

KANSAS CITY

Anti-Vice Society

INCORPORATED, 1913

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REPORT OF SECRETARY OCTOBER 27, 1939

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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE
ANTI-VICE SOCIETY, FOR THE YEAR
ENDING OCTOBER 27, 1939

To the Members of the Anti-Vice Society:

I take great pleasure in stating my belief that at no other time during the twenty-six years in which I have been connected with the Anti-Vice Society (and of its predecessor the Society for Suppression of Commercialized Vice) has prostitution in Kansas City been under such good control.

This does not at all mean that there remains nothing for us to do. It simply implies that an important milestone has been reached which marks substantial progress for decency in Kansas City. It is a challenge to us to help make our city as physically and morally clean as is humanly possible.

There are fifty-four night clubs listed in the telephone directory; a year ago the number was seventy. They are not favored by legitimate "tavern-keepers" as they get considerable business which would otherwise go to them and the night clubs tend to make long hours for the liquor business. Some of them have conducted such unwholesome entertainments as to be raided by the police and some of them have been put out of business. The notorious Chesterfield establishment is now in ruins. With closer supervision by the police doubtless their number will be further reduced. The "Gillis" has been repeatedly raided by the police but still conducts an unwholesome show which it calls "the only Burlesque show in the city."

STATE POLICE CONTROL SUCCESSFUL

The occasion of the great reduction in commercialized prostitution in Kansas City was the passage of the Missouri law transferring the management of our police department to the state government and the appointment by Governor Lloyd C. Stark of a

police board determined to enforce the law. A corresponding clean-up has been made in gambling.

In the name of the Anti-Vice Society, 3,500 cards (a few names were on sheets of paper) were sent to Governor Lloyd C. Stark commending his efforts to secure wholesome conditions and law enforcement in Kansas City. We have letters from the governor acknowledging their receipt and expressing his gratitude for our co-operation in his efforts to enforce Missouri laws.

Doubtless the distribution of the 21,000 copies of the "Informant" by the Anti-Vice Society was influential in directing public indignation to the enormity of the gambling business in Kansas City. After the clamp-down on public gambling and the closing of the infamous "Fortune" gambling place at 39th and Main, a laundryman remarked that his business of late had picked up wonderfully and that other laundrymen would make the same report. He attributed the increase in his business to the fact that women were chief patrons of "Fortune" and similar establishments and now had more money to spend for laundry work. If this is true in the laundry trade it is doubtless true of other lines of business. There is probably no question but that the millions of dollars formerly dissipated in gambling now find their way into legitimate trade. Quite likely the present business revival in Kansas City is greatly helped by the police war on gambling. Incidentally, Charles V. Carollo, the gambling King has begun his eight year sentence in the Leavenworth penitentiary for perjury in reporting his income.

POLICY GAMES PERSIST

A pernicious form of gambling persists in the prevalent "policy" games. For a small sum of money solicited by sellers of policy tickets many persons, usually of limited means, invest a dime or more for

the "drawing." Occasionally some one wins a small sum but enough to feed the appetite for gambling. The police make arrests, the keepers of the game are sometimes fined and the frequenters are discharged. If the number of people who patronize these games of chance and the total amount of money spent were known, the public would be amazed at the enormity of this business in Kansas City. It is now so popular that many favor the licensing of gambling that it may be conducted "honestly" and the public may derive a large income from the exercise of this human weakness.

There are stringent state laws and city ordinances against vice and gambling, but both state and city provide for the legal sale of liquor. All the police can do with respect to the sale of liquor is to see that the legal requirements are observed. This is a difficult task for the police as liquor sellers are not as a class law-abiding, and bootleggers add to the difficulties of the situation. There are now more than 1100 licenses issued by the city for the legal sales of liquors.

Before prohibition days there were 600 saloons. It now appears that there are nearly twice as many drihking [sic] places as formerly. The city receives \$190,000 per year for liquor licenses, but the liquor users pay a countless number of dollars. The close relation between the liquor problem and prostitution makes it an important factor in the suppression of vice.

POLITICAL MACHINE ROUTED

The political machine which has held Kansas City in its grip for thirteen years is mainly responsible for running Kansas City as a wide-open town. Gambling was allowed to operate without interference, except as to a division of its profits. Liquor laws were disobeyed by saloon keepers who submitted to repeated heavy payments to the machine. The

underworld was permitted to commit crime and violence provided it would divide its spoils and answer "here" when political support was demanded.

But the scene has changed. Many vote fraud criminals are now doing service in federal penitentiaries. Many who made big profits on all kinds of vice and committed perjury in reporting their income to Uncle Sam are now in federal custody. Many others are indicted and are now awaiting trial. Federal and county grand juries are indicting heretofore presumed respectable citizens and no one knows where the lightning will strike next.

There is a lesson for all good citizens in this Kansas City regeneration. It is that we should keep everlastingly on the job. We are share holders in the great corporation of Kansas City. When we elect the next board of directors (Councilmen) let us choose men of known integrity and ability. Men who will accept the office as a public trust. Then, when such men are in office let us not only criticize them if they go wrong, but uphold their hands when they go right.

MAKE CIVIC AWAKENING PERMANENT

Kansas City has long been a byword and a reproach among American cities. Let us henceforth make our record one of the best. We have a fine geographical location and splendid religious, educational and cultural facilities. We are having an unprecedented [sic] civic awakening. We should not let it cool off when we are no longer stimulated by the forced admission of the downfall of some of our citizens in whom we once placed confidence.

But if any citizen should overlook his plain duty to fight against municipal corruption let it be said of such a one:

"High thought his title, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim,
Despite those titles, power and pelf,

The wretch, concentered all in self,
Living shall forfeit fair renown,
And doubly dying shall go down To the
vile dust from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung.”

NAT SPENCER, Secretary