

The Informant

Devoted to the Enlightenment of
Good Citizens Whose Duty It
Is to Maintain Law and
Decency in the City

M A Y, 1 9 3 6

ISSUED BY THE
KANSAS CITY

**Society for Suppression
of
Commercialized Vice**

INCORPORATED, 1913

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Headquarters, 510-511 Ridge Bldg.

MAin 7037

WHAT THE LAW SAYS

(From revised city ordinances of 1928:)

INDECENT SHOWS, ETC.

No person shall be guilty of an unseemly obscene or filthy act or any lewd, indecent, immoral, or insulting conduct, language or behavior, or shall exhibit, circulate, distribute, sell, offer or expose for sale . . . any lewd, indecent or obscene book ... or allow to be exhibited or performed in or upon any house . . . owned by him or under his management and control, any lewd, indecent or im-moral play or other representation.

HOUSES OF ILL FAME

No person shall keep a bawdy house, or assignation; or shall knowingly allow or permit any house, building or other premises in his possession or under his control, to be used for any such purpose.

GAMBLING

No person shall set up or keep any gam- ing table or gambling device at which any game of chance shall be played for money or property, or things representing money or! property, or shall suffer, allow or permit any such table or device, at which any game of chance is played, to be set up or used in any room, house or tenement in his possession or under his control.

MISSOURI CODE ON GAMBLING

Sec. 4287 (Revised statutes of Missouri, 1929)

Keeping Gaming Device — Every person who shall set up or keep any table or gaming device commonly called A B C , faro, bank, E O, roulette, equality, keno, slot machine stand or device of whatever pattern, kind or make, or however worked, operated or manipulated or any kind of gaming table or gam bling device . . . shall on conviction, be guilty of a felony, and shall be punished by impris- onment in the penitentiary . . .

The Informant

Definite and accurate acquaintance with the facts is an essential of good citizenship. The INFORMANT believes that most good citizens of Kansas City know that grossly illegal enterprises are operating in the city on an extended scale. But it also believes that such knowledge can become an effective means for improvement of conditions only when it becomes specific. The INFORMANT proposes to devote itself from time to time to meeting this need. It will relate, accurately and without prejudice, specific violations that are in progress, in the hope that this information [sic] may prove useful in making a cleaner Kansas City. A report of one recent investigation is published below.

Gambling in the Westport District

On the evenings of April 15 and April 22 representatives of THE INFORMANT visited the Westport District in the vicinity of Thirty-ninth and Main streets. As far as was observed, there were no slot machines, or other gambling devices operating, and the representatives were told they were not "allowed" in this district. But the representatives also were told that their gambling instincts could be satisfied at a pretentious place at 39th and Main streets known as "Fortune."

Fortune, it was found, occupied the entire second floor of the building at the northwest corner, entrance being on the thirty-ninth street side. Time was when illegal enterprises of this sort were provided with lookouts—but no more. There is no need. Anyone may enter the double door, ascend the wide stairs, and become a welcome guest at the gaming table. There is not the slightest evidence of any interference with the place, although what goes on here is strictly and entirely against city ordinances and state law.

Once having entered the spacious quarters of the gambling place, your eye is caught by an elliptical table, or counter, around the outside of which sit the gamblers, so intensely absorbed in the "game," that you hear no voice save that of the announcer, calling numbers as they are drawn. As the numbers are called, they are flashed on an electric board, where they remain until the game ends.

You learn that the game is one of Kansas City's favorites, and is known as "Keno." There are numbers from 1 to 75 in the "kitty," and the players use cards on which are printed 24 numbers, the arrangement being different on each card. When five of the numbers drawn and announced create a straight line or row up and down, across or diagonally, on his checkerboard card, he "clicks" and he is awarded whatever stake has been set for that game. The prizes range from \$3 to \$25, mostly the smaller sum. A poster announced that both afternoon and evening sessions would open with a \$25 game. A player can use as many cards as he wishes, at ten cents a card. One

woman was observed keeping five of these cards going each game. As the games average only about three minutes, it cost her fifty cents every three minutes. The players keep track of their numbers with little cardboard discs which they place on the square when one of their numbers is called. Afternoon games average about 75 players, evening 100 or more. There was enough equipment in the place to accommodate twice that many on occasions when the crowd is big.

Now a word about the crowd. More than half of them were women, and they were of all ages. The oldest woman must have been near seventy and the youngest not yet twenty. There were two girls with a middle aged man. Evidently they were gambling together. He might have been their father. They looked to be in their 'teens. Some of the patrons were well dressed. Others were shabby and looked down at the heel. One could observe some of these leaving after playing a while, with an air of discouragement. One guessed that what little funds they had were gone—and for them there had been no prize!

There was no disorder in the place, no evidence of drinking men or brazen women. What struck one most was the deathlike, mirthless silence of the gamblers. Not once in an hour's gambling could an observer hear a single laugh or catch the light of a smile. It was hardly a healthy atmosphere, but one charged with an -undercurrent of nervous tension. They were all hypnotically waiting—waiting for that lucky row, which for most of them would be a long, long time turning up, if ever.

Now, gentle reader, will you turn over this folder and read the excerpts from the state law and the city ordinance on gambling? Or is our city administration a law unto itself? For this, mind you, is only one of many such places. And THE INFORMANT is going to see that you hear about some more of them.

Contributions to help defray the cost of THE INFORMANT, sent to the office, 510 Ridge Bldg., will be appreciated.