

## **Déjà Vu 1928**

*“Emboldened by what they insisted was a great dry victory, [temperance crusaders] pursued an agenda more extreme than anything [previously] attempted... It was a vehicle built for punishment, and so severe it seemed powered by vengeance... [This] thirst for retribution provoked the public’s plunging tolerance for it.”*

*Daniel Okrent: Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*

In the election of 1928 Republican Herbert Hoover defeated Democratic candidate Al Smith. The most divisive issue of the campaign was Prohibition. Republicans wanted it strengthened, Democrats wanted it repealed. Taking Hoover’s victory as a mandate, Republicans launched an offensive of revenge and retribution against their enemies real and imagined.

They embraced the KKK and its white supremacist dogma, set immigration quotas prejudiced against non-white populations, and launched the “Mexican Repatriation” campaign that deported over a million Mexican workers and U.S. citizens of Mexican descent.

The Republicans’ Revenue Act of 1928 reduced the top personal income tax rate and corporate and estate taxes, all of which disproportionately benefitted the already wealthy and led to an unprecedented level of wealth inequality (contributing to the misery created by the soon-to-come Great Depression).

The Republicans’ 1929 Jones Act made Prohibition vastly more punitive, turning even the most minor infractions into felonies and filling the nation’s prisons to overflowing with people convicted of being caught in a speakeasy or with concealing a hip flask.

The Republicans’ 1930 Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act launched a global trade war that transformed a recession into the Great Depression and contributed to an economic tailspin that lasted for the next ten years, intensifying the suffering of every American except for the wealthy few.

Offended by the sight of homeless veterans encamped in Hooverville within sight of the White House, President Hoover sent the military to burn down their shacks and chase them away. Two people were killed and dozens injured, sparking a national outrage that contributed to the landslide election of Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932.

In the years following their win of 1928, Republican embrace of white supremacy, support for prejudicial immigration restrictions and mass deportation, and criminalization of behaviors that most Americans approved of was highlighted by the blatant hypocrisy and corruption of many Republican politicians.

In the 1930 midterm elections Republicans got a message from the American people. They lost 8 seats in the Senate, 52 seats in the House, and 7 statehouses. Two years later FDR tromped Hoover in a historic landslide that sent the Republican Party into a political wilderness for the next twenty years.

Mark Twain said that history might not repeat itself, but it often does rhyme. Any Republican politician who does not hear the rhythms of 1928 blowin’ in the wind today... is not paying attention.