

KANSAS CITY

Society for Suppression OF Commercialized Vice

INCORPORATED

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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OCTOBER 29,

1925

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CONDENSED STATEMENT FOR 12th YEAR, ENDING OCTOBER 29, 1925

The work of the Society during the last year may be summarized under four heads: (1) The Injunction Law Amendment; (2) The Police and Municipal Courts; (3) Immoral Shows; and (4) The Grand Jury and the Prosecuting Attorney.

THE INJUNCTION LAW AMENDMENT

After two years delay in the Annie Chambers case, the Missouri Supreme Court decided that the Injunction and Abatement Law was valid except in one particular. The legislature, so the court ruled, erred in not fixing limits to the time during which enjoined property might be locked up. Accordingly, our Society vigorously sought to have the law amended by the insertion of four words: "Not exceeding one year."

The amendment passed the state senate but was strangled in the house committee on Municipal Corporations, largely through the opposition of its chairman, Henri Chouteau and of Jones Parker, speaker of the house. A strong effort should be made to secure the amendment when the next legislature convenes. It will be recalled that the original bill was not made into a law until it was sought from four different legislatures.

THE POLICE AND THE MUNICIPAL COURTS

A serious stumbling block in the enforcement of the laws against prostitution is the continued lack of co-operation of the police and the North Side Municipal Court. (The boundary line of the North Side Court jurisdiction was changed so that nearly all of the vice cases are taken to the North Side Court.)

The police make approximately 50,000 arrests during the year, a large percentage of which are vice cases. The police claim that the court turns the culprits loose and the court claims that the police fail to bring in the evidence. The net result of this lack of co-operation of our law enforcement agencies is reflected in the present low moral tone of Kansas City.

Our society has investigated scores of places and their locations have been repeatedly given to the police. Many of these have been frequent repeaters. Some places have been closed. But still the general condition is bad.

IMMORAL SHOWS

During the past year the city has been over run with immoral shows. Even at the higher class of theaters, the public seems to tolerate increasing nudity on the stage. In some places obscenity has but little check and vulgar dances are the greatest attraction. These conditions have been reported to the police who, in some instances have stopped the worst features. The loss by fire of the Gillis theater closed up one of the persistently immoral places.

Without doubt these immoral shows add to the volume of prostitution. Many of the attendants of these exhibitions are immoral women who doubtless are there seeking patronage; and strange to say among the audiences are men and women of apparent respectability.

Our new charter definitely fixes the responsibility for the character of public entertainments. When our new form of government goes into operation, one man, the commissioner of recreation, is specifically charged with the duty of enforcing the city ordinances concerning immoral shows. It is believed that by definitely fixing responsibility and authority in one person that many of the present day evils of immoral shows may be eradicated.

THE GRAND JURY AND THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

The last grand jury under the chairmanship of Herman Henrici seriously undertook the closing up of immoral houses. Many owners of real estate occupied for immoral purposes were called before the jury and ordered to clean up their premises. Some good effects resulted. If the present and succeeding grand juries will continue stern opposition to houses of prostitution their number will be greatly reduced.

Prior to his election as prosecuting attorney, Mr. Hanna promised our society that he would "go the limit" in the enforcement of the laws against prostitution. Conferences have been held and plans of action have been agreed upon, The long drawn out Garvey case is disposed of and now the way appears to be open to test the effectiveness of the Injunction and Abatement law.

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THE OUTLOOK

The present situation is admittedly bad. The worst feature in the outlook is the indifference of good citizens to the enforcement of law. If the public would insistently demand law enforcement, it could be secured.

The prospects for aggressive action by prosecuting attorney Hanna give hopes of substantial results.

The operation of the new city charter should be decidedly helpful and amendment to the Injunction law should be effected when the legislature next meets.

Our Society recognizes that public indignation against existing evils is not easily sustained. It may take the death of another high school girl to jar the public conscience to demand enforcement of the laws against vice.

In the meantime, it is our plain duty to hold the lines already gained, to co-operate with present and future officials for law enforcement and to urge continually a keener interest in stamping out the present unwholesome conditions.

NAT SPENCER, Secretary.