

(P) 364.1534 1927
JB 3910179136 Price 3d.

***FULL SUMMARY OF THE REPORT OF THE SPECIAL
BODY OF EXPERTS ON TRAFFIC IN WOMEN AND
CHILDREN.**

By kind permission of the Council of the League of Nations we are able to reprint in full the last chapter of the Experts' Report which contains a detailed summary of the whole.

SUMMARY.

LONDON GUILDHALL UNIVERSITY
FAWCETT LIBRARY

Meaning of Traffic.

International traffic has been taken to mean, primarily, the direct or indirect procurement and transportation for gain to a foreign country of women and girls for the sexual gratification of one or more other persons; but for the purposes of this study it was found impossible entirely to isolate international traffic from the national aspect of commercialised prostitution. Consideration was also given to certain aspects of the abuse of alcohol and to the traffic in obscene publications and drugs.

Traffic in women is a sinister business in which the persons carrying it on seek cynically to supply a demand with the greatest possible gain to themselves.

Extent of the Traffic.

No complete figures are available, but reliable information has been obtained from certain countries which justifies the belief that a traffic of considerable dimensions is being carried on. Many hundreds of women and girls—some of them very young—are transported each year from one country to another for purposes of prostitution. Many of these, but by no means all, were prostitutes in their own country, but nearly always there was evidence that their movements were controlled by others, and many of them could not have realised the sort of life to which they would be subjected. In some countries, where the number of registered prostitutes is very high, 70 per cent. are foreign women, and it may safely be inferred that the class of clandestine prostitutes in these countries also included a large percentage of foreigners. The statements made to our investigators by members of the underworld agree on the point that there is a constant stream of foreign women proceeding to certain countries. Whether the volume is

* Published by League of Nations. Geneva, 1927. C.T.F.E. 55.

(P)
364.1534

less than it used to be is a question difficult to answer, but on the whole we are disposed to think that the stricter measures taken by Governments, especially in regard to immigration, have produced a marked effect both in the extent and character of the traffic. The numbers known are sufficiently large to constitute a serious problem.

The Demand.

The demand for foreign women arises from two groups of causes. In the first group we include such social phenomena as a surplus, due either to natural or artificial causes, of men over women; and temporary markets for prostitution arising from occasional or seasonal movements of population. The movement of troops and ships and the migration of tourists are examples of the latter type of market. The second group of causes which are more directly concerned with the traffic includes conditions which stimulate in a marked way the demand for foreign women, such as notorious vice districts and the system of licensed houses. The attractiveness of the foreign woman increases the demand, and when once she is in a foreign country she is at the mercy of her exploiters. The profits are large, and they are often increased if the woman can be induced to practice perversion. Vices of the most degrading character are thereby encouraged for the money that can be made out of them. The uncontrolled sale of drink in amusement resorts where women are employed as entertainers pressing the sale of liquor as part of their duties, is a definite incentive to prostitution. The traffic in obscene publications is closely associated with the whole problem, and to a less degree the traffic in drugs.

Sources of Supply.

The traffic is supplied mainly from four classes of women. The regular prostitute who has gone the round of many brothels in her own country and whose earnings are decreasing is the most obvious type of women to be sent abroad. Although women of this kind are not in actual fact carried away by force or as a result of fraudulent practices, the records of such cases show that they are often misled as to the prospects before them and robbed of a good deal of their earnings, and they find themselves at the mercy of their *souteneurs*. We take the view that even when the woman has been a prostitute in her own country she should be protected from the methods of exploitation pursued by persons

engaged in the international traffic. Then there is the group of girls who are termed "semi-professional" or "complacent." They are usually minors, sometimes drawn from the country and small towns, who long for pleasure and excitement and are early led astray by the love of finery which they cannot afford. Some of them take to a wrong life to supplement the low wages gained in their ordinary employment. The *souteneur* takes advantage of the feelings of a girl of this type and makes her his mistress. She soon finds herself taken to a foreign country, where she is persuaded or compelled to engage in prostitution to provide for herself and her *souteneur*. Girls who join travelling troupes and perform in low-class music-halls and cabarets in some countries often fall a prey to traffickers who are sometimes associated with the managers of places of amusement. Their contracts are often misleading, their wages are inadequate, and not infrequently their real business is to act as prostitutes and so secure clients as well as profits for the establishment. Finally, the worst case of all is the innocent girl with whom the *souteneur* contracts a marriage, pretended or real. This type of girl usually comes from poor surroundings of ignorant parents who are easily deceived. It is only when separated from her parents by long distances that the unhappy victim learns what is expected of her.

Many of the victims of the international traffic are minors, who are the source of greater profit to the trafficker. Although the laws of certain countries are designed to prevent the embarkation of girls under age and there are regulations prohibiting them from being registered as prostitutes, it was found during the enquiry that these restrictions are evaded. A large number of foreign prostitutes are minors, or were minors when they arrived in the country. The *souteneurs* who were questioned boasted that it is always possible to bring minors into certain countries.

Girls who are placed in brothels soon find themselves in debt to their employers—a method by which they are the more easily controlled.

The Traffickers.

In most of the cases which have come under our notice, the movements of the women and girls were controlled by third parties for the sake of the profits attached to the business. Some measure of fraud or deception direct or indirect, is usually a feature of the business. The traffickers include madames who manage houses of prostitution; *souteneurs* who are mainly responsible for securing

the girls and controlling their movements; principals who are financially interested in vice-districts or brothels and lend money to madames and souteneurs; and intermediaries who sometimes secure and transport girls for the souteneurs and madames.

There is no regular organisation of traffickers, but these persons play into one another's hands when it suits them to do so and conspire to defraud their victims. There are recognised resorts in big cities where souteneurs and their friends meet and exchange information and advice as to their prospects. Associated with traffickers are various other disreputable persons of the underworld.

Routes and Methods.

The main routes of traffic disclosed by our investigation, so far as it has been carried out, appears to be from Europe, particularly Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Roumania, Spain, Turkey to South and Central America, particularly Argentine, Brazil, Mexico, Panama and Uruguay, and to Egypt and other places in North Africa.

All sorts of methods are adopted to evade troublesome enquiries or official regulations. Among these are travelling by indirect routes or by separate stages and securing entry to a country by means of smuggling or other clandestine method. False documents of various kinds, including birth certificates and passports are commonly used. The pretence of marriage is a frequent subterfuge. This may take the form of a false certificate of marriage or of a ritual marriage which can be repudiated; but many cases are recorded where a legal marriage is entered into to avoid suspicion or to prevent any risk of deportation. The evidence shows that many girls are led into the toils of traffickers by bogus offers of employment abroad. On the other hand the rôle of an entertainer in foreign cabarets which appeals so strongly to the stage-struck girl, offers at first sight prospects of an alluring career, but too often leads to the ranks of prostitution. As already stated, the contracts entered into by many of these girls are a direct incentive to begin such a life.

Measures taken to Prevent the Traffic.

Co-operation between Governments for the purpose of preventing this traffic began in 1902, after many years of voluntary international effort and national Government activity. The area of international action has been considerably widened since the

League of Nations undertook the general supervision of these matters but there are still many States outside the international movement. The administrative measures required by the Agreement of 1904 (as extended by the Convention of 1921) include the appointment in each country of central authorities charged with the duty of co-ordinating information relative to the traffic and of corresponding with one another; the watching of ports and railway stations; the repatriation of prostitutes; the supervision of employment agencies and the protection of women and children travelling on emigrant ships.

The Convention of 1910 and 1921 prescribes the minimum legislation which each country should provide for the prosecution and punishment of offences. A great deal has been done by Governments in pursuance of these provisions to check the traffic, but we have drawn attention to several points where the action taken on the legislation provided appears to fall below the standard prescribed.

The work of voluntary societies who were pioneers in the movement for the suppression of the traffic has proved of the greatest value.

Growth of Public Opinion.

As ultimate success in the fight against this evil must depend on the development of a strong public opinion in all countries, it is satisfactory to note the changing attitude which is being adopted in many countries towards the problem of commercialised prostitution and the many legislative steps which are being taken to deal with various aspects of the question. We have described these changes in detail.

Much of the responsibility for the traffic is due to past indifference of public opinion and to ignorance of the tragedies resulting from the traffic and its disgraceful exploitation of victims. Partly, this indifference was due to an idea that prostitution was a normal and necessary thing and that, if this were true, opportunities for recruiting its personnel must be allowed. Public opinion has greatly changed in many countries during the past fifty years and the World War has stimulated new studies. Particularly has the work of voluntary agencies thrown light upon the indirect causes of the traffic. Economic depression, poverty, the danger of enforced migration, and low wages have all been helpfully studied in relation to it. The favourable soil created by inadequacy of living accommodation for the working classes, the

influence of depraved homes and lack of family life have been pointed out. As a corollary embodying further unfavourable influences may be mentioned the unbridled development of pleasure-seeking causes of demoralisation, such as the low-class theatres, dancing-halls and objectionable publications. In general, influences which lift the mind to higher planes, providing ideals of truth and beauty, have been urged as important factors in combating the traffic, because they endanger a moral force which helps both men and women to develop control of desires which cannot be gratified by the practices of prostitution without disaster both to the individuals and to society. Recreation is also of the greatest value.

As public recognition has been accorded to practical proposals which have emerged from such studies and educational efforts, laws have been passed, and regulations enforced which have modified the character and extent of the traffic in women and children.

REMEDIES.

The facts which we have described in previous chapters of this report and which we believe to be fully established show that the international traffic in women is still an ugly reality and that it continues to defy the efforts to suppress it made both by Governments and voluntary agencies. It assumes new forms as restrictions are increased. It is therefore a menace to society and a challenge to greater efforts in the future.

It may be thought that, having stated the facts disclosed by our investigation and the opinion based on them, our task has been completed. It appears to us, however, to be our duty to offer some observations on the circumstances direct or indirect which are connected with this serious problem and to indicate the lines on which further enquiry shall be made or action taken either nationally or internationally.

It is obvious that there is no single or simple means of suppressing the traffic. An exact knowledge of the facts, active supervision and the application of suitable laws and measures of protection are all necessary elements in the campaign against the traffic; the latter, however, must be treated as an epidemic and must be continually fought in its endemic centres, that is, in the countries of origin; it must be arrested at the frontiers and mercilessly suppressed when it succeeds in crossing them and penetrating into the countries where a demand exists. No one measure is

In line 8 above read "engender" for "endanger"

sufficient in itself; the only effective means is to combine all measures and to adapt them to the situation in each individual country.

The traffic, being as it is of an international character, requires concerted international action. Experience has shown that, when measures of supervision and protection are strictly enforced, traffickers disappear or become exceedingly cautious. Experience has also shown, that such efforts are rendered fruitless if a neighbouring country fails to exercise the same supervision: traffickers immediately transfer to that country the scene of their operations in connection with the despatch and reception of women. Concerted action between the different countries thus becomes essential.

International Conventions.

We hope that the League of Nations will continue its work of increasing the area of the international movement for the suppression of the traffic in women. There are still many countries which have neither signed nor adhered to the Conventions, and some have failed to ratify their signatures. Evidence was placed before us that, even in countries which are parties to the Conventions, the legislation or its administration is not always up to the standard required. An examination of this question might be of assistance in securing a greater measure of uniformity.

In view of the number of minor girls who are exploited on pretence that they are over age, the question of modifying the existing Conventions might be considered to see whether there is some way of meeting the difficulty.

Central Authorities.

We understand that most of the countries which are parties to the Conventions have appointed central authorities, but it would appear from facts brought to our notice that opportunities for the exchange of information as to the movements of suspected traffickers and their victims are not taken as promptly and as often as they might be. This method of co-operation has proved so useful where it has been applied, both in respect of the traffic in women as in the traffic in obscene publications, that a greater development of it could not fail to produce valuable results.

Employment of Girls Abroad.

Bogus offers of employment in a foreign country are not infrequently used as a means of leading girls to become prostitutes and sometimes such offers are made through so-called employment agencies. Care should therefore be exercised that all agencies for

FAWCETT COLLECTION

foreign employment are supervised as provided by the international Conventions.

Much more serious, however, are the dangers incurred by girls in accepting contracts to perform in cabarets and other places of amusement abroad, unless the conditions are known to be beyond suspicion. In some countries many of these places are the haunts of dissipated men, and the girls employed in them to dance and sing are expected to act as prostitutes. In some instances we had evidence that the girls are actually required to register as such. The contracts also are often drawn up in terms so harsh that the girl who signs one has little or no security. Governments would be well advised to protect their nationals against victimisation of this character by providing for the examination and approval of the conditions of employment before girls under a specified age are allowed to take engagements of this character. It might be considered whether the matter should be made one for international agreement.

Places of Amusement.

On the other hand, the Governments of countries where foreign girls are employed as entertainers have the corresponding duty of seeing that the conditions of cabarets and other places of amusement are brought under adequate regulations. The sale of drink is often the main source of profit to these establishments and facilities for prostitution are but an added bait to increase the profits from the sale of liquor. The question of prohibiting the practice of allowing girls who are nominally engaged as entertainers to mix with the customers and to push the sale of liquors calls for careful consideration. Advertisements are sometimes inserted in a newspaper which are actually thinly veiled methods of inducing girls to enter an immoral life. It should be an offence to publish advertisements of this character.

Immigration.

The whole question of immigration, as well as its bearing on the international traffic in women, has been the subject of careful study in recent years by the International Labour Office. It is therefore unnecessary for us to say much on this subject. The protection afforded to women immigrants has undoubtedly been increased in recent years, but there is still much room for improvement in certain directions, and we hope that this aspect of the question will be borne in mind in any international discussions.

One of the greatest safeguards for young immigrants of both

sexes is that the conditions of life and work in countries which receive them shall be made known to them by the dissemination of accurate information in the countries from which these young immigrants are drawn. Organised methods of bringing them into touch with protective agencies when they land in a new country are also required. Some Governments do a great deal in this direction and many voluntary associations perform an admirable work in helping young people to find their footing. The contact between official and voluntary effort could well be strengthened.

Some countries make a practice of excluding and, in suitable cases, of deporting foreign prostitutes. Active steps are also taken for the removal of foreign souteneurs and traffickers. The general adoption of such a policy will do much to cripple the business of the traffic.

Age of Consent.

We were concerned to find so many young girls among the victims of the traffic. The need for special precautions in this direction are obvious because the increased profit thereby obtained is a direct incentive to all sorts of fraud and deception.

In one country in particular, girls between 14 and 16 are allowed to be registered as prostitutes and are said to be admitted to licensed houses. This question is bound up with the age of consent, that is to say, the age below which a man charged with a sexual offence against a girl cannot plead that she consented. This age is fixed as low as 12 in some countries, and, in one or two instances, even as low as 10 if it can be shown that the child was not previously chaste. Where so little protection is afforded to young girls it is not surprising that older girls are exploited without much risk of the offender being punished.

Marriage.

The low age of marriage in some countries may also lead to abuse and needs consideration. Various methods of evading or taking advantage of the marriage laws were brought to our notice. It appears desirable to draw the attention of the Emigration and Police authorities to manœuvres of this kind; also to consider the possibility of introducing penalties dealing with traffickers who have recourse to legal marriages in order to evade restrictions.

The Trafficker.

The measures to which we have referred above are not likely to be successful while the incentive of money-making remains.

Profit is at the bottom of the business. It is the "third-party" element which makes the traffic in women so tragic an affair in its worst aspects. If the third party could be eliminated, the battle would be largely won. Some countries realise this principle and punish severely souteneurs, madames and others, who live on the proceeds of prostitution. Instances have been given of effective legislation dealing with this point. There are many countries where no such action is taken. Foreign souteneurs, procurers, madames, and other persons of the kind should be excluded or deported as a preventive measure. Governments will be well advised to review their laws relating to living on the earnings of prostitution and, if necessary, to strengthen them.

Control of Prostitution.

The difficulty of eliminating the third-party element becomes greater in countries where the keeping of brothels is legal, where licensed houses exist and where the system of registering prostitutes is maintained.

The existence of licensed houses is undoubtedly an incentive to traffic both national and international. The fact has been established by previous enquiries,* and is admitted to be true by many Governments as a result of their experience. The enquiries made by us not only confirm this fact but show, as other observers have remarked, that the licensed house becomes in some countries the centre of all forms of depravity. These establishments constantly require more inmates to replace those who leave and to meet the desires of their clients for change.

In view of the connection with the Commission has found to exist between licensed houses and traffic in women, the question of the retention or abolition of these houses has acquired an international as well as a national character.

The need for the system used to be supported mainly on two grounds—the maintenance of public order and the prevention of venereal disease, of which prostitution is the most dangerous source. There has been a tendency to dismiss the first reason because experience has shown that the system of licensed houses does not get rid of clandestine prostitution and that public order is at any rate no worse in countries where the system has been abolished.

The retention of the system in some countries is now generally based on considerations of public health, but this theory has been

* See "Prostitution in Europe," A. Flexner. (1914).

abandoned long ago in many countries and it will be seen from the chapter on the "Growth of Public Opinion" that there is a growing tendency to discard it in many others. Belief in the system has been greatly weakened in recent years by further knowledge and experience which have led medical practitioners who are specialists to require extensive and expensive technique to determine whether any individual is infected or infectious for others. The value of these new methods of diagnosis and treatment have been tested widely during and since the War. The system of free treatment available for all persons alike in properly equipped clinics under conditions of privacy, which have been organised in several countries to supplement the practice of qualified physicians, is giving results which indicate the advantages of such methods of securing the diagnosis and treatment of both men and women of all ages and classes. Furthermore, we think it advisable to point out that the compulsory medical examination and treatment of prostitutes, no matter how thoroughly it might be conceivably applied to the limited class of registered prostitutes, is not an alternative to general medical facilities for all infected individuals, nor can it possibly meet the objections of large numbers of people on social and moral grounds. It behoves all Governments which place reliance on the older system of preventing the spread of venereal diseases to examine the question thoroughly in the light of the latest medical knowledge and practice, and to consider the possibility of abandoning a system which is fraught with such dangers from the point of view of international traffic.

The Problem of Prostitution.

We cannot close our remarks on this subject without some reference to the general question of prostitution. The causes of prostitution are deep-seated; it exists to a smaller or greater extent in all countries and no solution of the problem has been found by any of them. It is apparent, however, that the attitude of public opinion towards it has a direct bearing on its commercialised aspects which find their worst developments in the traffic in women. Prostitution should be regarded as a public evil to be kept within the narrowest possible limits. It is especially important that the youth of both sexes should be encouraged to view this matter from the highest moral standpoint. Safeguards of all kinds against international traffic are difficult to enforce when the lowering of the standard of morality serves to create an insistent demand. The remedy lies in a sound and vigilant public policy.

SCOPE OF ENQUIRY.

Our enquiry has been mainly concerned with the American Continent, Europe, the Near East and certain countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. In an enquiry as important as it is difficult, it cannot be claimed that every source of information has been drawn upon or that all the clues discovered have been followed up. Yet the main purpose in view, which was to verify the existence and determine the nature of the traffic, its volume, the places at which it is carried on and its characteristic features, as also to test the efficiency of the preventive measures, has been largely achieved as regards the traffic between Europe on the one hand, and the American Continent and Northern Africa on the other.

On the other hand, the enquiry has scarcely touched a large number of other countries, such as those of the Far East but we possess certain information supplied by the Governments of some of those countries in their annual reports. The Japanese member of our Committee has prepared a special report on the conditions in the Far East. It appears from this information that the international traffic in women is also met with in this part of the world, both in certain independent States and in certain colonies and dependencies of other nations. Owing, however, to differences of race, religion and custom, the problem appears in a different aspect.

In our opinion it would be for the Council of the League of Nations to consider and determine whether the results achieved up to the present are such as to warrant the further prosecution or extension of the enquiry in those other countries.

We have reached the end of our report and, in presenting it to the Council of the League of Nations for its consideration, we may be permitted to express the hope that the result of our investigations may materially assist the League in carrying out the duties it has assumed under the Covenant in regard to the traffic in women and children. We believe that excellent results have been obtained in the past by the combined efforts of Governments and voluntary associations. Much remains to be done. The measure of hope for the future rests on the extent to which these efforts can be maintained and strengthened.

PUBLISHED BY
THE ASSOCIATION FOR MORAL AND SOCIAL HYGIENE,
LIVINGSTONE HOUSE, BROADWAY, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1.

H. R. GRUBB, LTD., PRINTERS, CROYDON.