

KANSAS CITY  
**Society for Suppression  
of  
Commercialized Vice**

INCORPORATED

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**REPORT OF SECRETARY  
NOVEMBER 24, 1933**

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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE  
SOCIETY FOR SUPPRESSION OF COM-  
MERCIALIZED VICE FOR THE YEAR  
ENDING OCTOBER 31, 1933

To the Directors:

It is with regret that no decided moral improvement in Kansas City during the past year can be reported. While repeated reports of bad moral conditions have been made to the police with request for their removal, no determined effort has been made by the officers to subdue them.

Prostitutes are migratory in their habits. They drift to the localities where they are least disturbed. As they ply their trade with a minimum official interference in Kansas City they naturally settle down here to carry on their occupation. Doubtless the financial depression has increased commercialized vice. Dire necessity sometimes drives people to ways they would not ordinarily travel. While provision is made to care for those in want, some persons will go to extreme limits before making application for public charity.

Our Society has an excellent investigator who recognizes vice when he sees it and knows how to make understandable reports. The reports are sent to the police headquarters and occasionally vice raids are made. The official plan is to have physical examination made of women of the street. If these examinations reveal the presence of venereal disease the women are required to take medical treatment. This may be had without cost at the General Hospital, or from the patient's own physician. In the latter case written reports must be made to the Board of Health. In some instances the diseased persons are sent to the city farm at Leeds. In other instances they are permitted to remain in their own homes. It is thought that by these means the spread of venereal disease is somewhat checked.

Our Society has not the means to make a thorough investigation of all parts of the city, but the October report is somewhat comprehensive of the district investigated. The territory covered was the tract east of Main to Charlotte and south of Fifth to

Twentieth Streets. The report shows 98 houses of prostitution in this district with an estimated number of 392 prostitutes. It is probable that there are several times that number in the whole city.

(The complete report gives the location of the houses, the probable number of girls in each house and their methods of solicitation. It is not considered necessary, or advisable, to reproduce that information in this report. When desired, the information is available at this office.)

### Indecent Literature

The two men mentioned in the last report who were out on \$500 bonds for selling indecent literature plead guilty and were fined \$25 each and costs. Although the penalty was insignificant for the crime committed our Society was pleased to secure a conviction for this nefarious business. While these convictions had a wholesome effect it has not rid the city of this pernicious literature. The moral standards of the public will now tolerate pictures and literature that a generation ago could be found only in hidden places. It seems to take extreme viciousness in pictures and in language to shock the dull sensibility of modern complacency.

### A New President

Our former President, Dr. John F. Vines, resigned, as his new work took him out of the city the greater part of the time. Dr. Vines proved a splendid leader for our organization. He was always ready to do his part in the investigation of bad situations, to appear on the witness stand and to proclaim civic righteousness on all suitable occasions. Our Society and this community owes a debt of gratitude for his conscientious and willing service.

Dr. W. A. Stevenson, pastor of the United Presbyterian Church is our new president. Dr. Stevenson has already rendered effective personal service in fighting vice and our organization is fortunate in securing a person of his ability and interest to lead the fight against vice in Kansas City.

### Gambling in Kansas City

During the greater part of last year gambling was unchecked in this city. The sale of policy tickets appeared to be the sole occupation of scores of men.

Tickets were sold in low grade barber shops, on building elevators and in apparently questionable places of all kinds. Gambling houses of favorite operators were unmolested, except for an occasional spectacular raid which did not appreciably interrupt the business. Once in a while a group of crap shooters would be brought into the police court and discharged for lack of evidence.

Slot machines came in great numbers. It was estimated that there were several thousand of slot machines. The city manager was reported in the "Star" to have said that he was glad that the slot machines were out in the open; that nobody but suckers would play them; that they were a valuable means of support to merchants whose business was poor in hard times, and that he accepted the responsibility for them.

A storm of protest arose at the prevalence of the slot machines and their official sanction. Our Society rendered valuable service in securing the necessary legal evidence against them. Arrests were about to be made when word came from a Kansas City politician, temporarily sojourning at the Saratoga races that the slot machines must go and that gambling houses must close. Most of the slot machines vanished immediately. The Grand Jury cleaned up the job and now the slot machine evil is at least temporarily vanished from Kansas City.

The gamblers, too, at the magic word of the absent politician folded up their tents and ceased business. However, gambling is again opening up in a careful way and the indications are that the old haunts for men and women gamblers will soon be in full operation. There is some hope that the approaching city election may have the effect of subduing the gambling so that the town will not have the wide-open appearance of protected lawlessness.

### **Illegal Sales of Liquor**

The collapse of prohibition brought about great freedom in the sales of liquor contrary to law. Bad whiskey sold on Missouri Ave. at five cents a drink. Drunkenness became frequent. Our investigator reports that there is now more drunkenness than he

has ever before known in the North Side. The Night Clubs have various kinds of hard liquors printed on their menus. Pending the repeal of the 18th amendment there is practically no restriction in the sales of liquor in Kansas City.

### **The Peril of the Movies**

It is a matter of deep regret that an institution capable of extending information, culture and wholesome enjoyment should be put to reprehensible use. It is not only in outrageously indecent scenes, but in the alluring enticements to waywardness that many moving pictures portray that great harm is done.

On the same day in Kansas City crowded houses greeted in one entertainment place two "daring acts"; and in another the enticing allurements of a notorious screen "idol" who has served a prison sentence for outrageous performances in New York City.

It is hoped that the indecencies permitted by movie producers will lead to a national film censorship with power to prohibit the production and distribution of pernicious movies.

### **Indecent Shows**

Two Kansas City shows are indescribably bad. The two larger burlesque theatres are not now in operation; another smaller burlesque house is now closed, but the 12th Street and the Gillis theatres abound in obscenity, profanity and licentiousness. The Grand Jury took no action in the matter and complaints have been made to the police department. Whether any effective restraint will be put on these play houses remains to be seen.

### **Conclusion**

There is wisdom in continuing the fight against vice. It will not do to calmly let the underworld take possession of our city because our labors for wholesome conditions are not satisfyingly effective. "What's the use?" should not deter us. But in unfavorable conditions and in apparent public apathy the fight must go on. Sooner or later times will change and if we remain on the job we will be in better shape to render effective service than if we have to begin all over again. Those who feel that way about it are invited to give financial aid to meet the

necessary expenses of our work. No officer of the Society receives any remuneration for his services.

Nat Spencer, Secretary