

KANSAS CITY
Society for Suppression
of
Commercialized Vice

INCORPORATED

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REPORT OF SECRETARY

OCTOBER 23, 1931

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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE
SOCIETY FOR SUPPRESSION OF COMMERCIALIZED VICE FOR THE YEAR ENDING
OCTOBER 23, 1931.

To the Directors :

The suppression of commercialized vice in Kansas City is now mainly a function of the police. We are deprived of the use of the Injunction and Abatement law which is one of the most effective means of combating commercialized vice by the unwillingness of our prosecuting attorney to handle such cases. Several years ago under a former administration 6 injunctions were secured and the offending places permanently put out of business. However, this means of subduing vice is not now available.

We have the services of a good investigator who locates the immoral places. These are reported to the chief of police. Raids are made and the offenders are taken to the North Side Court. Here some are convicted, a few sent to the Municipal Farm and the majority are discharged.

The Police and the Courts

Disagreement of long standing exists between the police department and the North Side Court. The Court maintains that insufficient evidence is presented by the police. The police charge that those brought into court are turned loose. This lack of cooperation between the police and the court prevents better results in handling vice cases.

It is an established fact that the police can subdue the public manifestation of vice with or without the help of the courts. The police are certainly entitled to the full cooperation of the courts, but as a former high police official has said, "The police are all-powerful."

Police System Powerful

That the police are powerful in fact as well as in theory is illustrated by two recent occurrences:

1. Until a few months ago 12th Street from Oak

to Troost was alive with prostitutes. Day and night men were accosted by street walkers. Indecency was rampant. Our organization made frequent reports and for a time nothing was done. But the gross violation of decency became so pronounced that orders were issued to subdue vice on 12th Street, and vice has been subdued. This does not mean that prostitution has been eliminated from this locality, but it does mean that its open, flagrant and licentious manifestations are no longer tolerated.

2. A second illustration of the power of the police is noted in the positive check recently given to the gambling houses of the city. Four of them were known to be open and running full blast on Monday, October 12, 1931. On Tuesday, October 13, in these places and probably in others there was "nothing doing." An inquiry was made as to why things were so quiet, the reply was that the police had given orders to close up and the gambling was discontinued. Whether this restriction is temporary or permanent on the part of the police remains to be seen. In any event it shows the power in the hands of the police.

Citizens Appeal to Police

The continued prevalence of open vice in various sections of the city was reported to our citizens by our Society in March of this year. The suggestion was made that the police would subdue the deplorable condition if they had a mandate from the people to do so. Scores, if not hundreds, of letters were sent to the police urging the department to clean up these bad situations.

The reply of the police department was that they had made many raids and arrests and that most of the offenders had been discharged. The police report showed that an average of two raids per day had been made on immoral houses from September 1, 1930 to March 16, 1931. Thirty-seven percent of those arrested were convicted. Our organization believes that if an ordinary observer in two days could locate 45 immoral places that 600 trained men might find more than two places a day that needed their attention. It seems that the trouble has been

that the immoral houses have received only the occasional and not the constant attention of the police officers.

Immoral Shows

Several show houses against which decided opposition was taken by our organization last year are not now in operation. The Gayety, the Empress, the Pantages, the Missouri and the Globe are now closed.

The Twelfth St. Theatre is still running. For a time some of its objectionable features were omitted, but recent investigations reveal atrociously vile performances. The place has been reported to the Welfare department which has control of the character of shows.

Indecent Literature

Additional samples of indecent literature purchased on Kansas City news stands have been sent to the United States Attorney General at Washington, D. C., with the request that the interstate transportation of indecent literature be suppressed. The matter has been assigned to the United States district attorney in one of the larger cities who is now working on these cases.

It is especially desirable that the United States law on this subject be enforced rather than to use the state or city laws because the federal law would cover the entire country. Progress in these cases is necessarily slow and the outcome will be received with deep interest.

Influence of the Movies

There is no question but that the influence of many of the movies is seriously detrimental to young people. Portrayals of crime, unwholesome social relations and exhibitions of violations of the Volstead Act still abound in the movies. The motion picture people claim that their productions are becoming less objectionable. It is said that in the recent news reels prohibition has been favored in 33 instances, opposed in 21 instances and that neutral effects were observed in 17 reels. Why is it necessary to present

any news reels that are sympathetic with violations of law?

Modified Quarantine

Dr. A. L. Cooper, Director of Health, reports that the use of the modified quarantine plan for diseased prostitutes is having good effect. When found diseased, women of the street are given their choice of taking treatment at the General Hospital or from their own physician who must be approved by the Health Department. In either case they must report regularly until declared free from disease. Those who will not cooperate with this plan are sent to the Municipal Farm where they receive treatment. There are now about 100 women receiving treatment under the modified quarantine plan and only about half a dozen are being treated at the Municipal Farm. The city keeps no follow up record of those who have been discharged as cured. Dr. Cooper thinks that the financial depression has added materially to the volume of prostitution.

From May to September of this year 209 women were being treated under the modified quarantine plan. The length of treatment varies with the different cases. Some are dismissed as cured within six months and others require two years. The larger part of the 209 women under treatment are repeaters; that is they again become diseased and are returned for treatment. It is believed that three-fourths of those treated would lead respectable lives if there were places for them to live; but nobody wants them.

Other Social Maladjustments

It is not the province of the Society for Suppression of Commercialized Vice to specialize on gambling and on illegal sales of liquor. But when our investigator sees evidence of such law breaking the facts are reported to the police for their attention. The following are reports on such law violations which were handed to the police under the date of October 15, 1931.

Race Track Gambling. At 1114 Wyandotte St., is the largest and most popular racing pool room in the

city. Bets are made from \$2.00 up. It requires three clerks to handle the business. When investigated, 125 men and one woman were present. Professional "tipsters" work the crowd, offering them three "sure winners" for \$5.00 or one "sure winner" for \$2.50. Other "Turf" pool rooms are at 1211 Baltimore, 216 E. 12th St., and 314 E. 12th St. At the latter place there were 100 men and 15 women participating in the games.

Booze Report. At 557 Grand Ave. is a colored barber shop for colored trade. It doesn't do much barbering but it does do a big booze business. Most barber shops close at 8:00 P. M. or earlier. This joint never closes. Its booze customers are black and white, both men and women. Other booze joints were located at 13 Missouri Ave.; a drug store at the southwest corner of Main and Missouri Ave.; 4 W. 6th St.; 8 W. 6th St.; 711 Main St.; 808 Main St.; 616 Walnut St.; 415 E. 12th St.; and 700 E. 12th St.

Gambling Report. Gambling joints are numerous. There seems to be an epidemic of this form of dissipation. Possibly the financial situation leads people to take hazardous chances. Many salesmen infest the city in the interest of policy games. Dice boards at cigar stands operate contrary to law. Police raids of gambling places are made but with few convictions. The capture of gambling paraphernalia with the money is not regarded as sufficient evidence. Gambling in Kansas City is not under the control of law enforcing officers.

While conditions are still bad, some improvements can be noted. During the past year the police have taken some action for the betterment of the moral situation. Prostitution is still prevalent but it is under some control. The health department reports progress in the control of social diseases. The immoral shows do not have as strong hold on the community because there are not so many of them. The liquor problem is getting under better control. Present conditions call for strong, steady pressure to

hold back the surging tide of things that ought not to be.

Respectfully submitted,

NAT SPENCER, Secretary

Our work against vice is supported by voluntary contributions. No officer of the society receives any compensation. Interested persons are invited to assist the Society financially.