

KANSAS CITY

Anti-Vice Society

INCORPORATED, 1913

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REPORT OF SECRETARY OCTOBER

28, 1938

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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE
ANTI-VICE SOCIETY, FOR THE YEAR
ENDING OCTOBER 31, 1938

To the Members of the Anti-Vice Society:

“Believe it or not,” during the past year, in two particulars, there has been an improvement in the moral condition of Kansas City, Missouri; but the essential facts of liquor, gambling and vice are substantially the same as a year ago.

THE VICE PROBLEM

The vice situation seems to be under some control for the first time in many years. Street solicitation is not allowed, nor is porch or window soliciting. Girls sit at the windows as usual and smile to passers by, but window tapping has been curbed. “Keep off the streets and out of sight as much as possible” seems to be the order. But there are many women of the street who patronize cheap hotels, chiefly on the north side. These girls are now found in nearly all the north side saloons. They loiter around the bar room, waiting for a chance to ply their trade. The unrestricted presence of women in saloons is a serious menace to the moral situation in our city.

Doubtless, some taxi drivers are responsible for considerable prostitution. They not only get their commission from the fares but secure payment for bringing customers to immoral houses.

The prevalent immoral shows at night clubs are a constant threat to the morality of young people. The number of night clubs is about the same as a year ago. Over 70 are listed in the telephone directory. They are gross violators of the ordinance requiring the removal of all screens from drinking rooms.

The burlesque shows are not faring well. Much of their patronage has gone to the night clubs. The old Gayety has had no performances for a year or more. Burlesque shows at the Empress have been sufficiently unprofitable to keep the old show house running. The Gillis still operates but with reduced

attendance.

It is a general belief that high-class hotels harbor prostitutes unknown to the manager, but that when discovered they are compelled to vacate. The ruse of "man and wife," when registering, can work with the same couple only for a little time without the knowledge of the manager.

THE LIQUOR SITUATION

A second improvement noted in the moral situation is the better enforcement of closing hours of saloons. They are ordered closed on Sundays at 12:00 a. m. and at 1:30 a. m. week days. Gambling and gambling devices have been largely removed from bar rooms. Gambling is conducted often in a room separate from the room where liquor is served.

A marked difference in the new saloon from the old is the number of young women hanging around. Some are bar maids, or service girls, some are entertainers, but mostly women loiterers waiting for opportunities to make engagements with their customers.

The presence of unattended women in saloons is a direct indication that they are there for other purposes than the purchase of liquor; and when a woman requests a stranger to buy her a drink both parties understand the ultimate objective of such a social interview.

A citizen, classed as a "Wet," and well-informed on the liquor situation in Kansas City, says: "Prohibition was worse than the old license system, but present conditions are worse than prohibition."

The Kansas City liquor ordinance prohibits "anything resembling a bar as formerly used in saloons, nor any curtains, shades, swinging doors, or anything which shall conceal or attempt to conceal any part thereof where customers are served, from view of windows." The provision of this section of the ordinance is openly, continuously and wilfully violated.

Several of the "higher-up" violators have recently

been arrested and charged with counterfeiting state liquor stamps. It is believed that the state has been defrauded of very large revenues by the use of bogus stamps. Those who are arrested and not able to furnish heavy bonds are lodged in jail. Their preliminary hearing is set for November 1.

Roy McKittrick, the Attorney General of Missouri, has repeatedly stated that our liquor laws are very poorly enforced. In some other Missouri cities, Mr. McKittrick has taken strong measures for enforcement of the liquor laws. His assuming personal management of the bogus stamp cases is an indication that he may vigorously sustain other state liquor regulations.

GAMBLING LITTLE RESTRAINED

Gambling is wide-open in Kansas City. Saloons close on certain days and at certain hours. Gamblers never close, except by police order. South of 31st Street, there is little gambling in the usual sense of the term. There is a glorified "Keno" game in several places. The promoters of this game say it is not gambling, just a game of skill. But the Missouri law makes "Keno" a felony with a penitentiary sentence of from two to five years.

A card is bought for ten cents and with it a chance to win, perhaps, \$25.00. A game lasts about two minutes and somebody wins. About the only skill required is putting a button on each number as called. These joints are patronized by many women, not common women, but apparently respectable house wives.

The leading down-town gambling houses are located at 12th and Grand, and at 12th and Baltimore. These places are fully equipped with the latest gambling devices for Craps, Black Jack, Poker, Rummie, Mainstreet and Horse Racing. From 150 to 200 people may be found in either place almost any afternoon. It is estimated that 5,000 Kansas City people gamble every day in some of the numerous gambling places.

The City administration has demonstrated its ability to overcome public solicitation for immoral purposes and regulating the closing hours of saloons. The inevitable inference is that if the administration wishes to do so, it could curb the illegal liquor sales and gambling now so prevalent in Kansas City; the second inevitable inference is that in refusing to enforce the laws against open and flagrant evils they are in some way the beneficiaries of a corrupt alliance between the administration and the violators of law and public decency. But we must not despair in our efforts to overcome evil. The present deplorable situation should rather be a challenge to our best efforts to make Kansas City a better place in which to live; a city of which we may be proud.

In conclusion, I have two recommendations:

(1) That we endeavor to secure the cooperation of the Council of Churches, the W. C. T. U., and the Anti-Saloon League, and any other interested organizations, for the passage of a state law prohibiting women in saloons as bar maids, service girls or as customers.

(2) That we work with other organizations for the enforcement of our city ordinance which prohibits all blinds or curtains or other means of obstructing from the street view of any place where intoxicating liquor is sold and drunk.

Faithfully yours,

NAT SPENCER, Secretary