

### THE SOWER

A Weekly Department of Religious and Secular Thought Contributed by REV. JAMES A. TURNER, Pastor, M. E. Church, Patton, Pa.

#### THE TAVERN IN THE TOWN

The following excerpts from "The Chicago Reporter" of April, 1939, should be read by every American interested in the concerns of his country:

The Tavern is Chicago's most popular commercial facility. There are at present 9,017 licensed taverns in Chicago, and only 276 motion picture theatres in the city. In 1937 the total seating capacity of the theatres was 338,000 or one seat for every nine residents. If we estimate that there are fifty seats per tavern, we reach the tavern seating capacity of 450,000. Attendance at Chicago's theatres is over 20 million annually. The taverns far outstrip this figure under almost any method of calculation. Taking a low estimate as 10 customers per tavern per day would give a yearly total of over 30 millions

of tavern customers—there is one tavern for each 338 people.

Law violation by the tavern owner is constant. The State Liquor Control law provides that "All rooms where liquor is sold for consumption on the premises shall be continuously lighted during business hours . . . so that all parts parts of the interior of the premises shall be clearly visible.

In a recent survey made by the Juvenile Protective Association of 3,028 taverns in the City, 2,019 violated this law. Most patrons visit the tavern as a place where they can lose their inhibitions and escape from everyday routine. Soft lights are a psychological aid in mellowing the realities of the world and in inducing the customers to indulge freely in the various entertainments offered. Many taverns not only dim the lights, but have rooms or booths almost in total darkness. Some such rooms have signs, "For Women and Couples Only," posted at their entrance. Patrons also are hidden from public view by obstructions in the windows of the taverns. Though such obstructions are against the law, 1,678 taverns were found the interiors of which could not be seen from the street.

The State Liquor Control law prohibits sales to intoxicated persons, and yet the Juvenile Protective Association observed 1,432 taverns that served liquor to persons obviously drunk. Some tavern owners are reluctant to sell to drunks because of the provision of the statute that makes an owner liable to any person injured by the intoxication of a patron of the tavern. But the possibility of liability always seems remote when the customer is paying for his drinks and a profit is in sight.

For the same reason tavern owners are not hesitant about selling to minors. The danger of this type of sale was well illustrated last fall when a high school girl attempted to commit suicide by drinking a bottle of iodine after several drinks in a south side tavern. Her escort smashed into a car on the way to the hospital. One death resulted. In a less publicized case a fifteen year old girl was taken to a tavern by her aunt. There they met two men and all drank considerably. The aunt left the girl with the two men, and when she was almost unconscious from six hours of continuous drinking, they took her into a back room of the tavern and raped her. The tavern was closed by the police, but 939 taverns were found that sold liquor to persons who apparently were minors.

The ordinance providing that the tavern must be locked, the customers must leave, and no liquor may be sold between 1 a. m. and 7 a. m. on week days or between 2 a. m. and 12 noon on Sundays is notoriously disregarded. 986 taverns were visited that sold liquor after hours.

The Juvenile Protective Association found 539 taverns in which floors, bars, tables or toilets were in unsanitary condition. . . . Glasses often are not properly washed, sandwiches are served from dirty kitchens, patrons are allowed to spit on the floors. In 113 taverns women were heard to solicit men and if that many were heard, there were plenty of unheard solicitations. Mr. C. R. Cooper in his recent book on vice estimates that 80 per cent of the prostitutes in the country are diseased or suffering from after effects of disease.

Some of the most tragic victims of tavern prostitution are the girls themselves. Many start on the short and speedy road because they are seeking new thrills; others because they need the money. They come from country towns, from our high schools. It is easy for an attractive girl to get a job in a tavern soliciting men to buy drinks for her and for themselves, even though it is against the city code. The house gives the girl a percentage of the sale price, and increases its profit by serving the girl only with colored water. She quickly learns how to work the men for what they are worth, and submits to their pawing as long as they keep buying drinks. From here it is an easy step to prostitution, especially when prodded by other girls to "go into the business and make easy money." Once the girl is "in the business" the taverns are excellent headquarters. The breakdown of the taboo against women in the saloon, the willingness of the owner to serve anyone especially if that person is likely to attract other customers, the fact that the customer of the tavern is looking for a "good time," all point to the tavern as the office of the prostitute.

This problem of prostitution is closely connected with child labor in the taverns. In 162 taverns persons who apparently were minors were working as hostesses, entertainers or waitresses. Such employment violates the city code. A case will illustrate some of the bumps in the road that these young girls travel. The girls, 13 and 14 years old, from out of town were hired to solicit drinks from customers for \$1.00 a night. After working for him for a few days, they moved to another tavern, and then to a third. They sought a place to sleep from a restaurant owner, who offered them a squalid room with table linen for bed sheets. When they moved in he locked the door on them and then admitted patrons who took liberties with the girls. Police finally arrested him.

Violations of other sections of the state law and the city code are frequent. In 1,069 taverns gambling occurred; indecent entertainment in 392 taverns. On the average there were more than three law violations per tavern visited. . . . The tavern owner who does not toe the political line has trouble.

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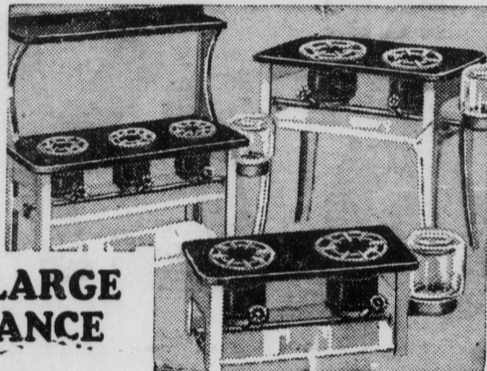
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