responsibilization,” 7.

26. Biebricher, “(Ir-)Responsibilization, Genetics and Neuroscience,” 469–488.

27. Giddens, “Risk and Responsibility,” 1–10.

28. O’Malley, “Risk and Responsibility.”

29. Scranton and Fridenson, *Reimagining Business History*. 17.

30. Pyysiäinen, Halpin, and Guilfoyle, “Neoliberal Governance and ‘Responsibilization’ of Agents”; Pyysiäinen and Vesala, “Activating Farmers.”

## The Rise of the Anti-drinking and driving Tide

In the 1980s, Western societies began to take the issue of impaired driving more seriously. At the same time, the victims' rights movement reached its zenith.<sup>31</sup> In Canada and the United States, grassroots organizations like Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), Please Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere (P.R.I.D.E.), Remove Intoxicated Drivers (RID), Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD), and Canadians Against Impaired Driving (Can-Aid) argued that driving while intoxicated was a socially accepted form of murder. While RID was the first of these anti-impaired driving groups to be established, MADD garnered the greatest attention from the press and had the most influence on public policy. Incorporated in August 1980, MADD was founded by Candy Lightner, a part-time California real estate agent. Months earlier, Lightner had lost her thirteen-year-old daughter, Cari, when a drunk driver hit her from behind while she was walking on a bike path. The driver did not stop and was later found to have been intoxicated. A repeat offender of California's DUI laws, the driver was out of jail for only a few days when he struck and killed Cari Lightner. Five days after her daughter's funeral, Candy Lightner started MADD, and by 1982 it had more than seventy chapters in Canada and the United States. Three years later it had a membership of 600,000, 360 chapters, and a budget of \$10 million.<sup>32</sup>

Grassroots anti-drunk driving lobby groups like MADD sought to bring greater public attention to the issue of impaired driving in order to pressure governments to impose tougher laws and stricter punishments for those found guilty of driving while under the influence. These organizations framed their arguments in the language of (in)justice and the politics of individualism, which incorporated a neoliberal definition of the problem—including an attribution of causality and blame, as well as a potential solution. For anti-tobacco organizations of the time, the problem was the individual who smoked. The neoliberal era witnessed the invention of a new political subjectivity, the “nonsmoker” who increasingly voiced his or her “right” to breathe clean air in airplanes, offices, and public spaces. Finding few who were sympathetic in Congress, nonsmoking activists turned to the courts. In the 1980s, activists additionally attempted to convince major corporations that their nonsmoking employees were more productive and produced fewer costly liabilities than those who lit up.<sup>33</sup> When it came to alcohol, grassroots organization like MADD argued that the consumption of intoxicating beverages led to drunk driving and increased the risk of crashes, injury, and death. Because drinking coupled with driving “caused” automobile accidents, the solution lay in strategies that diminished driving after drinking.<sup>34</sup> For these organizations, the issue of impaired driving was one of individual responsibility and retribution. The problem was not the safety of cars, urban sprawl, the lack of affordable public transportation, or even alcoholism. Rather, the problem was the “killer drunk,” who needed to be brought to justice and made to pay for his or her crime in order to deter others.

31. Rentschler, *Second Wounds*, 70–75.

32. Fell and Voas, “Mothers Against Drunk Driving,” 195–212.

33. Milov, *The Cigarette*, 188–200; Brant, “From Nicotine to Nicotrol,” 390–399.

34. Gusfield, *The Culture of Public Problems*, 7.

As the movement gained momentum, North American brewers came under increased scrutiny. In the minds of many anti-impaired driving advocates, the brewers had created a culture that promoted irresponsible behavior. In the early 1980s, a number of politicians joined the chorus of those condemning the act of drinking and driving and the brewers' lifestyle advertisements. "The idea that those [lifestyle] beer ads do not promote the sale of beer to young people is just preposterous," stated the Ontario MPP, Robert Fletcher Nixon in 1983. "We know there are more beer ads than anything [else in the media]," Nixon bemoaned, "and they must surely teach the value of having a good cold beer just after you get out of a balloon or climb down off the water skis or off those fantastic sailboards, or whatever they are, and before you start the other activity of the evening, which is obviously well laid on."<sup>35</sup>

One of the television commercials that particularly infuriated Nixon and other anti-drinking and driving advocates was Labatt's 1983 "Cutting Out" commercial. The commercial was designed to promote Labatt's flagship ale "50." By the 1980s, advertisers in general were spending more money on television commercials than on magazine and newspaper campaigns, and Canadians were, increasingly, forming an impression about beer from what they saw on television. The commercials for Labatt 50 featured a bunch of good-looking, young, white male adults "cutting out" from work and making their way to a cottage in cars, trucks, and boats and on motorcycles. The ad infuriated Labatt's critics, because it linked drinking and motorized vehicles.<sup>36</sup> The commercial, and others like it, led a number of politicians and grassroots advocates to conclude that Labatt was promoting a hedonistic, irresponsible lifestyle that was undermining the public good.

The singling out of Labatt was not arbitrary. Labatt was one of Canada's oldest and largest breweries.<sup>37</sup> In the aftermath of World War II, Labatt had gone on a spending spree, acquiring breweries across the land. Labatt, along with Molson and Carling O'Keefe, formed a national brewing oligopoly, known as the "big three." The big three had a physical presence in virtually every region across the country, and their brands dominated the marketplace.<sup>38</sup> Labatt also had a presence in the United States.<sup>39</sup> Domestically, Labatt controlled roughly 38 percent of the market, while the big three produced more than 95 percent of all the beer consumed in Canada. Labatt's flagship lager, Blue, and flagship ale, 50 were two of the best-selling domestic beer brands, and Labatt spent millions of dollars each year on advertising campaigns that associated these two brands with "the good life."

Feeling the pressure from politicians and grassroots movements like MADD, SADD, and P.R.I.D.E., the premier of Ontario, William Davis, established an Inter-ministerial Task Force in 1982 to study the problem of drinking and driving. The task force identified two major issues that were contributing to the level of impaired driving in Canada. The first was the

35. Province of Ontario, Legislative Debates (October 20, 1983), 2295.

36. *Ibid.*

37. Bellamy, *Brewed in the North*.

38. The one region where the "big three" did not have a significant presence was northern Ontario. This is because that market was protected by a Wartime Prices and Trade Board order that prohibited brewers south of the 46th parallel from selling their products in the north. See Ontario, Department of Provincial Secretary and Citizenship, *Report of the Inquiry into the Brewing Industry of Northern Ontario* (1972): 2–3.

39. Bellamy, *Brewed in the North*, 308–309.

relatively large number of eighteen- to twenty-one-year-old individuals who were drinking and driving, and the second was the brewers' lifestyle advertising. The task force agreed with Nixon that the imagery presented by the brewers in their ads was inappropriate with respect to drinking, because it fostered "unrealistic expectations about what alcohol could do." The concern with the imagery and subliminal messages led the task force to object to the use of "fun vehicles" (e.g., sailboards, hang gliders, water skis) in the brewers' commercials. According to the task force, these vehicles required considerable skill to operate, but the brewers' commercials suggested that they could be operated effectively even after a few beers. The task force also concluded that "the inappropriate imagery" could be seen as suggesting that driving a car or a motorcycle would not be impaired by drinking.<sup>40</sup> In the minds of those on the task force, there was a direct link between the brewers' lifestyle advertising and the level of impaired driving in Canada. Thus, the task force recommended that the government restrict the use of lifestyle advertising by the brewers of the nation. At the same time that the task force was considering the link between impaired driving and the brewers' lifestyle ads, various provincial governments were contemplating raising the drinking age from either eighteen or nineteen to twenty-one. Similar developments were taking place in the United States. In response to the emotionally resonant activism of MADD and other groups, the Reagan administration tied federal highway funding to the revision of state alcohol laws, thereby establishing a de facto national drinking age of twenty-one.<sup>41</sup>

An increase in the drinking age would have a profound effect on the brewers' bottom line. After decades of galloping postwar growth, beer consumption in North America had fallen flat. The first of the baby boomers were now in their midthirties and were drinking less beer than they had previously.<sup>42</sup> In part, the research showed that this was because some were tired of the bland-tasting, modestly packaged brands of Canada's biggest breweries. With tastes becoming more sophisticated, many boomers switched to drinking wine or spirits, which had a cachet that beer did not.<sup>43</sup> Beer executives could take some comfort in the fact that late baby boomers and Generation Xers were proving to be a hedonistic lot, with a greater propensity to "binge" drink.<sup>44</sup> Those between eighteen and twenty-four had long represented the brewing industry's heaviest drinkers, and raising the drinking age would cut the group's per capita consumption by almost 40 percent. Thus, Labatt stated publicly: "We do not advocate that the government increase either the drinking age or the driving age."<sup>45</sup>

40. Dennis Manning to J. F. Morgan (March 16, 1983), box A10-053-318, Labatt Collection.

41. Lerner, *One for the Road*, 90. It is important to note, however, that individual states could refuse to raise their minimum drinking age to twenty-one and thereby forgo federal highway funding.

42. Gioffre, "Growth Opportunities That Exist for Canada's Brewing Industry," 5–7.

43. In 1970, the volume of wine sales in Canada represented 4.65 percent of total sales volume of alcoholic beverages, while in 1982, the volume of wine sales represented 8.9 percent. In 1970, beer sales represented 88.9 percent of the total sales volume of alcoholic beverages, while in 1982, the volume of beer sales represented 83.2 percent. See Gioffre, "Growth Opportunities that Exist for Canada's Brewing Industry," 6.

44. Binge drinking is episodic drinking, defined as anything over five drinks in one evening or sitting. For the rising rates on binge drinking during the 1980s, see Rod Mickleburg, "Student Drinking, Drug Abuse on Rise, ARF Says," *Globe and Mail* (20 November 1991), A7.

45. Labatt, "Draft: Labatt Perspective on Impaired Driving," box A08-053-337, Labatt Collection.



## Labatt and Corporate Social Responsibility

What motivated Labatt to engage in a “Don’t Drink and Drive” campaign? The answer to this question lies, at one level, in the neoliberal culture of the late twentieth century. The logic of the age was such that corporations—through the neoliberal scheme of governance itself—were put on a par with elected governments. As a result, there was an expectation that market entities, like Labatt, would also dispense governmental responsibilities. This shift was further facilitated by the conception that corporations were, as a matter of fact, people in the eyes of the law. Capitalism, therefore, became humanized, and the dynamism of the market became the mechanism for achieving social well-being.<sup>46</sup>

Neoliberal logic, which venerated the private sector and disparaged the state (while paradoxically expanding its powers), created the conditions for the formation of an informal public–private partnership dedicated to tackling the issue of drinking and driving. On October 4, 1983, the minister of justice and attorney general of Canada, Mark MacGuigan, wrote to Sid Oland asking for the brewer’s help in tackling the drinking and driving problem:

Since impaired driving is a social as well as a legal problem, legal sanctions can only provide a partial solution. Research indicates that increased law enforcement, which accordingly augments the perceived risk of apprehension and punishment, may have a greater deterrent effect than increased penalties. Research further indicates that changing the prevalent social acceptability of drinking and driving may be an even more effective preventive measure than any changes in the law or the degree to which it is enforced; this suggests that non-legal approaches should be stressed and combined with the legal approach to the problem.<sup>47</sup>

MacGuigan did not state what form the “non-legal approaches” should take. The government would leave that to Labatt. But he did state that if Labatt aided the government in reducing the incidents of impaired driving, then the corporation would be perceived as socially responsible. Here then was the government’s “carrot” to go along with the “stick” of potentially raising the drinking age to twenty-one and restricting lifestyle advertising.<sup>48</sup> Confidential discussions at Labatt revealed the motivation for the campaign. In the words of one Labatt’s executive, Michael Egan, “the goal of the campaign should be to defuse the growing age 21/advertising controversies by giving the government something [positive] to point to.”<sup>49</sup> Beyond that goal, as Labatt’s manager of public policy, Dennis Manning, pointed out, an anti-impaired driving campaign would lead to the brewer being “perceived as an innovative and a responsible corporate citizen.”<sup>50</sup>

For these reasons, executives at Labatt decided to move quickly on the issue of impaired driving in order to gain a first-mover advantage over its chief rivals, Molson and Carling

46. Shamir, “Corporate Social Responsibility,” 381.

47. Mark MacGuigan to Sid Oland (October 4, 1983), box A08-053-365, Labatt Collection.

48. For more on the offer of reward and the threat of punishment in public policy see, e.g., Rothschild, “Carrots, Sticks and Promises,” 24–37.

49. Minutes of Meeting on Industry “Moderation Advertising” (July 12, 1984), box A08-053-337, Labatt Collection.

50. Dennis Manning to R. A. Binnendyk (January 9, 1983), box A08-053-308, Labatt Collection.

O’Keefe. The other members of the big three were also feeling the political and cultural pressure regarding drinking and driving. If Labatt moved rapidly, then it would derive the most benefits from educating the public on the issue of drinking while under the influence of alcohol.

Labatt was not motivated by some moral imperative to reduce impaired driving. As late as April of 1984, Sid Oland went on the record as saying: “I have no great objection, if someone has a drink and drives afterwards.”<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, throughout the 1980s, Labatt gave its nighttime workers five free beers per shift—two of which were supplied at the end of the night shift and therefore just before some employees got into their cars and drove home. Even after one of Labatt’s employees, Patrick Beemer, hit and injured a cyclist after consuming five beers during his night shift at the Labatt plant in Kitchener, Labatt continued its five free beers policy. When the police arrived, Beemer refused to take a breath test. He was charged and convicted of impaired driving and refusing to take a breathalyzer.<sup>52</sup> The story hit the pages of the national press, and one prominent newspaper editorialized: “We can’t help but think that Labatt’s policy gives a seal of approval to the idea of having one for the road.”<sup>53</sup>

### Labatt’s Non-legal Approach to the Problem

When it came to the question of how Labatt should tackle the issue of drinking and driving in society, there was a good deal of debate as to what should be done. Some executives argued that Labatt should return to promoting beer as a moderate alcoholic beverage. “There is now an opportunity to promote our product ... as a positive contributor to the well-being and healthy lifestyles of our consumers,” stated Labatt’s D. L. Rutledge. “With pressure increasing on our industry to change lifestyle advertising, and with the spectre of age 21 lurking in the wings of the political stage,” Rutledge continued, “we could sail into the lull before the storm with the positive facts about beer.”<sup>54</sup>

Rutledge’s report contained a list of the healthy chemical components in beer: calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, chloride, sodium, vitamins B1, B2, B3, and B6, as well as folic acid. He believed that “a moderate amount for a healthy adult person was one liter or three bottles of beer daily”—although he was quick to add that “this does not mean downing three bottles in twenty minutes.”<sup>55</sup> Rutledge was confident that a promotional campaign touting the health benefits derived from drinking beer would silence Labatt’s critics and spike the guns of government regulation.

The liquor traffic had used this approach before. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the nation’s brewers stressed the fact that beer was “a temperance drink,” and thus, unlike hard alcohol, not harmful to the individual or a danger to society.<sup>56</sup> Indeed – in the

51. Sid Oland, “Media Conference Transcript” (April 19, 1983), box A08-053-308, Labatt Collection.

52. *Globe and Mail*, December 12, 1983, 5.

53. *Globe and Mail*, January 7, 1984, 4.

54. D. L. Rutledge, “In Praise of the Judicious Consumption of Beer: An Assessment” (December 28, 1984), box A08-053-359, Labatt Collection.

55. *Ibid.*

56. Heron, *Booze*, 188–199.

words of one early-nineteenth century O’Keefe’s beer advertisement—“You can almost FEEL your strength coming back as you enjoy a bottle of this rich, creamy, old ale.”<sup>57</sup> In the post-Prohibition period, many North American governments proved sympathetic to this view, bringing back the public consumption of beer, while simultaneously instructing citizens to “try to control yourself.”<sup>58</sup> Likewise, during World War II, the brewers stressed the nutritional aspects of beer in order to prevent the moral reformers from lifting the lid off the tomb of Prohibition.<sup>59</sup> But Dennis Manning felt that this approach was dated and strategically flawed. “We seem to debate endlessly the old arguments of whether beer is the beverage of moderation and whether alcoholics only drink liquor,” he stated. “These arguments are stale, they have lost their appeal,” he continued, “and in their present form they are dangerous to Labatt.”<sup>60</sup> Instead, Manning argued that Labatt should embark upon a cause-advertising campaign to shift the responsibility for impaired driving onto the individual. As Manning put it:

If we accept that alcohol can cause problems ... [then] our goal is to change behaviour—to change bad drinking habits into good drinking habits or, hopefully to educate persons on the responsible use of our products in order to prevent the development of bad drinking habits. This approach is the most fruitful for Labatt because it keeps the debate focused on the individual. In short, if a person abuses alcohol, then the problems flowing from that abuse are a matter of individual responsibility, which speak to a problem in the person rather than a problem inherent in the product.<sup>61</sup>

Here, then, was a rhetorical shift that redefined the solution to the impaired-driving problem in terms of the development of a particular morally enlightened agent, a responsible consumer of alcohol who did not drive while under the influence, and contrasted the individual’s choice capabilities with an immoral other—that is, the person with “bad drinking habits.” The distiller Seagram had defined “bad drinking habits” as “excessive drinking” in its effort to shift the responsibility for drunkenness onto the consumer after the “noble experiment” came to an end in Canada and the United States. But as Lisa Jacobson notes, Seagram’s definition of “what it called ‘a sharp dividing line’ between moderate and excessive drinking was exceedingly vague.”<sup>62</sup> In the late 1930s, Seagram shrewdly marketed its blended product as a more moderate and better-tasting whisky than single malts in its quest for mass markets and legitimacy.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, the brewers in Canada’s largest province, Ontario, were vague when they made an appeal for moderation following “Black Christmas” of 1936—a holiday that witnessed more than one hundred motor accidents in the city of Toronto, most of them attributable to alcohol.<sup>64</sup> But at no time before the 1980s did the brewers define “bad drinking habits” as driving while intoxicated. When the issue of

57. *Ibid.*, 191.

58. Malleck, *Try to Control Yourself*.

59. Bellamy, “‘To Ensure the Continued Life of the Industry,’” 403–423.

60. Dennis Manning, “A Need for a Change of Perspective at Labatt’s” (no date), box A08-053-308, Labatt Collection.

61. Dennis Manning to R. A. Binnendyk (December 29, 1982), box A08-053-308, Labatt Collection.

62. Jacobson, “Navigating the Boundaries of Respectability and Desire,” 132.

63. Jacobson, “Navigating the Boundaries of Respectability and Desire,” 122–146.

64. Bellamy, *Brewed in the North*, 181–186.

drinking and driving rose to public prominence in the 1980s, Labatt was still concerned, first and foremost, about its bottom line. But this time there was not any talk about defining “bad drinking habits” as excessive drinking. Labatt did not want the pleasure-seeking late baby boomers and Generation Xers to drink less beer.<sup>65</sup> In the age of neoliberal excess, when individuals were deemed free to make their own mistakes, “bad drinking habits” were conceived by Labatt to be a function of one’s actions when intoxicated and not the state of intoxication/or excessive drinking in and of itself. Thus, rather than assigning responsibility to the state or taking the issue on itself, Labatt suggested increasing the ethical responsibility of the individual.

Individual decision making was key. This was consistent with the neoliberal notion of rationality, which stressed that the choice of options for action was an expression of an individual’s free will. The consequences of one’s action were to be borne by the subject alone, who was also solely responsible for them.<sup>66</sup> MADD was striking a similar chord when it condemned drunk drivers rather than drunk driving.<sup>67</sup> MADD’s organizational strategy was explicitly one of shaming the “killer drunk.” It assiduously avoided blaming corporate interests or the structural sources of alcohol problems and instead embraced a discourse of individual responsibility.<sup>68</sup> Likewise, for Manning, the ideological solution to the societal dilemma of impaired driving was to individualize the responsibility for handling it, apotheosizing the ideal of the “responsible drinker” who did not drink and drive.

Manning insisted on immediate action. The “alcohol abuse” and “impaired driving” issues were gathering momentum, and Labatt’s critics were more focused directly on beer, because it was Canada’s alcoholic beverage of choice. Manning was in possession of statistics that showed that 55 percent of Canadians felt that beer was the beverage “most likely to be consumed to excess.” By 1981, Canadians were drinking seven times as much beer as wine and spirits combined.<sup>69</sup> As a result of its popularity, beer was getting the bulk of the blame for society’s alcohol-related problems, like impaired driving. “It is naïve to think that beer is in no way a contributor to some or many of the social/alcohol problems,” Labatt’s vice president of corporate development and public affairs, R. A. Binnendyk, stated on January 17, 1983. “The public doesn’t believe it, the legislators don’t believe it. Who does believe it?”<sup>70</sup> As a result, before the task force in Ontario tabled its final report, Labatt committed to undertake an anti-impaired driving campaign in order to “achieve the attitudinal change necessary to make drinking and driving socially unacceptable.”<sup>71</sup>

65. Rod Mickleburg, “Student Drinking, Drug Abuse on Rise, ARF Says,” *Globe and Mail*, November 20, 1991, A7.

66. Lemke, “The Birth of ‘Bio-politics,’” 201.

67. Renarman, “The Case of Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Social Control in the 1980s,” 103.

68. *Ibid.*

69. In 1981, Canadians consumed 21,033,694 hectoliters of beer, 794,106 hectoliters of spirits, and 2,161,086 hectoliters of wine. See Hurst, Gregory, and Gussman, *Alcoholic Beverage Taxation and Control Policies*, 75–77.

70. Dennis Manning to Pierre Desjardins (January 17, 1983), box A08-053-308, Labatt Collection.

71. Dennis Manning to Lynn Hillborn (June 2, 1983), box A08-053-365, Labatt Collection.

## Constituting the “Responsible Drinker”

In June 1983, Labatt launched its anti-drinking and driving campaign. The first ads depicted a young, white, happy middle-class boy above the tagline: “For Him: Please Don’t Drink and Drive” (Figure 1). Subsequent ads continued to build on the child safety theme, and reflected the politics of whiteness, blondness, and innocence. During the 1980s, child safety became a crucial political concern. The specter of the child as an endangered species was appropriated by politicians in an effort to portray themselves as protectors of childhood innocence. Many of these politicians maintained that children were both the inspiration for and principal beneficiaries of their policies. More generally, young children became the target and referent in the discourse of moral uplift and social legitimation.<sup>72</sup> The neoliberal politics of the age stressed the moral threats to North American children, such as crack-baby mothers and impaired drivers, while downplaying material threats such as poverty, hunger, and educational inequity.<sup>73</sup> As Labatt’s ads demonstrate, businesses and politicians had little interest in the safety of kids who were poor and non-white. Under these circumstances, innocence emerged less as a trope to highlight the threat to kids and more than as a metaphor for advancing a neoliberal agenda based on so-called “family values.” Middle-class white children were viewed as more treasured and deserving of the state’s protection than those who were poor and non-white.<sup>74</sup> While the federal government assumed a larger role on the issue of missing, exploited, and endangered children, the state stressed the primacy of private enterprise in protecting North America’s youth. Private enterprise often obliged, because, as Paul Mokrzycki Renfro has noted, “Keeping children safe was good for business.”<sup>75</sup> Doing good was good for business, and the responsible corporation, which did good, became no less than a moral authority in society.<sup>76</sup>

Looking at the image, one might have wondered: Whose children were they? Were they those of the victim or the impaired driver? One suspects that the ambiguity was by design, signaling to the onlooker that everyone in society was being put at risk by the drunk driver. As part of the responsabilization process, Labatt wanted the consumers of alcohol to acknowledge their own potential culpability when it came to drinking and driving. The ads made the onlooker aware that the social risk of driving while under the influence was not the responsibility of the state but resided in the domain of the individual’s care of the self. The emphasis was on self-reliance and self-determination rather than direct intervention. With the dismantling of the Keynesian welfare state, individuals were left to their own devices. Individuals were required to be what the British social theorist Nikolas Rose has termed an “entrepreneur of the self.” Neoliberal logic demanded that citizens, as individual free agents, self-manage and self-regulate, and, often, self-educate.<sup>77</sup>

72. Giroux, “Nymphet Fantasies,” 31–53.

73. Briggs, *Somebody’s Children*, esp. chap. 3.

74. For an analysis of the ideological underpinnings of the right-wing family values crusade, see Stacey, *In the Name of the Family*.

75. Renfro, “Keeping Children Safe Is Good Business,” 151–187.

76. Shamir, “The Age of Responsibilization,” 11.

77. Rose and Miller, “Political Power Beyond the State,” 173–205.



Figure 1. “For Us. Please Don’t Drink and Drive.” In 1983, Labatt launched its anti-impaired driving campaign, the first major print and television by a North American brewer.

SOURCE: Box MR8833, Labatt Collection.

The individual’s management of risk, however, was not to be left to fate, nor was it to be supervised by a providential state. Instead, risk was to be managed by the individual, who was to be held responsible for his or her own actions as well as the respective outcomes.<sup>78</sup> During the 1980s, personal risk management increasingly became a technique of the prudent self. For example, while governments placed new restrictions on where smoking could take place and by whom, the individual was still free to smoke—although as Sarah Milov points out, smoke-free workplaces were increasingly imagined as “smoker-free workplaces.”<sup>79</sup> Within the neoliberal order, people were increasingly encouraged to govern themselves—although their choices were more or less bound by laws, cultural values, social norms, moral codes, and behavioral routines.<sup>80</sup> At a time when North American culture was dominated by what Allan Brant terms an “ethic of control and personal mastery,” governments and socially responsible corporations educated citizens on the risks of consuming drugs and alcohol and then let them make their choices.<sup>81</sup> The neoliberal subject was required to make predictions about the consequence of his or her actions. This risk thinking or “taming of chance”—as Ian Hacking terms it—demanded that individuals think about the possible outcomes of their actions, thereby bringing the future into the present and making it actionable.<sup>82</sup> From this perspective, the act of drunk driving came down to a rationally calculated choice of costs and benefits. Labatt’s initial ads warned onlookers of the potential price to be paid for driving while under

78. Biebricher, “(Ir-)Responsibilization, Genetics and Neuroscience,” 469–488.

79. Milov, *The Cigarette*, 295.

80. Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 66–70.

81. Brant, “From Nicotine to Nicotrol,” 394.

82. Hacking, *The Taming of Chance*.

the influence. This risk thinking was another twist in the logics of responsabilization, in which the state and public authorities relinquished their obligations for the provision of security and well-being of citizens, instead abandoning individuals to the destinies they created for themselves.

The initial campaign was deemed by some onlookers to be depressing. “For Him/For Us/For Them,” stated one viewer, “makes you feel guilty for drinking. I don’t want to feel guilty for drinking.”<sup>83</sup> At the same time, health professionals were sounding the alarm regarding the brewing industry’s initial cause-advertising campaign. “To ask people to do the right thing after they’ve been drinking doesn’t work out,” stated the director of Kingston’s Alcohol and Drug Education Center, Hilton Murray, “because the very first thing alcohol does is affect your judgement.”<sup>84</sup> Murray was among those health-care experts who were calling for greater emphasis to be placed on the consumption of alcohol. “I think they are concerned too much on the act of drinking and driving and not enough on excessive drinking *per se*,” he said. Labatt did not want to alienate its loyal customers at a time when competition among the big three was at a postwar high.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, the brewer recognized that it was hypocritical to ask individuals “to do the right thing when their perceptions were skewed by alcohol.”<sup>86</sup>

As a result, the original campaign was replaced after a few years by the more cheerful “homing device” theme that offered individuals a solution to the “act responsibly/pursue pleasure” dilemma. The new cause-marketing campaign consisted mainly of a print ad and posters showing a cab or a bus as the “homing device” (Figure 2). These ads were similar to those used in the first campaign in that they continued the process of responsabilization, but they were designed to address the criticism of those like Murray who maintained that the act of drinking alcohol impaired rational decision making and thus prevented sound cost-benefit analysis on the part of the “entrepreneurial self.” The new ads offered a solution to the problem. As one internal memo noted: “The ads provided people with alternatives to drinking and driving so that they are able to make responsible decisions.”<sup>87</sup> Neoliberalism thus collapsed the distinction between economy and society. By encoding the social domain as a form of the economic domain, cost-benefit calculations and market criteria influenced the decision-making process in all aspects of the individual’s life, even leisurely pursuits like drinking.

When asked to reflect on the ads, Labatt’s focus groups noted that they were easier to take than Labatt’s initial ads. “It’s got a sense of humor,” stated one observer. “It’s not like the shock of seeing somebody lying in the middle of the road,” stated another.<sup>88</sup> “It’s the lighter side,” stated a third reviewer, “as opposed to the constant pounding of ‘you can kill yourself and somebody else.’”<sup>89</sup> The ads were accompanied by a television commercial called “Show Me.” The “Show Me” commercial depicted young male drinkers coming out of a bar and then getting on public transit or into a cab. The soundtrack in the background of the commercial was

83. Kwechansky Marketing Research, “Labatt Brewing Company’s Moderation Advertising” (November 1986), box A08-053-791, Labatt Collection, 30.

84. *The Kingston Whig Standard*, April 23, 1986, 1

85. Bellamy, *Brewed in the North*, 328–334.

86. Dennis Manning to R. A. Binnendyk (January 17, 1983), box A08-053-308, Labatt Collection.

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*, 12.

89. *Ibid.*

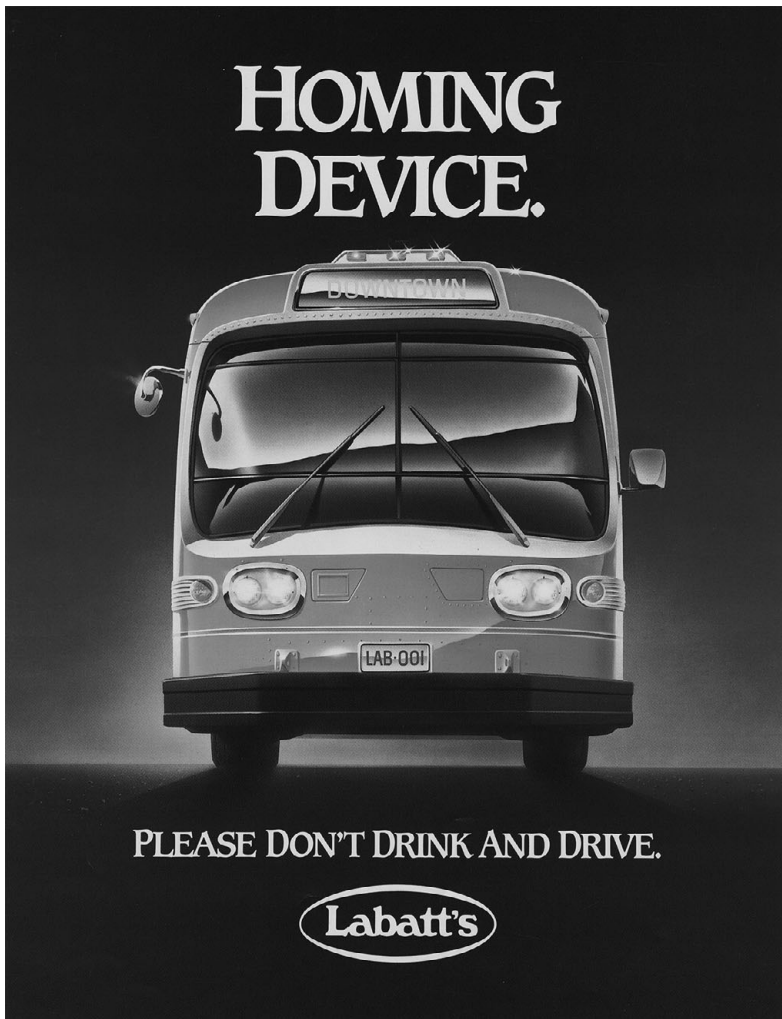


Figure 2. "Homing Device. Please Don't Drink and Drive." ad (1985).

SOURCE: Box MR8833, Labatt Collection.

based on the old "Show Me the Way to Go Home" song.<sup>90</sup> The "Show Me" commercial did not portray anyone as visibly drunk. However, they were coming out of a bar late at night. This led a number of observers to conclude that they must have been there for several hours and thus had probably consumed a fair amount of beer.<sup>91</sup> The way the characters traveled home seemed to many observers to be a responsible act. "It was so natural," stated one individual in Labatt's

90. Perception Research Inc., "Labatt Brewing Company, Moderation Campaign (July 1989), box A08-053-791, Labatt Collection.

91. *Ibid.*



focus groups. “It was something they pre-planned for,” stated another.<sup>92</sup> Those in the focus groups found that there was no evidence of a “tug of war” with the characters’ consciences over whether to drive home or not, because they rationally assessed the costs and benefits of a certain act (i.e., drinking and driving) as opposed to other alternative acts (i.e., drinking and then taking a cab or a bus). This was a pivotal point, according to those at Labatt. It showed that responsible preplanning was not incompatible with having a good time. In fact, as an internal report noted, it could be seen as facilitating a good time by eliminating “the mental tussle caused by keys in the pocket.”<sup>93</sup>

Labatt’s anti-impaired driving campaign continued into the 1990s and 2000s. While the themes continued to change, the message remained fundamentally the same. Labatt’s cause-advertising was a neoliberal form of governing from a distance. By influencing individuals in a specific way, the company’s program of responsabilization was one of the key techniques used to solve the social problem of driving while under the influence.

### The State’s Legal Approach to the Problem

The ideological attack on the Keynesian welfare state and the shift of responsibility onto the individual reduced the role of the neoliberal state to a policing one. During the 1980s, peace officers were given additional powers when it came to “policing the open road,” and the courts imposed stiffer penalties on those convicted of drinking and driving.<sup>94</sup> Labatt’s non-legal approach aimed to “educate” the onlooker about the costs of drinking and driving and suggested a “responsible” course of action if the individual was planning to drink later. People were free to make their own miscalculations, but there would be a price to pay for bad decision making.

Although impaired driving in various forms had been a criminal offense in Canada since 1925, criminal charges were rarely laid before the 1980s, even after the sharp increases in recreational drug and alcohol use that began in the 1960s.<sup>95</sup> By 1962, police were using the breathalyzer for road-side testing. However, the test was voluntary and could only be used as confirmatory evidence. In 1969, the federal government enacted the Canadian Criminal Law Amendment Act, which made it illegal to operate a motorized vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration of more than 80 mg of alcohol in 100 milliliters of blood. It also gave peace officers the authority to demand pre-arrest roadside breath samples and made it an offense to refuse one. The prosecution of impaired-driving cases was typically based on the arresting officer’s testimony regarding the accused’s driving behavior. However, even when an accused was obviously impaired and there was evidence of recent alcohol use, it was still necessary in most cases to introduce expert testimony linking the accused’s alcohol use to impaired ability to drive.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Seo, *Policing the Open Road*, 210–212.

95. Heron, *Booze*, 299–350.

During the 1980s, however, legislators and the courts began taking a harder line when it came to the crime of impaired driving. Until 1985, the maximum penalty under the Criminal Code for a first conviction on impaired driving was a fine of \$2000 and six months in prison. In most provinces, however, the typical fine was about \$300, with the average slightly lower in Ontario and Quebec and slightly higher in the Maritimes and the West.<sup>96</sup> As late as 1983, jail terms were imposed in only about 10 percent of all drunk-driving cases—including those involving serious accidents or deaths.<sup>97</sup>

In December 1985, amendments to the Criminal Code provided for stiffer penalties for impaired drivers. Referred to collectively as Bill C-19, the amendments allowed for the taking of a blood sample where a breath sample could not be obtained and introduced two new impaired-driving charges, impaired driving causing bodily harm and impaired driving causing death. Conviction on the former charge provided for a prison sentence of up to ten years, the latter for up to fourteen years. Judges were also given the power to suspend licenses for at least three months for a first offence, six months for a second, and one year for a subsequent offence.

In 1985, the Supreme Court ruled that the police were operating within their powers when they stopped motorists at random to check for impaired driving. “Because of the seriousness of the problem of impaired driving, there can be no doubt about the importance and necessity of a program to improve the deterrence of it,” Justice Gerald Le Dain wrote for the majority in the 4–3 ruling. The “random” stops by the police at sobriety checkpoints were a key disciplinary technique in the war on drunk driving, adding to society’s “carceral texture.”

Labatt’s own research suggested that the state’s “legal approach” was having an effect. Asked why they did not drink and drive, a number of respondents stated that they worried about being caught by the police. “I worry if there’s a cop around the next corner ready to pull me over,” stated one respondent to Labatt’s market researchers.<sup>98</sup> “I think most people are concerned about being pulled over and losing their licence,” stated another respondent.<sup>99</sup> The new laws further responsabilized individuals to distinguish morally “right” behavior from “wrong” and self-govern accordingly. The logic of the punitive deterrence was to make crime pay so that individuals would avoid costly criminal behaviors—like driving in an intoxicated state.<sup>100</sup> In this sense, the penal state was the power effect of risk-management techniques. Under the new law, ordinary traffic infractions were sharply distinguished from drinking and driving, thereby giving the use of alcohol a special status. Thus, heavier penalties for drinking and driving created a public vision of what was morally right and what was socially acceptable behavior; they embodied an image of society in which moral standards were embraced and protected.

96. *Globe and Mail*, December 10, 1983.

97. *Ibid.*

98. Kwechansky Marketing Research, “Labatt Brewing Company’s Moderation Advertising” (November 1986), box A08-053-791, Labatt Collection, 8.

99. *Ibid.*

100. Beckett, *Making Crime Pay*.

## Conclusion

In 1989, Labatt commissioned a study that examined drinking and driving attitudes and how they had changed over time. Six years earlier, Labatt had become the first brewer in North America to launch an anti-drinking and driving campaign, which garnered praise from state bureaucrats, politicians, law enforcement, and “responsible citizens.” Having assembled focus groups in various North American cities, Labatt asked: “Do you sometimes drive after you have been drinking?” The responses were remarkably consistent. “No, never. I have done it before but no, never,” answered one respondent. “I’ve done it before,” another participant responded. “I had a motorcycle and I drove it pissed out of my mind. That was, like, when I was eighteen. Now, like I’m 26.” A third person answered, “Not for a good couple of years now. Maybe as I am getting older, I am getting more responsible. I realize it is stupid. It is better not to drive.” Summarizing the findings of public attitudes in 1989, Labatt reported that “since the drinking driver is no longer tolerated with a good-natured, boys-will-be-boys wink of the eye, it is now probably unthinkable for a focus group respondent to admit that he thumbs his nose at it all and does as he pleases ... Acknowledgment of the wrongness of drinking and driving is universal, and mostly quite genuine.”<sup>101</sup>

Labatt’s campaign against impaired driving set a moralization process in motion through which responsibility was shifted away from the state and reassigned to the individual. The anti-drunk driving campaign sought to solve a social problem by heralding a revolution against the (wrong) way of governing oneself. Neoliberal discourse stressed that it was not socio-structural factors (e.g. unsafe cars, lack of affordable public transportation, urban sprawl, or alcoholism) that caused drunk driving accidents, but rather individual subjective categories—that is, those who lacked self-control and the ability/will to make a (right) cost-benefit analysis. Labatt’s campaign diagnosed as problematic the societal conditions that prevent individual agents from effectively assuming responsibility for outcomes. It reframed and reconfigured the conditions so that the fate of the agents—and the consequences of their undertakings—depended predominantly on their own decisions, actions, and abilities so that the consequences of the action were borne by the subject alone. The subjects of neoliberal governance were persuaded into active responsibility taking by the appeal of increased personal freedom and possibilities of self-determination. Labatt’s “Please Don’t Drink and Drive” campaigns responded to the “demand” for great personal freedom and self-determination by “supplying” individuals with the possibility of actively participating in the solution.

Labatt’s anti-impaired driving campaign was motivated by less than altruistic ideals. How Labatt defined its responsibilities depended to a large extent on the criticisms launched by those outside of the corporation’s walls and the neoliberal culture in which it operated. Labatt responded to public and political pressure in a way that sought to reconcile its business interests with the demands of society. Somewhat ironically, those at Labatt were not initially, or principally, motivated by reducing impaired driving. Rather, they were motivated by a

101. Perception Research Inc., “Labatt Brewing Company, Moderation Campaign (July 1989), box A08-053-791, Labatt Collection, 3–5.

desire to prevent government regulation and, simultaneously, portray Labatt as a responsible corporate citizen.

On both counts, Labatt's campaign worked. In the aftermath of the initial campaigns, the brewer heard from politicians,<sup>102</sup> law enforcement,<sup>103</sup> and grassroots organizations.<sup>104</sup> All of them found Labatt's actions to be praiseworthy. "Your campaign to change attitudes seems identical to ours," wrote James M. Ivey, the director of development at MADD, "and we appreciate the support this will generate in Canada."<sup>105</sup> Just as importantly for those at Labatt, the premier of Ontario, William Davis, acknowledged that he was "very pleased that the Company had launched this campaign, and hope that it will have an appreciable impact on the many irresponsible drivers in this province who insist on driving while impaired."<sup>106</sup> The Davis government kept the drinking age at nineteen and allowed Labatt to continue with its lifestyle advertising. Furthermore, by moving quickly on the impaired-driving issue, Labatt gained a comparative advantage over its chief rivals, Molson and Carling O'Keefe. A 1989 marketing study found that "essentially no one knew that Molson had done advertising about drinking and driving."<sup>107</sup> As far as the focus groups in the study were concerned, the only producer of alcoholic beverages that had addressed the issue in a major way was Labatt, and as a result, it was given recognition for having taken a leadership role.<sup>108</sup>

This article further demonstrates the extent to which the borders between the private and the public sector were redrawn at the dawn of the neoliberal revolution in Canada. The contours of the North American economy after 1970 were sculpted not simply by an increasingly unregulated market but also through considerable state intervention, subsidy, and public-private partnerships. Neoliberalism constituted a mentality of government that included a conception of how public and private authorities should employ their powers to promote the public good. Neoliberals might have claimed that they wanted to limit government. But despite their rhetoric, neoliberal policies expanded the state's capacity to police, punish, and develop additional networks of governance and control. To inject markets into every corner of social life, the government became highly invasive—even when it was working

102. See, e.g., John Eakins to Sid Oland (July 15, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection; Eric Cunningham to Sid Oland (July 18, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection; Mel Lastman to Sid Oland (August 10, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection; Tom Siddon to Sid Oland (September 6, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection; Jack Masters to Sid Oland (September 7, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection; John McDermid to Sid Oland (September 9, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection; Ian Deans to Sid Oland (September 6, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection; Charles L. Caccia to Sid Oland (September 2, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection; David Crombie to Sid Oland (August 24, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection.

103. See, e.g., Kenneth Cook to Rod McLeod (November 14, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection; LaVerne Shipley to Sid Oland (July 27, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection; J. W. Ackroyd to Sid Oland (September 1, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection.

104. See, e.g., Kathryn Smithen to Sid Oland (May 21, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection; Jan Skirrow to Herb England (June 24, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection.

105. James Ivey to Dennis Manning (June 17, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection.

106. Bill Davis to Sid Oland (July 27, 1983), box-A08-053-365, Labatt Collection.

107. Kwechansky Marketing Research, "Labatt Brewing Company's Moderation Advertising" (November 1986), box A08-053-791, Labatt Collection, 30.

108. Perception Research Inc., "Labatt Brewing Company, Moderation Campaign" (July 1989), box A08-053-791, Labatt Collection, 8.

behind the scenes, as was the case during the campaign on drunk driving. The neoliberal state not only retained its traditional roles, but also took on new tasks and functions.

The state thus grew in several areas even as neoliberalism triumphed. In part it was the “neoliberal culture” that made Labatt take on formerly governmental functions, but as this article demonstrates, the threat of real state action—in the interest of the common good and with the potential to hurt bottom lines—loomed large. The “stick” of potentially raising the drinking age to twenty-one mattered a great deal, and as a result, this ends up being a story about the maturation of the regulatory state as well as the rise of the carceral state. The neoliberal forms of government featured not only direct intervention by means of empowered and specialized state apparatuses, but also indirect techniques for leading and controlling individuals. The strategy of rendering individual subjects “responsible” entailed shifting the responsibility for social risks like impaired driving into the domain for which the individual was responsible and transforming it into a problem of “self-care.”

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