

KANSAS CITY
Society for Suppression
of
Commercialized Vice

INCORPORATED, 1913

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REPORT OF SECRETARY
FOR OCTOBER 31, 1935

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**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE
SOCIETY FOR SUPPRESSION OF COM-
MERCIALIZED VICE, FOR THE YEAR
ENDING OCTOBER 31, 1935**

It is with continued regret that no substantial progress has been made during the past year in the struggle against immoral conditions in Kansas City. I have lived in Kansas City 29 years and it is my candid opinion that at no time during my residence here has prostitution been under so little control, the illegal sale of liquor has met with so weak interference, and has the gambling spirit been so rampant among men and women as at the present time.

Prostitution Unchecked

During the past year our Society has made repeated surveys of prostitution, located scores of immoral places and given our findings to the police, and with very meager results. When the matter was referred to the prosecuting attorney, he said it was the business of the police. But he did say he would see what he could do if we would re-check our information and give him a list of alleged immoral houses. This was done and the addresses of 49 houses were given to the prosecutor with the request that the places be cleaned up. After receiving no reply for several weeks, a letter was sent to the prosecutor, requesting a reply. No reply came. I have later made four or five visits to the Court House to see the prosecutor but did not find him. I will now try by telephone to make an appointment.

Liquor Not Controlled

The liquor situation is bad. The saloon has returned without the restraints of pre-prohibition days. In place of "true temperance" there is competition among liquor sellers to see who can sell the most liquors. Hard liquors are freely advertised in

residence districts. The bootlegger is back. The laws are not enforced. There are now three times as many places to purchase liquors in Kansas City as there were before prohibition. The present wild orgies of liquor drinking pretend the return of prohibition.

Gambling Unrestrained

The spirit of gambling seems every where. Dice, slot machines, policy drawings, bridge and other card games are popular amusements. Recently a gambler, a tailor in the Ridge Building, lost \$7,000 and, unable to face the responsibilities of such heavy losses, committed suicide. A young man squandered his college money with slot machines. Vigorous opposition to gambling was aroused. Women's organizations joined the movement against gambling and called on the city manager to stop the prevalent defiance of law. The city manager said he would give his answer to the people of Kansas City. No answer has been given unless neglect to enforce the law is his answer. However, the end is not yet. A plan of action is being worked out which bears evidence of hopeful results.

Public Interest Inactive

Our Society was organized in 1913. If it be asked, what is the use of an organization which has been maintained these 22 years and has not more effectively accomplished the purpose for which it was formed, it may also well be asked what is the use of 150 churches which must ultimately furnish the moral stamina for all kinds of moral welfare ? City Manager McElroy has said that 75 per cent of the people of Kansas City want the kind of law enforcement we now have. If the City Manager is right, the apparent remedy lies not so much in prodding our chief executive officer, as it is to awaken the slumbering conscience of the people.

Politics Controls Situation

There are several situations which militate against the arousement and exercise of the public conscience. The most important consideration is a political machine which demands votes. No officer nor employee of the city can expect to retain his position unless he is subservient to the organization. He must not only vote right himself but he is accountable for the votes of his relatives and others whom he can influence. The test for securing a city position is not primarily honesty, ability and efficiency, but it is "what have you done for the organization?" Then, a large number of our fellow citizens are willing to barter their votes for special privileges, in the form of exemption from just taxation, for special traffic favors and for immunity from penalties for minor infractions of law.

Adherents to the political machine are found in most church groups. Many ministers hesitate to denounce liquor, immorality and gambling lest they offend certain persons. The minister of a prominent church said it was all right for pastors of "inconspicuous churches" to take up moral questions but that it would not do in the larger churches. Dr. Ivan Lee Holt, president of the Federal Council of Churches, in a recent address to the Kansas City Council of Churches, gave the key to the situation; "attend to the quality of your Christianity."

Directors Study the Problem

During the past year our directors have had three evening dinner meetings at the Ivanhoe Congregational Church, the church of which our president, Rev. R. O. Chaney, is pastor. These meetings were attended by a gratifying proportion of our 24 directors. The discussions were helpful and an aggressive interest was manifest.

Night Life Investigated

With the guidance of our investigator, Rev. R. O. Chaney and Dr. I. M. Hargett made a personal exploration of Kansas City's night life—which revealed almost unbelievable depths of depravity. A public report of their experiences was made to an audience of approximately 1,500 persons at the Linwood Boulevard Methodist Church. The pastors' reports were mimeographed and given a wide distribution. Indifferent Kansas City at least knows what is going on in our night life and what meager official interference is being exercised to prevent it.

The Break Will Come

Some months ago a Kansas Citian asked a leader in the dominant political party whether the present disregard for law and political favoritism would continue. "No, not always, it will break up some time. Our boys are going too strong. When the break comes it will be because our fellows go too far and the community will not stand for it." Theodore Roosevelt said that "fighting for the right is the noblest sport in the world." We have had much of that kind of sport. There is much more of that kind of sport before us. We should not be dismayed by repeated failures. The right will ultimately triumph. We should follow the advice to Joshua: "Be strong and of good courage."

Faithfully yours,

Nat Spencer, Secretary