

KANSAS CITY
Society for Suppression
of
Commercialized Vice

INCORPORATED

DR. JOHN F. VINES, President E.
T. BRIGHAM, Secretary
NAT SPENCER, Secretary
PRESTON DOBBIN, Treasurer

REPORT OF SECRETARY
OCTOBER 31, 1929

	BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Mrs. M. C. Alderman	Preston Dobbin Col.
Mrs. Kirk Askew H. M.	Chas. Edwards
Beardsley Geo. E.	O. J. Hill Mrs. J.
Bowling W. W. Brady	O. McVey Mrs.
E. T. Brigham	Rose Ohaus Mrs.
F. W. BrowningDorr	Geo. Peeper Mrs.
Carroll Rev. R. O.	Mary Ream Nat
Chaney Mrs. Geo. W.	Spencer Dr. John
Davis Rev. I. E. Deer	F. Vines William

Volker
O. N. Watson Mrs. Geo. Welsh

Headquarters, 510-511 Ridge Bldg.
Main 7037

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE
SOCIETY FOR SUPPRESSION OF COMMER-
CIALIZED VICE FOR THE YEAR ENDING
OCTOBER 31, 1929

To the Directors:

Gratifying progress has been made in the suppression of prostitution in Kansas City during the past year. True, we have not been able to secure injunctions, and the criminal court has rendered unfavorable decisions, but the substantial co-operation we have received from the police department has put a decided check to the operations of the underworld.

Our organization does not specialize in the enforcement of the prohibitory laws but booze joints located in our investigations are reported to the police. The increasing effectiveness of the enforcement of the dry laws has materially aided in the suppression of vice.

No Injunctions Secured

The criminal court judges to whom our requests have been referred have not been favorable to this plan of suppressing vice. Some years ago several injunctions against the operation of immoral houses were secured and the places closed. More recent attempts to obtain injunctions on properties used for immoral purposes have not been successful. One injunction was secured against an indecent play house but later requests have been refused.

City Counselor John T. Barker is of the opinion that injunctions can legally be placed on immoral houses. County Prosecutor James R. Page doubts this procedure but agreed to a conference with Mr. Barker on the subject. However, we have never been able to find a time when the prosecutor could attend a conference and up to this time there is no prospect of its being held.

Criminal Courts Unfriendly

Our organization has received fine co-operation from Judge Carlin P. Smith of the North Side Court.

Convictions have been secured against persons conducting indecent shows and substantial fines have been assessed. However, when the cases have been appealed to the criminal court they have been dismissed, with one exception.

Police Co-operation Effective

Immoral houses located by our investigations are referred to the police. Vigorous action by Chief of Police, John L. Miles, has been very effective in closing many old time resorts. Others still operate secretly but constant pressure is being brought to bear on them. While there remains much to be done in overcoming the bawdy house situation there has been marked progress in recent months in closing immoral places.

Wholesome Amusement Committee Organized

In accord with the action at the last annual meeting a conference of representatives of social, civic and religious organizations was held in the Grand Avenue Temple on November 19. Twenty-five organizations were represented, forty-three individuals being present. The membership in the Committee on Wholesome Amusement is by organizations. All organizations interested in the suppression of indecent shows are invited to become members and send representatives to this Committee.

The Committee requested a conference with the police commissioners with view of suppressing indecent shows. The conference was held in the council chamber of the city hall. About two hundred and fifty persons were present representing fifty organizations. The wide spread interest of a large number of people together with earnest addresses from leading citizens produced a wholesome affect. The city administration which had refused to make arrests in indecent performances

agreed to do so. The arrests followed, fines were levied in the municipal court, appeals were taken, but the cases were dismissed in the upper court. The city administration then refused to make additional arrests. The matter of indecent plays is now put up to the police department in the expectation that we will receive as fine co-operation in the suppression of indecency on the stage as we have received in the suppression of prostitution.

Immoral Shows Opposed

The proprietor of the Lyric Theatre was arrested and heavily fined in the municipal court. The case was appealed to the criminal court. The proprietor plead guilty and received a nominal fine with the promise to conduct only decent shows. It was later ascertained that highly improper exhibitions were presented at the Lyric Theatre. The matter was referred to the Lyrics attorney who at once had the necessary changes made and advised our organization that any further offenses on the part of the theatre would be promptly taken care of.

Last year the Gayety Theatre presented many outrageously indecent performances. Probably as the result of the activities of our organization the shows have been considerably toned down. The entertainments at the Gayety are not yet in the class of wholesome amusements but a reduction of improper exhibitions is gratifying.

The return engagement of the "Strange Interlude" at the Shubert Theatre met the opposition of our Wholesome Amusement Committee. It was voted that such shows tend to lower our moral standards and a request was made that persons who have the moral welfare of our city at heart refrain from patronizing such plays.

At the present time the Twelfth Street Theatre is viciously bad. Extreme presentation of sensuality is made in their exhibitions. The matter is being referred to Chief John L. Miles whose prompt action is anticipated.

Indecent Literature Opposition

Samples of highly objectionable magazines were purchased at ten news stands. Other news stands carrying the same publications were also noted. Letters were sent to the managers of twenty-eight news stands requesting the removal of the indecent literature. Some of the proprietors volunteered co-operation. Others referred us to the Kansas City News Agency which is the distributor of most of these objectionable magazines. The agency showed a spirit of co-operation in removing the objectionable magazines but upon referring the matter to the publishers such cooperation was withheld. The publishers intimate that they will oppose in the courts any attempt to take the literature from the news stands. The matter has been referred to W. L. Vandeventer, United States District Attorney in Kansas City. He has given these cases to the Bureau of Investigation. The United States penalties for the transportation of indecent literature from one state to another are severe. It is hoped that action will be secured which will prevent the display and sale of pernicious literature. The following is an extract from the federal law on the subject:

Sec. 396, chapter 9—IMPORTING AND TRANSPORTING OBSCENE BOOKS Whoever shall—knowingly deposit or cause to be deposited with any express company, or other common carrier, for carriage from one state, territory or district of the United States————— to any other state, territory or district of the United States—any obscene lewd, or lascivious, or any filthy book, pamphlet, picture, motion picture film, paper, letter, writing, print, or other matter of indecent character: or, whoever shall knowingly take or cause to be taken from any such express company or other common carrier any matter or thing the depositing of which for carriage is herein made unlawful, shall be fined not more than \$5,000 or imprisoned for not more than five years, or both.

New York Ordinance Favored

By a referendum vote of the Wholesome Amusement Committee it has been decided to ask our city council to pass the New York ordinance for the suppression of indecent plays. The effect of

the ordinance is to declare indecent shows to be misdemeanors and to revoke the license of the proprietor and the license on the property in which the exhibitions occur. The bill is now being perfected and will soon be presented to the city council.

We cannot measure the effect of opposition to vice and indecency. Although we may not always get the desired results from opposition to evil, yet it is still true that no good deed is ever wasted. Where improvement is not visible, we may have prevented conditions from becoming worse. We do not always have to win to make a fight worth while. Opposition to evil quickens the public conscience against it. "The pressure of public opinion is like the pressure of the atmosphere; you cannot always see it, but all the same it is sixteen pounds to the square inch."

Respectfully submitted,
NAT SPENCER,
Secretary.