

# The City of Seattle

WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND SANITATION

FRANK M. CARROLL, M. D., COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

July 18, 1941

The Honorable Mayor and City Council  
City of Seattle  
County-City Building  
Seattle, Washington

Gentlemen:

For many years the Seattle Health and Sanitation Department has maintained a large clinic for treatment of venereal diseases. During the past few years this clinic has been considerably expanded and improved. Still the spread of venereal disease in Seattle has shown no significant decrease. On the contrary, reported cases of gonorrhoea have increased 20% during the first six months of 1941 as compared to the same period in 1940.

The number of patients being treated for gonorrhoea in the City Clinic has increased by 50% over the number a year ago. Questioning of male gonorrhoea patients in the City Clinic regarding their sexual contacts during the three weeks prior to the beginning of infection indicates that the sources of their disease were distributed as follows:

Recognized Houses of Prostitution	27%
Street Walkers	23%
Bar, Tavern, and Dance Hall Pickups	22%

On the basis of these findings, it is safe to assume that 50% or more of the male gonorrhoea infections treated in the City Clinic originate from prostitutes.

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It is extremely doubtful that the venereal diseases can ever be controlled in any community that tolerates prostitution.

The enclosed pamphlet, published by the American Social Hygiene Association, outlines the pros and cons of tolerated prostitution. Additional copies are available from this office upon request.

This is for your information.

Very truly yours,



FRANK M. CARROLL, M.D.  
Commissioner of Health

FMC:vw



All Evidence is Against  
Commercialized Prostitution  
and the Red Light.



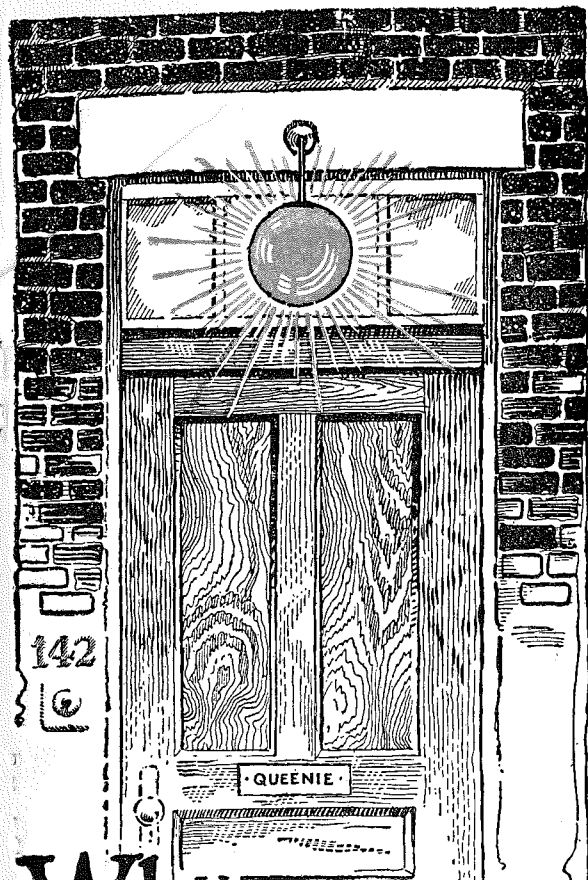
In times of national emergency, when large numbers of men are concentrated in Army and Navy training camps and in the vicinity of defense industries, the "business" of organized prostitution costs the country millions of dollars—in time lost through venereal disease, in treatment costs, and in money misspent.

The greatest cost of all, which millions of dollars can not redeem, is the loss of health, happiness and self-respect by those who are victimized by this vicious traffic.

"Prostitution must be recognized as a Fifth Columnist in our midst, to be dealt with accordingly," a United States Army officer recently said.

WHY LET IT BURN

?



Why  
let it burn  
?

THE laws and regulations of almost all states and cities of the United States forbid prostitution. In no place where it has existed has it contributed anything but sickness, misery, corruption and degradation. The volume, flagrance, and evil results of prostitution can be greatly reduced by the simple expedient of enforcement of existing laws.

### What is Your Community Doing?

Write to  
THE AMERICAN  
SOCIAL HYGIENE ASSOCIATION  
1790 BROADWAY, NEW YORK  
for information, advice  
and suggestions.

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## WHY LET IT BURN?

### THE CASE AGAINST THE RED LIGHT DISTRICT AND COMMERCIALIZED PROSTITUTION

PROSTITUTION is the oldest profession in the world."

"You can't change human nature."

"You might as well face the facts. There's always going to be prostitution in the world, so isn't it better to keep it under control and make it sanitary by forcing all the girls into one district and having them examined by a doctor so they will be safe? Then a man who wants to satisfy his animal nature can go to the segregated district and not run the risk of getting disease?"

That's one argument of the underworld.

What truth is there in it?

#### 1. Segregation Does Not Segregate

IT has proved impossible to get all, or even most, of the prostitutes in a community inside of any district.

Many a city thinking it had a model red light district, found out that 80 per cent of its prostitutes were operating outside the recognized district.

Today it is generally accepted as a fact

throughout the world that for every prostitute in a segregated area in any city, at least five prostitutes are at the same time active outside the area.

## 2. *It Creates New Prostitutes*

FAR from controlling prostitution in the sense of limiting it, the existence of a segregated district, with licensed or tolerated brothels, makes it easier to induce new girls to begin a career of commercial prostitution. Here is provided an insatiable market for the procurers who recruit prostitutes. Here is furnished an ideal business background for the exploiters who live on the earnings of prostitutes. Investigations conducted by the League of Nations of the Traffic in Women and Children in most of the civilized nations throughout the world confirm these conclusions.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, when prostitution is easily accessible, men form the habit of seeking it with greater frequency, and of course a red light district employs every device for increasing the demand for women for prostitution purposes. Demand in turn increases the supply.

Awaiting his turn to patronize a prostitute is a sordid experience. A man avoids this if he can, but his appetite for prostitution being artificially stimulated, he seeks a clandestine prostitute or may form a temporary alliance with some girl who is drifting toward prostitution.

<sup>1</sup> Reports of League of Nations on Traffic in Women and Children may be secured from Columbia University, New York City.

In all these ways the red light district, the licensed and tolerated brothels and all other forms of commercialized prostitution are constantly making prostitutes from girls who might otherwise never enter the life, and customers from boys who might otherwise never patronize the brothels.

## 3. *The Segregated District Is a Disease-Breeder*

THE underworld asserts that the segregated and regulated prostitute does not spread disease: It is alleged that "she knows her business well enough to take good care of her stock in trade." The underworld spreads the idea that all the gonorrhoea and syphilis cases come from the free lance prostitutes and the "amateur."

### *What are the facts?*

In the study of the old "Barbary Coast" of San Francisco, 97 per cent of the prostitutes were found to be infected. In the old Baltimore "district" it was found that 96 per cent of the inmates had a venereal disease. Only recently a Southern city abolished its district because it found that over 90 per cent of the inmates were diseased. And so it has been found in hundreds of studies all through the years, down to a small town with twenty prostitutes in three houses. Each had a physician's "certificate of freedom from disease," but careful examinations and laboratory tests showed eighteen had syphilis or gonorrhoea, or both of these diseases.<sup>2</sup>

The "street walkers" or other clandestine prostitutes and sexually promiscuous "amateur"

or "charity" girls are also likely to be infected, but they do not have nearly so many patrons in any one night or week, as do women in a redlight district. Any promiscuous man or woman is likely to contract, sooner or later, at least one of the venereal diseases, although many of them may not know or suspect infection.

*But who does the most damage?*

Since practically all prostitutes may be counted on to become diseased sooner or later, the amount of harm they do is measured roughly by the number of men they expose and the damage to themselves and the community their own infection causes. The most promiscuous "charity" girl rarely has sex contact with more than two or three men in any week, whereas the prostitute in a brothel is trained and aided to contact sexually twenty-five or more a week, and frequently as many as twenty-five in one day.

The facts are clearly against commercialized prostitution as a method of safeguarding the health of either the men or the women concerned.

#### **4. Medical Inspection Creates a False Sense of Security for Men and the Community**

No reputable and competent doctor will sign a statement that a prostitute is free from venereal diseases on the basis of the examinations made.

2 In many parlor-houses the customer pays his money in advance to the madam or landlady, who then punches a card for the prostitute designated. At the end of each day's work the punch-marks are counted and she is credited with her share of the receipts. In a study of one of these houses containing three prostitutes, all of whom were syphilitic, the day's cards were seized and presented as evidence in court. They contained 49, 37 and 28 punch-marks respectively.

Limited examinations and occasional blood tests for syphilis and smear tests for gonorrhea serve only to detect the most obvious cases even among those who tell the truth to the doctor and cooperate in every way. Failure to discover infection by such means does not prove that those examined are not infected. But the madams and men who exploit prostitutes do everything possible, of course, to make it seem that those not definitely found infected are guaranteed to be healthy. And, of course, if she is free from disease when last examined she may have become infected since then. And even if she herself is not infected, she may be at any time a mechanical conveyor of infection from one customer to the succeeding ones. Medical certificates are by no means a reliable basis on which a man may select a prostitute free from disease.

Thus the ignorant or reckless individual who visits a brothel, because he has a mistaken faith in a medical certificate, contracts syphilis or gonorrhea all the more surely because in his overconfidence he takes no precautions, and does not look for symptoms and consult a doctor when they develop.

No city, by any system of medical inspection, has yet been able to safeguard prostitution from spreading the venereal diseases. The requirement of mechanical and chemical prophylaxis in brothels is not practical for either the men or the women, because it cannot be enforced. The voluntary use of such measures by a prostitute is difficult and is against her business policy and her claim of freedom from infection; while for a man it is often not easy to apply at the time of the

sexual contact or immediately thereafter, even when he knows what to do and is sober.

### 5. *The Business Can Be Stopped*

THE underworld is fond of repeating the age-worn excuse that prostitution—"the business"—is based on human nature, and cannot be stopped.

The truth is that, just because it *is* a business, a vicious "racket," organized prostitution can be effectively repressed much more easily than is generally believed. It can exist only with official toleration or protection, active or passive. When the underworld sees that a city is in earnest about getting rid of this racket, it will not put up a long fight; for there is no profit in fighting, and the prostitutes and procurers are in the business for profit only.

Take the profit out of the organized prostitution "racket" and it dies as a "business." What is left are extra-marital sexual alliances and contacts which men and women seek without the exploitation of third party promoters.

When organized prostitution exists in a city, it exists *because public opinion consents to it.*

And don't forget this—it is organized prostitution that is responsible for much physical and moral degradation as well as economic loss to society.

### 6. *The "Scatteration" Yarn*

ACCORDING to the underworld propaganda the closing of licensed and tolerated brothels brings

about the great menace of prostitutes scattered into all the respectable sections or neighborhoods.

This is the biggest fallacy of all to anyone who knows the facts. *Toleration* or open recognition of a district is really responsible not only for its flagrant and destructive influences, but for attracting many new prostitutes who are clever enough to operate clandestinely in any part of the city. Closing the district causes the promoters and their exploited inmates of brothels to leave town, and discourages the worst of the clandestine traffic also.

The most successful prostitutes have always operated more or less secretly in complaisant hotels, apartment houses, massage parlors, dance halls or other places in all parts of a city easily accessible to customers willing to pay higher prices, and where the residents are not alert or protected by the police and other law enforcing agencies. When a segregated district holds the center of the stage, people are less likely to recognize the above facts. It is assumed that all the prostitutes in town are in the district, and the number flagrantly practicing there lends weight to that assumption.

*It is only when the district is abolished* that the public begins to look around and learns the facts. That is the time for the city to rid itself of the whole thing, by enforcing the laws. Honest law enforcement abolishes "the business" instead of scattering it, because like other businesses, this one depends for its success on the profits derived from many customers who are attracted and served by a small number of women.

These conditions cannot exist in the residence sections of a large city, or in a small country town, unless the police and the public approve or shut their eyes. The situation, good or bad, reflects the public sentiment of the community.

### 7. *The Rape Fallacy*

THE underworld often tries to justify itself by claiming that the existence of a segregated district safeguards respectable women and girls against annoyance, insult and rape.

*What has been the experience of cities that have extinguished the red lights?*

A careful study of these cities shows that in almost every case there is *less rape* after the segregated district was closed than before. In no case is there evidence that the repression of prostitution has resulted in a "carnival of crime."

*The segregated district does not lessen crime;* and it breeds not only sexual offences, but extortion, blackmail and other forms of crime and exploitation.

### 8. *The Question of Promiscuity*

THE underworld alleges that the abolition of a red light district and the repression of commercialized prostitution lead to more promiscuity in the population. But just what is meant by such an increase in promiscuity? Presumably it means more sexual relations between girls who are not prostitutes and men who seek them in every part of the city. There is no evidence that this is so. None of the studies made have supported this

fallacy; and from a health point of view it can be stated that there is less exposure to disease.

### 9. *How Is Prostitution Dealt With Abroad?*

THE practices of foreign countries, especially France, were often cited by the uninformed or prejudiced as an example of how prostitution ought to be handled. It was supposed by these people that in Europe, South and Central America, prostitution was carefully segregated, regulated, licensed and guaranteed to be sanitary—that the system produced wonderful results.

This is a delusion. Proof of the miserable failure of the system of regulation and inspection in foreign countries has been demonstrated by the League of Nations' world-wide investigations and recognized by most European authorities. From ten to thirty years ago the system was abandoned entirely in such European countries as Czechoslovakia, Holland, the Scandinavian countries, Great Britain and Switzerland; and it was practically abandoned in Germany, Austria, Poland, Danzig, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, India and Hungary, prior to the present war. Until the war with China, it was beginning to disappear in Japan. Other countries which have never had or have officially abandoned this policy in whole or in part are the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Cuba and Uruguay.

In all these countries it was found impossible to get more than a minor part of the prostitutes under such control, and the false security re-

sulting from medical inspection encouraged the spread of more disease than it prevented.

We can profit by the mistakes foreign countries have made in trying to "regulate" prostitution. Dr. Abraham Flexner's book,<sup>3</sup> *Prostitution in Europe*, published in 1914, discusses the European situation from many angles. Anyone who thinks that America would be better off if it followed European methods of dealing with prostitution should read this book before expressing an opinion based on hearsay rather than knowledge. His findings were confirmed by the League of Nations' official studies.

### 10. Who Is Defending Regulation?

THE segregated district, licensed and tolerated brothels, and all other forms of commercialized prostitution mean not less, but more disease, not less, but more crime.

Who, then, wants the prostitution "racket" to exist?

It is favored by those prostitutes who are not capable of managing their own affairs.

It is strongly defended by the madams and pimps who exploit the prostitutes, and profit by this exploitation.

It is advocated by some politicians who fatten off the pimps and madams.

It is quietly encouraged by the unscrupulous landlord who can force an exorbitant rent for his property.

<sup>3</sup> Flexner, Abraham, *Prostitution in Europe*, New York: The Century Company, 1920. 455 p. See also 1, page 3.

It is permitted by the dishonest policeman who, for a consideration, can be induced to overlook violations of the law.

It is encouraged by the quack medical practitioner who profits by the sale of certificates of inspection and whose practice is enlarged by the patronage of diseased prostitutes and their patrons.

In short, commercialized prostitution and the regulation thereof is generally defended by *those who are making money out of it*.

And their arguments are able to confuse a certain number of well-meaning people and secure their support.

The United States has tried all systems, from maintaining segregated districts or stockades, to strict law enforcement. Adequate legislation and its enforcement is the only method now approved for combatting commercialized prostitution and its attendant evils. During the World War General Pershing wrote:

"Many of us who have experimented with licensed prostitution or kindred measures, hoping thereby to minimize the physical evils, have been forced to the conclusion that they are really ineffective. Abraham Flexner has argued the case so convincingly that on the scientific side it seems to me there is no escape from the conclusion that what he terms 'abolition' as distinguished from 'regulation' is the only effective mode of combatting this age-long evil."

Since then the military and naval forces of the United States and the United States Public Health Service have formally recognized the established public health and law enforcement programs for the control of syphilis and gonorrhea and protection against the hazards of commercialized prostitution.

## W H Y L E T I T B U R N ?

*The Underworld  
claims that*

### **Segregation:**

Decreases crime by enabling police supervision of a recognized crime center.

Safeguards against sexual perversions by providing for sexual appetites of men.

Protects boys and young men from contact with the prostitute by removing temptation from the streets and residence districts.

Decreases prostitution by regulation.

Decreases venereal diseases through medical inspection and elimination of infected women.

*The Truth is that*

### **Segregation:**

Increases crime by fostering viciousness and disease, providing a meeting-place for the idle and vicious, with whom, rather than with the police, the prostitutes sympathize and usually cooperate.

Fosters sexual perversions and abnormalities as added inducements to patrons who are not satisfied by the ordinary practices offered.

Exposes boys and young men to contact with the prostitute, by presenting an ever-present opportunity to "go down the line and see the sights." Provides a show-place for special obscene and depraved exhibitions, to which the youth is lured by "runners" and the sale of lewd pictures.

Increases prostitution by increasing opportunity and the demand, which increases the supply.

Increases venereal diseases by inducing the ignorant to rely upon frequently "faked" and inevitably futile medical inspections.

## W H Y L E T I T B U R N ?

*It is claimed that*

### **Segregation:**

Concentrates prostitution, thus facilitating control and reduction.

Simplifies control of liquor traffic in connection with prostitution.

Prevents crimes against women.

Protects the community from offensive and detrimental proximity of prostitution.

Decreases graft in connection with prostitution, and the exploitation of the prostitute.

*The Truth is that*

### **Segregation:**

Increases prostitution, making it familiar by continual advertisement. Affords a place of commerce, otherwise uncertain and precarious, to the least attractive of prostitutes, mentally and physically.

Complicates illegal liquor traffic control, since commercialized prostitution does not flourish without liquor.

Incites crimes against women by fostering sexual promiscuity and providing a source of sexual brutalization and degeneracy.

Exposes the community by advertising prostitution as a community necessity, making it easily accessible and tolerated, a condition conducive to the moral degradation of the community.

Increases graft, by illegal toleration of commercialized crime, tempting dishonest police officers to exact illegal revenue and confer illegal privilege. Gives free rein to the exploitation of prostitutes.