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Lewd and Lascivious: French Quarter Clean-up Campaigns by Business and Civic Organizations in 1950s New Orleans

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**LEWD AND LASCIVIOUS: FRENCH QUARTER CLEAN-
UP CAMPAIGNS BY BUSINESS AND CIVIC
ORGANIZATIONS IN 1950s NEW ORLEANS**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by

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ABSTRACT

On January 1, 1950 Nashville tourist Robert Dunn died after a long night of drinking on Bourbon St. An investigation ruled the death a homicide. That determination marked the beginning of a decade-long effort by prominent New Orleans residents, civic, and business organizations to pressure Mayor deLesseps S. Morrison and the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) to rid the French Quarter of those deemed “undesirable.” Reformers aimed to make the French Quarter friendly for residents, tourists and businessmen who attended conventions. Throughout the 1950s, three committees were created that were comprised of local residents and businessmen to investigate the issues facing the French Quarter and create recommendations to help solve the problem. The first focused on vice crimes in the French Quarter, the second on police corruption, and the third on homosexual activities in the city. All three committees shared a tendency to scapegoat women and homosexuals for the many problems facing the neighborhood.

This dissertation examines these committees, which were predominately comprised of white males who pushed to reduce the visibility of women and homosexuals in public. They also fought an effort by city officials to preserve a status quo that considered certain types of vice as a part of the tourism industry. The committees’ main targets were B-girls, barmaids, prostitutes, and homosexuals, who were considered easy targets due to their disreputable standing in society. The efforts promoted by these committees would set the stage for a much larger cleanup effort in the 1960s that completely disrupted the status quo, leading to what could be seen as a victory for those who sought the initial clean up.

INTRODUCTION

In the early morning hours of January 1, 1950, wealthy Nashville native Robert E. Dunn, Jr. and three companions, in New Orleans for the Sugar Bowl, wandered through the French Quarter to celebrate the New Year. As the night went on, they eventually found themselves at the Latin Quarter Club on Bourbon Street. Some time later, after drinking heavily, Dunn was found slumped over his chair by the club bartender who proceeded to call for an ambulance. After arriving approximately at 4:30 a.m., the paramedics examined and attempted to resuscitate Dunn. However, after much effort, Dunn was pronounced dead at 5:05 a.m. Initially ruled as a heart attack, a later autopsy revealed that he had ingested enough chloral hydrate to cause his death. It was believed chloral hydrate, a drug used by doctors as a sedative, was poured into his drink. This mixture, commonly known as a “Mickey Finn,” was thought to have gone unnoticed by Dunn until it was too late.¹

The death of Robert Dunn ushered in a decade-long effort to pressure city officials and the police department to clean up the French Quarter, also known as the Vieux Carré, of people neighborhood residents considered “undesirable.” The group of undesirables that residents sought to eliminate were an assortment of people that included B-girls, gambling operators, prostitutes, drug dealers, mob figures, peddlers of pornography, homosexuals, and all establishments that catered to and profited from lewd entertainment. The pressure campaigns, led by civic and business organizations, sought to make the neighborhood safe not only for its residents, but also for the burgeoning tourism industry. In the views of reformers, these “undesirables” became an impediment

¹ “Death in Night Club Blamed on Knockout Drops,” *Times-Picayune*, March 23, 1950, 3; “Probe of Death

to a city government that sought to capitalize on the rapidly gentrifying French Quarter. What started as a way to prevent what happened to Dunn from occurring again, became an all-out campaign to scapegoat and rid the neighborhood of all those individuals they believed sullied its reputation.

The gentrification that occurred in the French Quarter, which was started by wealthy and influential New Orleanians to preserve its architecture, sought to change the character of the neighborhood by removing a bohemian culture that existed since the early twentieth century. The 1950s saw a movement to modernize the city while preserving the French Quarter as a tool for tourism purposes. Those who sought to gentrify the neighborhood believed the only way to achieve this goal was to displace poorer residents, replace them with more affluent ones, and in doing so, remove all those they deemed undesirable.

The pressure reformers placed on city officials and the police department resulted in the creation of three committees whose purpose was to investigate vice and corruption. Based on their findings, they recommend ordinances designed to promote better enforcement of existing laws with an eye to eliminating, or at least minimizing, undesirables from the French Quarter. This dissertation reconstructs the history of these committees and explains why reformers chose to target certain groups of people for removal. Women and homosexuals were repeatedly targeted by committee members. It must be specified that not all women were the subjects of their investigations. Women targeted by these committees were those who worked in what would be classified as the sex industry, such as prostitutes. One committee during their investigations, justified their targeting of B-girls and barmaids not only because they played a role in Dunn's death,

but because they lumped them together with prostitutes, making no distinction between the three types of work.

While the creation of committees such as these was not a new concept, the role they played in the maligning and the eventual persecution of certain groups allowed them to achieve an outsized influence in the city. The importance of these committees in New Orleans history is greater than the current historiography has presented. The ordinances and police procedures adopted in the 1950s can be directly traced to the work completed by these committees. Their work, in turn led to continuing harassment well in the next decade.

Those who helped create these committees justified their investigations and crackdowns as a way to tackle problems some French Quarter residents as well as civic and business groups believed hindered economic growth and safety. But in reality, the committees were created in response to greater visibility of women and homosexuals in the public sphere. It was also a way for men, who solely comprised the committees, to re-impose gender norms more common before World War II. For them, respectable women belonged at home taking care of their husbands and children. Homosexuals, these committee members believed, should remain hidden from view if their presence could not be eliminated.

In order to place the committees into context of the 1950s, one has to look at who was politically dominant in the city at the time. DeLesseps S. “Chep” Morrison, mayor of New Orleans from 1946 to 1961, played a central role in the creation of these committees. Edward F. Haas’ definitive work on Morrison describes an administration obsessed with its “image of reform.” Throughout his political career, Morrison sought to

make himself the exemplar of reform. He hoped this carefully crafted image would one day make him governor of Louisiana. With regard to civic and business groups' call to combat vice activities, Morrison had an ability to echo the calls of reform-minded groups to clean up the French Quarter while also doing very little of substance to achieve that goal. This became his *modus operandi* throughout his time as mayor. Morrison was more interested in maintaining a status quo and only engaged in halfhearted cleanup campaigns when it suited him politically. The connection between illegal vice and tourism most certainly was not lost on Morrison. Therefore, maintaining a status quo was beneficial to the continued draw of tourists and their money.²

The events surrounding Dunn's death and the subsequent committees Morrison helped create give credence to Haas' argument. Haas portrays this continued status quo as yet another example of the mayor turning a blind eye to certain illegal activities in the French Quarter due his connections to vice elements in the city. This view is shared by J. Mark Souther in *New Orleans On Parade: Tourism and the Transformation of the Crescent City*. Primarily a book on how the tourism industry changed the culture of the city from a business hub to a tourist destination, Souther examines Morrison's response to Dunn's death and the actions taken by him. Recognizing the need to acquiesce to a clean-up effort in order to appease his constituents, Morrison also wished not to "quash racy nightlife because he understood the necessity of maintaining an atmosphere that outsiders found alluring." Meaning, Morrison wished to use vice as a tool to attract

² Edward F. Haas, *DeLesseps S. Morrison and the Image of Reform: New Orleans Politics, 1946-1961* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 181-182.

business conventions where men could seek lewd entertainment as well as the company of prostitutes.³

The sometimes competing needs to attract tourists to the French Quarter while also making it safe for residents, led to the creation of three different committees. Each was charged with investigating a problem that pertained to a situation or specific activity that was prominent at the time. While the first two committees dealt with a range of issues, this dissertation will focus on two specific groups these committees targeted: women and homosexuals. These two groups were viewed by civic and business organizations as the main culprits in the problems facing the French Quarter.

The first committee, formed by Chep Morrison in response to Robert Dunn's death, was the Mayor's Special Citizens Committee for the Vieux Carré (SCCVC), 1950-1951. Pressure from French Quarter residents as well as business and civic organizations, were instrumental in the speedy creation of the SCCVC. The composition of the committee included two representatives from city government, Vieux Carré tavern operators, property owners and residents, the Chamber of Commerce, and a member representing religious organizations. Each member was appointed by Morrison, which allowed him to take credit for any positive outcome that might occur or deflect any blame that could come from a SCCVC failure. Richard R. Foster, a prominent businessman and civic activist, was unanimously chosen by the committee as its leader. Even though Foster headed the SCCVC, the most outspoken member was Rev. Robert R. Jamieson, pastor of St. Mark's Methodist Church on S. Rampart Street, which borders the French Quarter.

³ J. Mark Souther, *New Orleans On Parade: Tourism and the Transformation of the Crescent City* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 47.

Before he agreed to join the SCCVC, Rev. Jamieson crusaded against vice and the presence of undesirables in the French Quarter. He reserved his most ardent criticism for prostitution, likely spurred on by the presence of a known house of prostitution operating a mere two blocks from his church. Jamieson encouraged the SCCVC to target prostitution and to help create a city ordinance that sought to arrest and prosecute not only the prostitutes themselves, but also those that helped them, such as madams, pimps, and others who helped solicit business.

Initially charged with investigating an array of vice issues, the SCCVC instead concentrated on examining women in their roles as B-girls, barmaids, and prostitutes. B-girls were directly involved with Dunn's death, and, therefore became an immediate target for cleanup. B-girls were female employees sanctioned by alcohol establishments to solicit drinks from bar patrons, in exchange for a portion of the profits made from the patron's bill. Barmaids, dealt with separately from B-girls by the SCCVC, served as waitresses and in some cases bartenders in bars and nightclubs. The SCCVC believed it was important to eliminate women from working in bars all together because they viewed both B-girls and barmaids as substitutes or gateways for prostitutes to solicit in French Quarter establishments. Committee members even targeted anyone that aided these women, including taxi drivers.

Within the French Quarter, an aura of unchecked debauchery on Bourbon St. helped foster the kind of activity that led to Dunn's death. In *Bourbon Street*, Richard Campanella describes the thoroughfare, which extends thirteen blocks from Canal St. to Esplanade Ave., as "attract[ing] flighty characters [that] brought out the ribald in otherwise level-headed folks." Campanella's description of Bourbon St. and the

“characters” it attracted, helped vice elements remain in business. Men came into the city seeking out the lewd and lascivious entertainment the street had to offer. Because of this, it made it easier for grifters, such as B-girls, to take advantage of individuals who were in an inebriated state.⁴

Angela R. Demovic’s “‘Quaint Creatures’: Public Discourse and the Role of B-girls in the Heritage of Bourbon Street’ gives an anthropological study of B-girls in New Orleans, which she explains revolves around the French Quarter’s culture of alcohol and sex. Much like other vice and hustling that existed in the French Quarter, Demovic states B-girls were “generally tolerated as an expected, humorous, and logical part of business on Bourbon Street.” Because of this, she argues, B-girls challenged the power dynamic that existed where men dominated a situation or establishment, such as a bar or nightclub. B-girls used their sexuality to subvert this relationship, thereby allowing them to achieve dominance in this setting. However, by the 1950s Demovic surmises that the image of a B-girl had changed from “quaint trickster” to “a malevolent knock-out-drug-user.” This more sinister view was enhanced by the events that surrounded Dunn’s death.⁵

In *Creating The Big Easy: New Orleans and the Emergence of Modern Tourism, 1918-1945*, Anthony J. Stanonis explains the role taxicabs played in prostitution and the tourism industry during the interwar years. He describes how taxi drivers served as middleman when soliciting customers, thereby “provid[ing] a service both to men eager for sex and to prostitutes, who used the cab drivers to reduce the risk of arrest or harassment.” His research revealed a connection between prostitution and taxi drivers as

⁴ Richard Campanella, *Bourbon Street* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014), 152.

⁵ Angela R. Demovic, “‘Quaint Creatures’: Public Discourse and the Role of B-girls in the Heritage of Bourbon Street,” *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 11, no. 4 (2016): 336-348, 337, 341, 346.

existing well before the 1950s. Due to this longstanding association, the problem was already well known to the SCCVC members.⁶

Before the SCCVC disbanded, its members crafted, submitted, and lobbied for the passage of ordinances designed to regulate B-girls, barmaids, and prostitutes. Members considered this a great achievement, but the effectiveness of these ordinances was mixed. B-drinking and prostitution continued in the French Quarter even though arrests were made, while a lack of convictions made these ordinances largely toothless.

The second commission, the Special Citizens' Investigating Committee (SCIC), 1953-1954, was created in response to the failure of state and local cooperation in rooting out corruption in the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD). The SCIC's primary objective was to investigate corruption within the NOPD, including revelations about ties between police officers and criminal elements. SCIC members took particular interest in investigating police involvement in prostitution. What can be seen as a continuation of the SCCVC's work, the SCIC went further in their investigation by examining why prostitution continued to persist in the French Quarter even though ordinances recommended to, and eventually passed by, the city's Commission Council, were not as effective as originally believed.

Morrison and A. Brown Moore, Utilities Commissioner on the city's Commission Council organized the SCIC. Its membership included representatives of the Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI, the Bureau of Governmental Research, and the Metropolitan Crime Commission. The head of the committee and chief investigator was

⁶ Anthony J. Stanonis, *Creating The Big Easy: New Orleans and the Emergence of Modern Tourism, 1918-1945* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 117.

Aaron M. Kohn, a lawyer and former FBI agent who received accolades for his work as head of the Chicago Crime Commission in 1952.

Even though the SCIC was created with the cooperation of Chep Morrison and the New Orleans Commission Council, Morrison became a persistent impediment to the SCIC's work. In *Madame Vieux Carré*, Scott S. Ellis describes the mayor as “grumbling” about the SCIC, even going so far as obstructing the investigation by “heckl[ing] witnesses” as they tried to speak during public hearings. Because of this, and other actions taken by Morrison, the SCIC was prevented from coming to a proper conclusion thereby forcing the committee to issue an incomplete report. Even with this impediment, the SCIC managed to prove itself effective as an investigative body. Much of this had to do with the dedication of Aaron M. Kohn, who helped establish the existence of a connection between police officers and prostitutes, helping to explain, at least in part, why prostitution persisted in the city.⁷

Kyle P. Willshire's thesis, “Aaron Kohn Attacks Corruption in New Orleans: An Intersection of Media and Politics, 1953-1955,” seeks to highlight Kohn's professional career as a “citizen crime fighter” and give him credit for his work on the SCIC. Using television and print media as a way to connect with New Orleanians, Willshire views Kohn's role as chief investigator of the SCIC as a being relatively successful even though the committee was seen as an overall failure. Even with this perceived failure, Willshire credits Kohn for having the fortitude to investigate a corrupt and uncooperative police

⁷ Scott S. Ellis, *Madame Vieux Carré: The French Quarter in the Twentieth Century* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2010), 63.

department, as well as overcome the continued interference and objections from Morrison.⁸

The third commission was more clearly defined in its mission. The Committee on the Problem of Sex Deviates (CPSD), 1958, had a sole mandate to investigate homosexuals in the French Quarter. Seen as “deviates,” “perverts,” and “degenerates,” the committee sought to remove them from the area due to the presumption that they engaged in other criminal behavior outside of illicit sexual activities. However, the actions taken by the committee and the conclusions eventually released in their report can rightfully be described as scapegoating, rather than providing any actual evidence linking homosexuality to widespread crime per se. The reason for the creation of the Sex Deviates committee was not so much in response to any specific event or crime committed due to a homosexual presence. Rather, its foundation came in response to the rise of homosexual visibility in the city. With increased visibility came an increase in NOPD harassment.

The creation of the committee was the result of an eight-year long attempt to reign in homosexual activities in the French Quarter. In July 1958, the New Orleans City Council, led by council president Glenn P. Classen and councilman Fred J. Cassibry, took action. They sought help from Mayor Morrison’s half brother, Jacob Morrison, a lawyer and activist, in the creation of a committee composed of residents of the French Quarter and civic leaders, as well as representatives from the Metropolitan Crime Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Young Men’s Business Club. Absent from the

⁸ Kyle P. Willshire, “Aaron Kohn Attacks Corruption in New Orleans: An Intersection of Media and Politics, 1953-1955” (Thesis, University of New Orleans, 2013), 3-4.

committee were any religious leaders even though clergymen requested the City Council take action against homosexuals.

Historically, certain perceived homosexual activities, such as cross-dressing, were overlooked during Mardi Gras. In his unpublished dissertation entitled, *City of Desire: A History of Same-Sex Desire in New Orleans, 1917-1977*, Richard Clark argues New Orleanians would tolerate and even celebrate aspects of homosexuality, such as cross-dressing, but only in the confines of celebrations, especially Mardi Gras. Even in the 1950s, Clark stated police saw homosexuals as “generally harmless and better left alone.” However, he indicated that between 1950 and 1958, there occurred an increase of harassment of homosexuals by the police. A cycle of raids and arrests at establishments that catered to homosexuals became the new norm. One of the bars that experienced this routine harassment was Café Lafitte In Exile, New Orleans’ oldest gay bar.⁹

The book, *In Exile: The History and Lore Surrounding New Orleans Gay Culture and Its Oldest Gay Bar*, by Frank Perez and Jeffrey Palmquist relies mainly on newspaper articles and oral history interviews to document the experiences of homosexuals from the founding of New Orleans to the twentieth century. While not a comprehensive history, the authors describe the hardships these men and women faced in a city that had a reputation for being tolerant of unorthodox ways of living. In their chapter related to the 1950s, Perez and Palmquist documented “considerable amount of homophobia, especially from [the] police.” This harassment from police occurred in bars and other places where homosexuals gathered. The notion that homosexuals were considered “perverts” who actively recruited kids was a stigma that hung around their

⁹ Richard Clark, “City of Desire: A History of Same-Sex Desire in New Orleans, 1917-1977” (PhD diss., Tulane University, 2009), 114.

necks. This demonization would later lead to much harsher police crackdowns in the 1960s.¹⁰

This enduring notion of labeling homosexuals as “perverts” and “deviates” allowed them to be easy targets as scapegoats due to dehumanizing language used by the police and the political class. It also calls into question the idea that New Orleans was welcoming to anyone who wished to call it home. Alecia P. Long re-examines the misconception that New Orleans “served as a sexually liberal oasis” that had always been welcoming to homosexuals. In, “Queers, Fairies, and Ne’er Do-Wells,” Long describes the various ways New Orleans sought to combat the presence of homosexuals in the French Quarter. The romanticism of the Vieux Carré created by writers, artists, and others, gave the impression of a fun-loving city where all were welcome. However, as residents began gentrifying the historic neighborhood, this romanticism faced a more conservative reality. Those who the French Quarter embraced in the 1920s were seen as undesirables by the 1950s. Homosexuals fell into this category. Long goes on to describe the efforts by reform-minded individuals and groups who sought to fix the problem through the creation and crafting of a commission, municipal laws, and state legislation.¹¹

In “Saving the City from Sex Deviates: Preservationists, Homosexuals, and Reformers in the French Quarter, 1950-1962,” Long continues her research into the targeting of homosexuals in the larger context of the arrest and prosecution of Clay Shaw in connection with the assassination of John F. Kennedy. She examines the rising importance of tourism as Chep Morrison sought to modernize the city and attract certain

¹⁰ Frank Perez and Jeffrey Palmquist, *In Exile: The History and Lore Surrounding New Orleans Gay Culture and Its Oldest Gay Bar* (Scotland: LL-Publications, 2012), 46-48.

¹¹ Alecia P. Long, “‘Queers, Fairies, and Ne’er-Do-Wells:’ Rethinking the Notion of a Sexually Liberal New Orleans” in *Remaking New Orleans: Beyond Exceptionalism and Authenticity*, ed. Thomas J. Adams et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 179, 183.

kinds of tourists. Morrison “viewed as threatening...the rising visibility of gay and lesbian people,” and believed their increasing presence constituted a threat to the French Quarter – at least the French Quarter as Morrison wanted it to be. Thus began a decade-long effort to eliminate certain homosexuals from the neighborhood by the use of committees such as the SCCVC and their encouragement if not sanctioning of targeted police harassment.¹²

Taken together, the committees show how the 1950s were dominated by a white male, hetero-normative agenda. It also revealed how the same individuals who led the committees tried to legislate morality. All this served to perpetuate their efforts to re-instate gender norms that existed before World War II. However, what their actions actually accomplished was not a re-ordering of gender norms, but an increase in oppressive actions taken against women and homosexuals. The ordinances and police practices common to this time period led to harsh crackdowns in the following decade, especially against homosexuals.

The materials used in this dissertation come from primary source material consisting of meeting minutes, correspondence, commission reports, and newspaper articles and editorials. The use of newspaper articles intends to show how local news outlets, especially through their editorial boards, portrayed these committees and offered advice, on how the committees should conduct business. In some instances, public figures fought each other through the press, trying to get the upper hand on each other.

The chapters are organized to focus on the reasons for the creation of a committee, followed by an examination of the success of the particular committee as well

¹² Alecia P. Long, “Saving the City from Sex Deviates: Preservationists, Homosexuals and Reformers in the French Quarter, 1950-1962,” in *Cities as Multiple Landscapes: Investigating the Sister Cities Innsbruck and New Orleans*, ed. Christina Antenhofer et al. (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2017) 460-461.

as explaining why its members chose to target certain groups and how they went about doing so. Each committee had both successes and failures. The successes came because civic and business organizations were able to draw attention to what they perceived as problems in the French Quarter. However, the failures were that the committees did not always fulfill the mandates they were given. An underlying theme that emerges in the chapters that follow is that the root of these failures could be explained by the lax enforcement of ordinances by the police. Without police cooperation, any ordinance passed by the city would be ineffectual at best.

Chapter one discusses the formation of the SCCVC and the crucial role civic and business organizations played in pressuring the Morrison administration into acquiescing to their demands for a cleanup of the French Quarter. If not for their outcry and demand for action, it is quite possible Morrison would have responded to Dunn's death with token raids and arrests, until the subject faded from press headlines. The chapter also shows the early steps taken by the SCCVC to legitimize their committee. The presence of Gasper Gulotta, a bar and tavern owner who was accused of harboring vice elements in his establishments, kneecapped the committee early on thereby causing New Orleanians to question its credibility.

Continuing with the SCCVC, chapter two discusses why the SCCVC chose to target B-girls, barmaids, and prostitutes, all professions occupied by women. The committee recognized no distinction among the three types of work. In the thinking of the committee members, each was just a stepping-stone to the other. Because of this, SCCVC members sought to ban all women from working in bars and nightclubs in the French

Quarter. It also examines whether the committee achieved some form of success and by what measurement.

Chapter three provides a bridge between the SCCVC and the SCIC. Before the SCCVC officially disbanded, reports were made that recognized police corruption and lack of enforcement of extant laws were key factors in the perpetuation of prostitution. The 1951 Kefauver Committee hearings in New Orleans served as the basis for civic and business groups to investigate corruption in the police department. This corruption, when tied to prostitution, portrayed vice interests as taking advantage of these women by either exploiting them for monetary gain or by indulging in their services privately while publicly denouncing them. This led to the creation of the Special Citizens Investigating Committee, the sole purpose of which was to investigate police corruption. Through this investigation, the connection between the police and prostitution became more apparent and solidified the perception that the police were responsible for the perpetuation of prostitution.

Chapter four looks at the relative success of the Special Citizens' Investigative Committee (SCIC). The committee's success became apparent during their investigation into prostitution. SCIC investigators were able to uncover a connection between police officers and house of prostitution. The SCIC's findings were made public in hearings that were televised and reprinted in local newspapers. The hearings allowed for New Orleanians to see and hear first-hand what they had suspected. Corruption was rampant throughout the police and the Morrison administration appeared indifferent to the issue. A status quo was preferred that saw prostitution continue as a form of entertainment for male tourists who came into town. This, of course, was at odds with residents of the

French Quarter, as well as civic and business organizations that wished to see prostitutes removed from the area.

Chapter five delves into the efforts taken by the SCCVC and the SCIC in the early 1950s to eliminate the “homosexual problem” in the French Quarter. Efforts by the SCCVC, with the help of Jacob Morrison, laid the groundwork for the eventual creation of the Committee on the Problem of Sex Deviates (CPSD). Residents of the French Quarter resented the rise in homosexual visibility. Seeing them as the wrong kind of visitors, and a nuisance to residents and tourists alike, the goal of the new CPSD was to find a way to force them out of the French Quarter, and if at all possible, out of the city. Harassment was the most widespread tool used by the police to accomplish this goal. However, they did not have all the legal tools to take actions that could lead to an arrest outside of witnessing solicitation or seeing individuals engage in homosexual activities.

Chapter six examines the Committee on the Problem of Sex Deviates; the only committee established that focused solely on homosexuals. The chapter focuses on the report, the recommendations given to the City Council for adoption of new ordinances, and evaluates the committee’s success. The consequences of this committee were far more significant than the SCCVC or the SCIC. An atmosphere of harassment by the police and an indifferent city government allowed for a much harsher crackdown in the 1960s that was made possible because of the sanctioning of police actions taken against homosexuals.

The competing visions of reform by Chep Morrison, civic and business leaders like Jacob Morrison, and the New Orleans Police Department were the foundation for the creation of the three committees. Chep Morrison viewed reform as a means for political

gain and used the committees as a way to achieve this. Civic and business leaders used reform as a way to impose their moral views on the French Quarter as well as to achieve their goal to gentrify the French Quarter for tourism purposes. And the police, who exploited prostitutes and homosexuals, viewed reform as an impediment to the status quo they sought to uphold. All three views contributed to the eventual creation of the committees.

The death of Robert Dunn at the beginning of the decade provided the justification for people like Richard Foster, Rev. Robert Jamieson, Jacob Morrison, and other civic and business leaders to finally bring their concerns about vice in the French Quarter to the broad public's attention. Not wishing to miss an opportunity, they took advantage of the situation and pushed Mayor Morrison and the NOPD to take action. These people laid the foundations for a much larger and more consequential cleanup of the French Quarter in the 1960s that eventually changed the long-tolerated status quo.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MAYOR'S SPECIAL CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR THE VIEUX CARRE

The creation of the Mayor's Special Citizens Committee for the Vieux Carré (SCCVC) did not occur immediately after Robert Dunn's death. What did occur in the aftermath was a backlash against the bohemian culture that had existed in the French Quarter for decades. Dunn's alleged murder became a *cause célèbre* for those who wanted quick action from the city to address their concerns. Specifically, it was seen as an opportunity for influential residents and business organizations to finally gain the attention of city government and the police. With this attention, they hoped to be able to continue their gentrification of the French Quarter and root out all "undesirables" in the hope of permitting only certain types of residents and tourists into the neighborhood. The fruit of their efforts was the creation of the SCCVC. If not for civic and business organizations that, out of their own self-interest, demanded something be done, it is likely Mayor Morrison and the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) would have responded to Dunn's death with indifference.

A police crackdown initiated by Morrison and the NOPD began soon after Dunn's death, but no major policy changes or city ordinances were introduced in the time between the death and the formation of the SCCVC. Influential French Quarter residents who deemed the police crackdown to be insufficient, however, quashed this hands-off approach. Business organizations also raised their objections to the way the city was handling the situation. Sensing a potential political liability, Morrison searched for a solution to placate these groups. That solution was the formation of the SCCVC, which was charged with investigating and drafting recommendations or ordinances pertaining to

any vice issues in the French Quarter. Any recommendations or drafted ordinances would then be passed on to the city's elected commission council, whose members would then take up the recommendations or shelve them.

The outcries of influential residents of the French Quarter and the business community were instrumental to the SCCVC's creation. The pressure they exerted on Mayor Morrison forced him to demonstrate he lived up to his reform image. Even with the initial police crackdown, the early response was perceived as inadequate to those influential individuals and business groups.

This chapter seeks to show the influence prominent individuals, and civic and business organizations had over the Morrison administration. Their objective of cleaning up the French Quarter was initially met with token raids and arrests, which they found unsatisfactory. The outcry over Dunn's death was not a coincidence. Dunn, a wealthy white tourist, was exactly who French Quarter residents and business organizations wished to draw to the city. If someone like him could easily fall prey to B-girls, barmaids, and prostitutes, then people of his status would be more hesitant to visit the French Quarter.

The events leading up to the formation of the SCCVC played out in newspaper articles and editorials that helped pressure Morrison to act. His reform image was taking a hit and civic and business leaders took advantage of this to create the momentum needed to push Morrison to create the committee.

Citizen Outrage

Initially ruled a heart attack in January 1950 by the Orleans Parish coroner, Dr. C. Grene Cole, a subsequent autopsy performed in Nashville, in conjunction with the Louisiana State Board of Health, revealed Dunn had ingested enough chloral hydrate to cause his death. Chloral hydrate, a drug prescribed by doctors as a sedative, can induce “a more natural kind of sleep” thereby causing drowsiness and eventual loss of consciousness. It was concluded the drug was poured in his drink. Even though the chloral hydrate evaporates quickly, the Louisiana State Board of Health found a large amount of the drug had remained in Dunn’s body leading to the conclusion the victim had consumed a lethal dose. Facing scrutiny for not performing an autopsy, Dr. Cole explained he had not done so because the initial police report “did not indicate ingestion of poison or chloral hydrate. [Eyewitnesses] reported the man had immediately collapsed at the table following the swallowing of the drink.” Based on this information, NOPD reclassified Dunn’s death as a homicide.¹³

On March 23, in response to this information, Police Superintendent Joseph I. Scheuering announced a crackdown on French Quarter bars. Scheuering, believing B-girls were involved in the murder, ordered his officers to “bear down on enforcement of the B-drinking ordinance” as well as be on the lookout for any bar owners possessing chloral hydrate. The B-drinking ordinance used by the police, City Ordinance No. 15697, was passed on March 13, 1945 in response to B-girls’ perceived harassment and swindling of service members on leave during World War II.¹⁴ The ordinance stated:

¹³ “‘Mickey Finn’ Death Brings Police Action,” *New Orleans Item*, March 23, 1950, 1; “Mickey Finn Drug Used By Doctors,” *New Orleans Item*, March 24, 1950, 1.

¹⁴ “‘Mickey Finn’ Death Brings Police Action,” *New Orleans Item*, March 23, 1950, 14.

It shall be unlawful for the owner, operator, or manager of any establishment operated for the sale, purchase, or acceptance for consumption of alcoholic liquors, or other beverages on the premises to employ or allow the presence of any female, irrespective of whether or not any such female receives compensation from the owner, operator, or manager of such establishment, for the purposes of requesting or soliciting any person for any such female, or any other person any intoxicating liquors or other beverages, sold, purchases, or accepted for the consumption, in any such establishment; or to permit in said premise any female therein, who accepts the gift of any such intoxicating liquors, or other beverages, and who receives a commission therefor, or who receives remuneration therefor in any other way.¹⁵

The breadth of the ordinance, however, proved difficult to enforce. Collecting evidence on B-girls allowed for the potential harassment of all women regardless of whether they were B-girls or not. Scheuring acknowledged this difficulty by stating, “suppose my wife and I go into a place for a few drinks and my wife asks for the bartender to mix me a weak drink because she doesn’t want me to get drunk. Would you call her a ‘B’ drinker? How are we to know who is and who isn’t?” Essentially, the ordinance was practically unenforceable.¹⁶

With an unenforceable ordinance, the police crackdown effort did not have the effect the police had hoped. As a *New Orleans States* reporter discovered on a night out in the French Quarter only two days after Scheuring opened a homicide investigation into Dunn’s death, B-drinking continued unabated. The reporter concluded that “the city’s B-drinking law – apparently killer of the ‘scourge’ – is nil, helpless, unenforced, dead.” To further prove the ineffectiveness of the crackdown, Bourbon St. nightclub employees indicated that not only had things reverted back to business as usual, but that they also

¹⁵ City Ordinance No. 15697.

¹⁶ “Scheuring Orders Drive on ‘B-Girls,’” *New Orleans States*, March 25, 1950, 1.

saw a potential surge in business due to thrill seeking tourists who wanted to see where Dunn was drugged.¹⁷

Scheuering's failed crackdown caused French Quarter residents to worry about the allegedly deteriorating conditions in the neighborhood. More needed to be done and many felt it was up to them to push the city into action. This sentiment was given a voice by prominent resident Mary Meeks Morrison, sister-in-law to the mayor. On the same day Scheuering announced the police's crackdown effort, Morrison, speaking in front of the Independent Women's Organization (IWO), challenged the group to seek better conditions in the Vieux Carré, which she describe as being "the worst since I've been living here and probably the worst in the history of the city." She further noted, "it ha[d] been impossible to get any co-operation from the city or the police department to clean up the Vieux Carré" which she saw as New Orleans' biggest asset.¹⁸

Mary Morrison continued her critique by directing her most stinging criticism toward the police department. "When something happens in the Quarter which would bring at least three squad cars if it happened uptown," she said, "the police don't even bother to show up." If they do show up, Morrison continued, they "just ask us why we don't move out of the Quarter." The criticism from a prominent citizen, especially one with close ties with the mayor, proved successful in lobbying the IWO's support to go on the record for cleaning up the French Quarter by targeting bars and calling for the better enforcement of laws by the police department.¹⁹

¹⁷ "Cops Ignore Victimization of Suckers in Quarter," *New Orleans States*, March 25, 1950, 2; "Dope Death Drawing Thrill Seekers," *New Orleans States*, March 24, 1950, 1.

¹⁸ "Women Object to Any Long-Morrison 'Deal,'" *Times-Picayune*, March 24, 1950, 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

What made the IWO's support so important was their ability to organize women's votes in city elections. When Chep Morrison ran for mayor in 1946, the IWO supported his reform candidacy and sought to encourage women to vote for him. They even organized a "broom brigade" which they used as a metaphor for Morrison's reform platform. Cognizant of the importance the IWO would play to Morrison's re-election effort, Mary Morrison used their support as a way to further gain the mayor's attention. If Chep Morrison refused to do anything about the conditions in the French Quarter, there was a possibility the IWO would not endorse his re-election bid.²⁰

The coverage of Dunn's death by local newspapers brought the problems in the French Quarter to the general public's attention and further fueled calls for action. Soon after Mary Morrison's speech was covered in the press, newspapers received letters from New Orleanians who expressed their frustration with the city's lack of progress in French Quarter cleanup efforts. They called for a vigorous response to the situation. "It's time that we of the city insist upon cleaning out of all the undesirable places in the Vieux Carré. An all-out drive against these B-drinkers... would make them vacate our good city of New Orleans," wrote John Scordill to the *New Orleans States*. Others offered advice on how to help the cleanup effort. "A. Visitor" suggested jail time was the best "broom to sweep out the French Quarter." The writer proposed an ordinance that required jail time for both B-drinkers and bar owners for three months on the first offense and six months for the second. Another letter to the editor suggested the main problem with B-drinking was unescorted women in bars. "Unescorted women should not be allowed in those places." "As long as unescorted women are allowed in the barrooms in the Quarter, B-

²⁰ Joseph B. Parker, *The Morrison Era: Reform Politics in New Orleans* (Gretna, La.: Pelican Publishing Company, 1974), 85.

girls will be there, too.” While not completely representative of the public as a whole, what the letters to the editor suggest was that cleanup effort had garnered the attention of other New Orleanians in the city, not just those in the French Quarter.²¹

Editorial boards also felt compelled to express their opinions. A *New Orleans States* editorial emphasized the dangers of entering French Quarter bars and nightclubs, writing, “if you go inside some of these places you don’t know what’ll happen. YOU MIGHT COME OUT FEET FIRST.” It went on to pose the question, “what is New Orleans going to do about it? Forget it again?” The hyperbolic language emphasized the argument that police and city officials needed to act decisively in order to counter the threat posed by bars and nightclubs that were loosely policed. It also revealed that the city and police were known to take quick action with police roundups, but later reverse course once attention to the situation abated.²²

The *Times-Picayune* editorial board laid the blame squarely on the NOPD for the conditions in the French Quarter due to its lack of enforcement of existing laws. They accused them of having a “pass the buck” mentality even though they bore the responsibility “for decency and law observance in the operation of New Orleans bars and night spots.” Even though the editorial board believed the NOPD functioned in this manner, they still had faith they would take the issue seriously. The board was certain the citizens of New Orleans would hold the NOPD responsible if they did not engage in proper enforcement of existing laws.²³

²¹ “Favors All-Out Drive Against Bar Evils,” *New Orleans States*, March 30, 1950, 16; “Photos, Fingerprints For Quarter Minions,” *New Orleans States*, March 30, 1950; “Keep Unescorted Women Out of Bars,” *Times-Picayune*, March 28, 1950, 16.

²² “A Resident Complains About the Quarter,” *New Orleans States*, March 25, 1950, 4.

²³ “Police Responsibility,” *Times-Picayune*, March 27, 1950, 10.

Other editorial boards from around the state also weighed in on the situation in the French Quarter. Baton Rouge's *States-Times* believed no actions taken by the city would change a thing about conditions in the French Quarter. They doubted the city would even want to change things if given the opportunity. Dunn's murder would be yet another myth and legend that would become part of the nightlife of the French Quarter. The *Shreveport Times* accused the police of ignoring the newspaper articles about the conditions of the French Quarter. "The police sit back and do nothing – other than an occasional 'putting on the heat' for a few days." The board concluded the situation could be remedied if the police were willing to put in the work.²⁴

While not indicative of the entire population, various newspaper editorials, whether they came from New Orleans or outside the city, revealed a lack of confidence in the police. The editorials suggested the police had a history of not taking situations like the Dunn murder very seriously. Token cleanup efforts occurred after such incidents, but after a while things returned to business as usual. All these editorials agreed the inability, or the refusal, of the police to enforce existing laws perpetuated these problems. They firmly believed if the NOPD actively engaged the various crimes occurring in the French Quarter, what happened to Dunn need not happen again.

As Dunn's murder and the situation in the French Quarter garnered more attention, various civic and business organizations voiced their support for a cleanup. Much like the IWO before them, the Bywater Business and the Professional Men's Association passed individual resolutions supporting a cleanup effort and requested the mayor and the police department "rid the Vieux Carre of undesirable characters." Sensing

²⁴ "French Quarter Views," *Times-Picayune*, April 2, 1950, 6.

the potential economic problems from perceived danger in the French Quarter, these organizations were of the opinion that the area's conditions were "detrimental to all business in the city." Other groups such as the Junior Chamber of Commerce, New Orleans Business and Professional Women's Club, and the French Quarter Property Owners Association favored strategies ranging from urging the police to enforce the Alcoholic Beverage Control Act provisions prohibiting B-drinkers and the selling liquor to children and prostitutes, to "a citywide boycott of those bars that do not operate ethically." The Young Men's Business Club (YMBC) took it upon themselves to conduct their own independent investigation into the vice-plagued French Quarter. Club president, Jay Wells, Jr. said previous cleanup efforts of the French Quarter were ignored so the police must now conduct a "vigorous campaign to rid the city of the vices that have existed and to protect New Orleans' national reputation." Business and civic organizations made known their vested interest in keeping the French Quarter safe. If conventions or tourists did not come into the city, their profit margin was sure to suffer.²⁵

The last voice to advocate for the mayor to take a more assertive stance against crime in the French Quarter came from Chamber of Commerce president C.C. Walther. While speaking to reporters, Walther announced he intended to recommend to Morrison a meeting between residents of the French Quarter and business organizations to facilitate a plan of action. Walther hoped this meeting would help to "prevent any recurrence of the reported death" of Robert Dunn.²⁶

²⁵ "Mayor to Name Vice Inquisitors," *Times-Picayune*, March 30, 1950, 1-2. This was not the first investigation the YMBC conducting regarding vice. The year before they produced a report recommending police rotations in an effort to minimize corruption in certain police precincts. The recommendations went unheeded and procedures never changed.

²⁶ "Promise Arrest If Report Shows Knockout Drops," *Times-Picayune*, March 28, 1950, 3.

Pressure from the IWO, the YMBC, the Chamber of Commerce, and other business organizations was too much for Morrison to ignore. Finally, on March 30, he announced his intention to create a permanent committee devoted to investigating vice in the French Quarter. In his announcement, Morrison expressed how “everyone who has the interest of the community and his own business in mind is agreed that clip joints and Mickey Finns must go.” The committee’s mission was to “study all special problems presented in the operation of night clubs and bars in the French Quarter.” He announced that, “all suggestions relating to the improvement of conditions will be referred to this committee and...expect[ed] [the committee] to work quickly and effectively in making recommendations for official action.” Morrison hoped this committee would “improve conditions to the point that visitors may go anywhere without molestation and danger.” The committee would be composed of two representatives of city government, two from Vieux Carré tavern operators, two Vieux Carré property owners and residents, and two members of the Chamber of Commerce. Each member would be appointed by the mayor, which allowed him to take credit for any positive results the committee produced.²⁷

The persistent pressure endured by Morrison forced his hand in creating the committee. While he might have been able to weather criticism from citizens for his inaction, voices from civic and business organizations ultimately tipped the balance that caused Morrison to act. His acquiescence to these groups showed the amount of influence and power they could exert. However, the design of his new committee allowed for Morrison to leave it up to these organizations’ leaders to come up with a solution to

²⁷ “Quarter Vice Probers Named on Committee,” *New Orleans States*, March 30, 1950, 4.

combat crime in the French Quarter, thereby taking the pressure off of him to produce immediate results.

The Special Citizens Committee for the Vieux Carré

On March 31, 1950, at 11:00 a.m., the newly formed Mayor's Special Committee for the Vieux Carré, referred to in the press as the "vice committee" or "vice commission," met for the first time on the third floor of the Chamber of Commerce. The meetings would be open to the press, who would give their accounts of what was discussed during the meeting. Its membership consisted of Leonard V. Huber and L.N. Goll from the Chamber of Commerce; Owen Brennan and Gasper Gulotta, Vieux Carré bar owners; Frank Soule and Scott Wilson, attorneys, and French Quarter property owners and residents; representing the city government was Henry B. Curtis, a city attorney and Richard R. Foster, a businessman and civic activist; attorneys Edgar B. Stern Jr., Hugh Wilkinson, and W.H. McClendon, were appointed as members-at-large; and Thomas H. Schneidau represented the Louisiana Alcoholic Beverage Control Board. Foster was unanimously elected chairman. The choice of Foster was no surprise. Not only was he a member and chairman of the city's police advisory board, he had also advocated for the creation of a crime commission since at least 1946.²⁸

The SCCVC was a mixture of civic activists, and business leaders with various degrees of involvement in public affairs. The majority of those appointed were attorneys by trade and business owners. Attorneys were a natural selection due to their

²⁸ Meeting Minutes, March 31, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46; Samuel Lang to Robert R. Foster, 14 February 1946, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 2, Folder 16.

understanding of the law and their ability to craft any new legal ordinances that could withstand legal scrutiny. But the symbolism of where the committee met cannot be overlooked. The choosing of the Chamber of Commerce building, rather than in a city government office, shows how influential the business community was in the creation and operation of the new committee.

While each member had their own idea of what problems needed to be addressed, Owen Brennan created, with Foster's approval, an agreed upon list of issues that the committee should investigate. The first item on the list was the "prevalence of 'B' girls in the Quarter." Since B-girls were seen as being directly responsible for Dunn's death, this would naturally be one of their first priorities. Other items on the list include investigating the character of taxi drivers and the location of cabstands in front of businesses, reducing prostitution, improving the quality of entertainment and the quality of outside advertising in front of clubs, and "watch[ing] shady characters who migrate to the Quarter."

The list itself must be examined to show the SCCVC's priorities, outside of addressing the B-girl problem. Taxicabs were high on the list due to two factors: the first is their history of harassing and accosting tourists when jostling for cab fares. The second, and the most important for the committee, was their involvement with the prostitution industry. But it makes one wonder why reducing prostitution, which appears fifth on a list of eight priorities, was not higher up on the list, especially since it was considered one of the major problems plaguing the French Quarter. Even the idea of rooting out illegal card games was placed higher on the list. It can be deduced that the reason why taxicabs was placed higher on the list is because they were seen as a major

avenue for facilitating prostitution. The inability for prostitutes to openly advertise their services caused them to rely on other sources to get their message out. Coordinating with taxi drivers made the most sense due to their proximity to male tourists in search of sex.

The last item on the list goes to the heart of the true objective of the committee. That item asked the SCCVC to watch out for “shady characters [that] migrate to the Quarter.” The members of SCCVC wished to make the French Quarter safe for residents and tourists alike. Their solution to this was to minimize or even eliminate all undesirables who did not fit into their perceived view of who should live or visit the neighborhood. Whether on purpose or not, the committee used the term “shady,” which was ambiguous in its direct meaning. While clearly referring to tourists, the descriptor of “shady” could pertain to anyone that does not fit the desirable profile of a person visiting the city.

One item that did not make the list but was seen as a major problem in the French Quarter was the rising visibility of homosexuals. Foster described them as “congregating in greater numbers in the Quarter” due to the fact that they were “not tolerated in other cities.” He even noted their dangerous nature of trying to recruit teenagers. Yet they still did not make the list. However, based on the description Foster and others labeled homosexuals, it can be assumed that they would fall under the last item on the list regarding shady characters.²⁹

The SCCVC members made clear they did not see themselves as a “moral” committee. Despite this acknowledgement, they agreed not to shy away from investigating “moral conditions” when they deemed it necessary. This was further

²⁹ Meeting Minutes, March 31, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

reinforced when Owen Brennan stated the need to “expedite [the] matter of eliminating objectionable people and situations in the Quarter.” One subset of those deemed objectionable were B-girls, the women at the heart of Dunn’s murder. Thomas Schneidau advised the committee that as the B-drinking law stands, “it is necessary to sign a warrant stating the [B-drinker] was apprehended participating in the proceeds of the place – which is impossible to do.” He suggested this provision be eliminated from the statute and intended to go before the state legislature to advocate for the revision to the law. The recognition of the difficulty of enforcing the law was readily apparent. However, this did not deter the committee from attempting to rectify the problem.³⁰

The SCCVC was not insular in its approach to conducting business. They welcomed help from any outside organizations and individuals. One of those outside groups was the Young Men’s Business Club (YMBC). The organization, led by Jay Weil, Jr. who had been appointed to the committee by the second meeting on April 5, submitted a letter to the SCCVC that stated the YMBC’s desire to help. “Our organization is determined that this historic center of the city shall continue as an attraction for tourists,” the letter stated. The members of the YMBC wished to “continue to lend [their] best efforts to see to it that this time the French Quarter is rid forever of its solicitous prostitutes, the dangerous and leaching ‘B’ drinkers...[and] its homosexuals.” The letter offered fifteen recommendations to achieve this goal. The highlights of the recommendations consisted of rotating police officers in and out of the French Quarter to prevent them from possibly forming relations with criminal elements, adding more patrolmen to the neighborhood, and requesting mandatory jail sentences for B-drinking

³⁰ Ibid.

offenses. To the YMBC, the job of cleaning up the French Quarter rested squarely at the feet of the police department. “Whatever evils have existed in the French Quarter,” the letter read, “have been due to the failure of those charged with the responsibility to enforce the law to do so.” The committee took up the YMBC recommendations in their April 26 meeting. Even though many of the recommendations had already been implemented, the SCCVC’s willingness to take into consideration the YMBC’s recommendations showed they intended to listen to outside groups and individuals not directly associated with the committee.³¹

One individual who would have an outsized influence on the SCCVC was Rev. Robert E Jamieson, pastor of St. Mark’s Methodist Church on S. Rampart St. in the French Quarter. Jamieson’s mission to root out prostitution from the neighborhood led him to Jacob Morrison, a St. Mark’s congregant. Jamieson and Morrison conducted their own investigation into undesirables in the Vieux Carré. They ultimately delivered their findings in a report at the April 5 meeting of the committee. The report contained their investigative analysis of several French Quarter bars. Their initial intention was to gather as much information as possible for Thomas Schneidau to revoke liquor licenses. While Jamieson hoped the committee would achieve some success in their endeavor, he remained skeptical. This stemmed from the fact that the committee contained multiple members who themselves owned and operated bars on the French Quarter. Jamieson went so far to criticize the mayor in the press for not appointing any clergymen to the

³¹ Jay Well, Jr. to Robert Foster, April 4, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

committee. After hearing Jamieson's critique, Morrison conceded the point and officially appointed Jamieson to the SCCVC.³²

Whether it was intentional or not, Jamieson's criticism allowed him to not only be a member of the SCCVC, but also to bring a religious, and arguably moral perspective that was lacking prior to his appointment. Jamieson would prove to be a skillful investigator who could persuade others into accepting his ideas and recommendations. When the SCCVC began to focus solely on prostitution, he would take the lead and advocate for a strong response to the problem.

The Gulotta Distraction

Rev. Jamieson's critique of some of the members of the SCCVC came to a head when a journalist from the *New Orleans States* conducted an undercover investigation into French Quarter bars and nightclubs. In the exposé printed on the front page of the March 25 issue of the *States*, the reporter entered a number of bars to determine whether the cleanup drive conducted by the police had any effect on B-drinking. During his investigation, the journalist entered a bar and was immediately approached by a B-girl. What made this revelation so scandalous was that the establishment he entered happened to be owned by Gasper Gulotta, a friend of Mayor Morrison and member of the SCCVC. The events that followed led to a questioning of the SCCVC's ability to

³² "Bare Threats Against 2 In French Quarter Cleanup," *New Orleans States*, April 3, 1950, 1; "Add 5 to Committee Investigating Quarter," *New Orleans States* April 4, 1950, 4. It must be noted that Rev. Robert Jamieson and Jacob Morrison's meeting with the SCCVC was not recorded in the meeting minutes. It is mentioned that Jamieson and Morrison were in attendance, the records make no mention of them conversing or presenting their findings to the committee at that time. The only real mention that this exchange took place in in newspaper reporting accounts.

function honestly. Gulotta's continued presence on the committee had the potential to derail and taint any recommendations it might make.³³

The exposé led to the *States* to print an article on April 4 implicating Gulotta in the death of Dunn. The implication rested on the account of B-girls who were arrested for theft at one of his nightclubs. The connection rested on their alleged involvement in Dunn's death and the fact that they were arrested in one of Gulotta's establishments. The alleged theft of \$50 from a bar patron was committed five days prior to Dunn's death. Appearing circumstantial, the flimsy connection was enough for the *States* to make a public recommendation for the mayor to remove Gulotta from the SCCVC.³⁴

Known as the "Little Mayor of Bourbon Street," Gulotta was a nightclub and tavern owner who had a reputation for wielding vast political influence, especially with Mayor Morrison. He portrayed himself as a legitimate businessman, but many suspected Gulotta dealt in vice, specifically B-drinking and prostitution. The press saw his presence on the committee as a distraction and corrupting influence. In an editorial issued by the *States* the next day, the editorial board questioned whose interest Gulotta represented while on the committee; the citizens of New Orleans or B-girls? The *States* reiterated its stance that Gulotta should resign or, if he refused, Morrison should remove him. If neither were willing to do so, then "the committee he is serving with ought to demand it." The editorial cemented its point by stating, "There is no place on the mayor's vice committee for a B-drink operator, past or present. Start the Quarter cleanup with a cleanup of the mayor's committee."³⁵

³³ "Cops Ignore Victimization of Suckers in Quarter," *New Orleans States*, March 25, 1950, 1.

³⁴ "Disclose Former B-Girls Arrested Prior to Dunn Death," *New Orleans States*, April 4, 1950, 1.

³⁵ "A Change Needed in Vice Probe," *New Orleans States*, April 5, 1950, 22.

The *States'* editorial highlighted the objections some members of the SCCVC, and those non-members who supported it, had with regard to Gulotta's presence. Thomas Schneidau announced publicly that he would resign from the committee if Gulotta continued to serve. He also made it known privately to Richard Foster that he, "didn't want to make an issue of it but it's gone too far now. Gulotta has absolutely no business serving on a vice committee of this kind, and it's so serious he must get off. Schneidau gave an ultimatum to Foster. Either remove Gulotta from the committee or he would submit his resignation."³⁶

Outside the committee, religious figures registered their objections to Gulotta. Archbishop of New Orleans Joseph F. Rummel, expressed his opposition to Gulotta's continued presence and issued a public statement that noted, "In principle, I do not consider it wise or advisable that anyone should serve on a commission that involves social conditions in a particular district who was himself or herself a personal interest in the issues that are involved." He continued, "All members of such a commission should be able to study the problem and make recommendations on a purely objective basis, apart from personal interest." Rev. H.F.J Rest of the New Orleans Ministerial Union also expressed his organization's "amazement" at Gulotta's continued presence on the committee. "[I]f reports are true that he is the owner of one of those establishments frequented by B-drinkers," Rest said, then Gulotta "ought to be under investigation himself."³⁷

Public dissension from a member of the SCCVC against Gulotta as well as from other prominent New Orleanians, threatened to tarnish the committee's reputation even

³⁶ "Morrison Rejects Gulotta's Ouster From Probe Group," *New Orleans States*, April 6, 1950, 1.

³⁷ "Archbishop Criticizes Gulotta as Vice Prober," *New Orleans States*, April 8, 1950, 1; "Pastor Hits Presence of Gulotta on Probe Group," *New Orleans States*, April 10, 1950, 5.

before it began its investigations in earnest. These critics however, failed to persuade other members to join Schneidau in openly threatening to resign from the committee. Nor did it create any pressure for Mayor Morrison to request Gulotta's resignation. In fact, Morrison became steadfast in his decision to keep Gulotta on the committee.

In response to the *States*' editorial, Morrison forcefully rejected their recommendation. In a public statement, Morrison defended his decision to appoint and keep Gulotta on the SCCVC. "It is my duty to do my job the way I think it should be done..." In defense of his appointment, he made it known that, "Mr. Gulotta ha[d] been chairman of the Tavern Owners' Association and I have no apologies whatsoever for having appointed him." In a pointed statement directed at the *States*, Morrison remarked, "Whenever I start letting [the *New Orleans States*] mak[e] my decision for me, I'll consider my usefulness as a mayor greatly lessened." Morrison's refusal to budge on his decision showed his lack of concern about any appearance of impropriety. The supposed pressure from the press and the others was clearly not enough to force his hand on Gulotta. Knowing he had Morrison's full support, Gulotta, in his own public remarks, indicated he had no intention of resigning and would work "100 per cent to clean up the Quarter the way the public wants it to be."³⁸

Foster, as chairman of the SCCVC, also put to rest any idea of the committee removing Gulotta. In remarks to the press, Foster stated, "I didn't put Mr. Gulotta on his commission. This is the mayor's commission entirely. It is up to the Mr. Gulotta and the mayor. He was appointed by the mayor, not me." Foster's hands-off approach aimed to shift any blame for keeping Gulotta on the committee away from him and other SCCVC

³⁸ "Morrison Rejects Gulotta's Ouster from Probe Group," *New Orleans States*, April 6, 1950, 1.

members. It also showed how Foster wished to put this distraction behind them so the SCCVC could continue with its work.³⁹

The Gulotta distraction was eventually resolved during the SCCVC's April 12 meeting. True to his word, Thomas Schneidau submitted his letter of resignation to Foster. After Foster read aloud the resignation letter, various members, including Rev. Jamieson, voiced their support for Gulotta's continued presence on the committee. They then voted unanimously for Gulotta to remain in the body. The controversy surrounding Gulotta's appointment ended uneventfully. It appeared the pushback to his appointment was mostly relegated to newspaper editorial boards and some religious leaders. Public outcry for Gulotta's removal never materialized.⁴⁰

The distraction showed the precarious ground the SCCVC stood on. It was perceived as having been infiltrated from its inception by the same vice elements it sought to root out. Gulotta, rightfully or not, became the face of those elements. His selection also continued the perception that Mayor Morrison was somehow in league with those very same vice elements as well. As an owner and operator of businesses in the French Quarter that were considered less than reputable, Gulotta had a negative stigma against him from the beginning. In spite of this, Gulotta remained on the committee. As head of the Tavern Owners Association, it would have been impossible to exclude him. But the taint on the SCCVC had been set. The committee would have to continue its

³⁹ Ibid. While defending himself publicly, privately, Gulotta sent a letter to Richard Foster, pleading his case against the criticisms against him. Gulotta emphasized that he had nothing to do with the bar in which Dunn was drugged and informed Foster that as head of the Tavern Owners Association, having communication or financial dealings, such as loans, with other bars and taverns on Bourbon St. was not unusual, see Gasper Gulotta to Richard R. Foster, 12 April 1950, New Orleans, Louisiana, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Box 5, Folder, 46, Historic New Orleans Collection.

⁴⁰ Meeting Minutes, April 12, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

work despite the perception, and if need be, fix its image by becoming an effective body that produced results.

With the Gulotta issue settled, the SCCVC was back on track to continue with their investigations. Their agenda, laid out in their first meeting, was their guide post as to how to prioritize their work. But in practice, the investigations conducted by the committee revealed their focus to be more targeted than their eight-item agenda would suggest. The actions taken by the SCCVC for the next two years signaled they cared more about certain issues than others. Those issues tended to focus on women working in French Quarter bars and nightclubs. Specifically, they targeted B-girls, barmaids, and prostitutes. It became so one sided that the majority of the committee's achievements pertained to the investigations conducted on these three groups.

The SCCVC's success would be measured by how effectively they were able to change policy regarding B-girls, barmaids, and prostitutes. But before the committee's investigations could begin in earnest, French Quarter residents, along with civic and business groups had already achieved a major part of their goal. They had the attention not only of city government and police, but also the public as a whole. Their issues were being listened to, and, they hoped, would be taken seriously by the city. While the SCCVC itself gave no guarantee that the issues they investigated would be completely solved due to their work, it did place in motion a decade's long effort to use committees as a tool to effect change they felt was needed to rid the French Quarter of its seedy past and create an environment that suited them and attracted tourists. But these efforts would prove challenging. The majority of the committee members were not attorneys, therefore were not familiar with the legal process of drafting potential ordinances. They would

have to rely on a representative of the city attorney's office to help guide them in any wording or recommendation in order for their draft ordinance to achieve maximum impact.

CHAPTER TWO THE SCCVC AND WOMEN

The Gulotta distraction left the SCCVC with an image that needed to be mended quickly. The only way to do this was to dive headlong into their task of cleaning up the French Quarter. While the committee's mandate was broad, a common theme arose during the course of their investigations. Women became a constant target of committee members who sought to minimize, if not eliminate B-girls, barmaids, and prostitutes from the French Quarter. What started as a way to tackle the problem with B-girls in relation to Robert Dunn's murder became an obsession for SCCVC members who, instead increasingly focused their attention on all women they deemed disreputable. And they did this by taking a moral stance, attempting to bar women from work environments they considered inappropriate and corrupting. This was particularly the case for Rev. Robert Jamieson who enhanced his crusade against prostitution with the help of the SCCVC. These women became easy targets because no one was willing to speak up for them, not even women's groups such as the IWO.

While the SCCVC investigated B-girls, barmaids, and prostitutes concurrently, they agreed to focus their attention on B-girls first. Even though they could be classified similarly, the SCCVC decided to separate B-girls and barmaids from each other. This was done for two reasons. The first was that on most occasions there legitimately existed a distinction between the two. Barmaids could take on the role of B-girl when serving alcohol to customers. However, B-girls were not always barmaids. B-girls also did not always work as an employee of the establishment but in cooperation with them. The second reason was because committee members believed that having barmaids in bars and nightclubs was a cover for many women working as prostitutes. While there was

some truth to this assertion, not enough evidence was presented by the committee, to warrant this conclusion. The assertion seemed mostly to rely on committee members' prejudices and preconceived notions against women working in bars and nightclubs.

The SCCVC finally targeted prostitutes. A two-pronged approach was taken to maximize their efforts. Not only did they investigate prostitutes themselves, they also targeted taxi drivers, who were seen as one of the biggest promoters of prostitution since prostitutes relied on word of mouth and cab drivers to bring business to them, in exchange for a portion of the profits.

The police were also going after women employed in bars and nightclubs in the French Quarter. While the SCCVC was distracted with the question of Gulotta's continued presence on the committee, the police continued their cleanup effort in the French Quarter though French Quarter business owners deemed the police tactics too heavy handed. On April 5 nightclub and bar owners expressed their displeasure with the cleanup effort and made their objections known to two representatives of Superintendent Scheuering in a meeting of the Vieux Carré Retail Liquor Dealer's Association. The bar owners criticized the police crackdown as "too rigid." Scheuering, unmoved by their words, stated firmly, "They'll be no let up in the cleanup." The focus on arresting women made it clear whom the police, much like the SCCVC, saw as the major problem in the French Quarter. Targeting women could be seen as logical considering the raids were in direct response to B-girl involvement in Dunn's murder. However, by failing to target others, such as bartenders, and club and bar owners and managers, the police raids made it clear that women working in these kinds of establishments were unwelcome. Early

grumblings by bar and nightclub operators about the treatment of their female employees was a harbinger of things to come from the SCCVC.⁴¹

This chapter examines the SCCVC's preoccupation with targeting women working in the French Quarter. It also assesses the relative success of the committee with regard to ordinances they presented to the city's Commission Council, including their eventual adoption. Ultimately the SCCVC would be disbanded, brought on by the actions and neglect of one member who wished to see a more expansive crime commission formed. With the creation of the succeeding crime commission, the SCCVC became redundant. The permanent committee Mayor Chep Morrison had envisioned quickly became obsolete.

The Work Resumes

The Gulotta distraction left a perception that the SCCVC was not fully committed to the task given to them by the mayor. This perception gave liberty to organization such as the Independent Women's Organization (IWO) to give their input on the direction of the committee's investigations. In a letter to Richard Foster, the IWO requested the SCCVC expand their inquiry and submitted for consideration two vice related recommendations. Reminding Foster and the committee of their voting strength, the letter impressed on them that the IWO was "deeply concerned with [the] exploitation and deterioration of the Vieux Carré which is rapidly transforming this rare community asset from a place noted for its beauty and historic value into a place notorious for its crime." It went further when it blamed the "lack of proper policing" that caused things in the

⁴¹ "Clubmen Cry Vice Drive 'Too Tough,'" *New Orleans States*, April 6, 1950, 1.

French Quarter to go from bad to worse. The two recommendations called for the SCCVC to “recognize the necessity for adequate polic[ing] of the French Quarter” as well as for the “Vieux Carre [to] be rezoned against further exploitation of both an industrial and immoral nature.”⁴²

Even though the IWO did not specifically call for the removal of women from working jobs in nightclubs and bars, the organization was well aware of the SCCVC’s focus. Their call for the rezoning recommendation would limit any new businesses that would cater to “immoral” elements, which would in turn draw women to work in these establishments. The committee agreed to take these recommendations into consideration, but gave no guarantee they would be incorporated into any reports, recommendations, or draft ordinances that would be submitted to the New Orleans Commission Council.

On April 12, the committee invited municipal judges Harold J. Moore, Edwin A. Babylon, and Paul P. Garofalo all of whom presided over cases that involved prostitution and other vice offenses. Committee members sought to question them and discuss actions taken by the court to prosecute individuals who violated various laws as well as to seek their input on what could be done to obtain more convictions. The first to address the committee was Judge Garofalo, who indicated insufficient evidence was the issue they encountered most frequently. He said, however, that judges tended to take into account an individual’s history when a case was brought before them. Judge Moore added that cases tended to fall apart due to “non-appearance of witnesses” and a failure to arrest “in the act of violation.” But Moore’s biggest concern was the large volume of women’s cases that

⁴² ⁴² “Women Demand Probe of Vice in Vieux Carré,” *New Orleans States*, April 15, 1950, 1.

appeared before the municipal court, which at the time, stood at one hundred and twenty-seven a day.⁴³

Rev. Jamieson asked next why the city did not have a woman's court. Moore replied that he customarily assigned cases involving women to a certain day of the week, but also realized that with the increase in volume, another day might have to be added. Appearing not to be satisfied with his answer, Jamieson commented on the dangers of hearing women's cases in open court due to the exposure of first-time offenders to potential panderers who pay their fine and make arrangements for bail. He suggested these cases should be held behind closed doors. The recommendation, however, was later dropped.⁴⁴

Though Jamieson's recommendation was rejected, Judge Moore did suggest the municipal courts set aside one day a week to hear all "moral offenses" which would be held behind closed doors. The suggestion was taken up by Jamieson but was not discussed further until the SCCVC's April 26 meeting. Assistant City Attorney Bueker Amann appeared skeptical of the idea. He reminded the committee there was a constitutional right to hold public trials if the defendant requested it. Jamieson rejected this argument by citing the precedent of closed-door courts held during World War II. Another committee member supported Jamieson but used juvenile courts as an example of potential closed-door hearings. Jamieson's reasoning for his push was because he felt

⁴³ Meeting Minutes, April 12, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Woman's court, as reference by Rev. Jamieson, is was a specific court that catered to prostitution cases. First started in New York in 1910, its intended purpose was to "provide prostitution defendants with moral and social pedagogy and measure of material aid." Amy J. Cohen's article, "Trauma and the Welfare State: A Genealogy of Prostitution Courts in New York City" identifies vice reforms as pushing the state to create a woman's court, which they praised as "deal[ing] more wisely and hence more effectively with the social evil" of prostitution. Cohen, however, concludes that the courts did not ultimately live up to the reform's expectations and was eventually dissolved, see Amy J. Cohen, "Trauma and the Welfare State: A Genealogy of Prostitution Courts in New York City," *Texas Law Review* 95 (2017): 915-991.

women charged with immoral offenses often used the open court as a means for advertising. Even though he provided no evidence to support this assumption, the SCCVC unanimously approved the recommendation.⁴⁵

The questions posed by committee members rested on the idea that with the creation of new ordinances combating B-girls, barmaids, and prostitutes, a potential influx of cases involving women could await judges in municipal courts. They also wanted to make sure that these women were kept separate from the general populous so they would not be a corrupting influence. Jamieson's suggestion of a dedicated women's court was rejected, but not the idea of having the cases tried in closed-door courtrooms, which was ultimately Jamieson's key recommendation. Even before the SCCVC began their investigations in earnest, the idea that these kinds of women would be targeted was already underway. That decision guided to the majority of the committee's work going forward.

A Re-examination of the B-girl Ordinance

The SCCVC's first order of business was to target B-girls. The committee members felt it could not effectively conduct its other investigations if they did not tackle this issue first. In their April 26 meeting, the SCCVC's Sub-Committee on Legislative Affairs discussed possible changes to the existing B-girl ordinance. They recommended upping

⁴⁵ Harold J. Moore to Richard R. Foster, April 18, 1950, New Orleans, Louisiana, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Box 5, Folder, 46, Historic New Orleans Collection; Meeting Minutes, April 26, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

the fine to \$100 and increase the amount of jail time to no less than ten days for first offenses, and ninety days in jail plus any additional fines for repeat offenders.⁴⁶

Committee member Leonard Huber believed these changes were not enough of a deterrent to curb B-drinking. He wanted to put more teeth into the ordinance by not just going after B-girls, but also proprietors and owners of bars and nightclubs that allowed B-drinking to occur. Huber recommended making it mandatory upon a second conviction to revoke an owner's liquor license and close the establishments where B-drinking was prevalent. What made this suggestion stand out was the fact that bars and nightclubs owners, up to that point, tended to escape scrutiny during the raids.⁴⁷

The threat of high fines and jail time was designed as a way to discourage women from working in these establishments. Whether it would serve as a deterrent or not remained to be seen. These were modest changes to the B-girl ordinance, but committee members hoped it would have more of an impact of than the existing ordinance. Committee members had confidence it would when they presented the recommendations to Supt. Scheuering. He found the recommendations satisfactory, commenting, "Nobody wants to spend a week or so in jail." Enforcement was still key, however. When asked by Huber about the enforcement of the potential revised ordinance, Scheuering replied, "The police must observe or get a complaint or, they must see the actual accosting." Even with a revised ordinance, the same problems of making arrests and obtaining convictions

⁴⁶ Minutes, April 26, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

remained. Regardless of this fact, the SCCVC approved of the recommendations and submitted them to the Commission Council for consideration.⁴⁸

Meeting minutes and the report created by the Sub-Committee on Legislative Affairs, do not indicate or suggest that any investigations were performed when drafting the recommendations. A report issued by the SCCVC indicates the sub-committee met and created a list of recommendations to revise the existing B-girl ordinance. If they sought out the advice from police official or government experts, they made no record of it. The sub-committee relied solely on their own expertise to draft their recommendations. And, they particularly did so without the input of women.

A Revised B-Girl Ordinance

On June 9, the New Orleans Commission Council took up discussion of the SCCVC revision recommendations to the B-girl ordinance. A revised ordinance effectively made it illegal for operators, managers, owners, or other persons, paid or unpaid, to engage in solicitation of drink purchases with or without profit. It also forbade any person employed as a waiter, waitress, or any position similar, to occupy a table with any patron or visitor to a bar or nightclub. Those who violated the ordinance faced a fine and a possible jail sentence of no less than ten days in jail for the first offense, and a jail term of up to ninety days on subsequent convictions. The ordinance, however, did not extend to the selling of food or non-alcoholic beverages.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Report of Sub-Committee on Legislative Affairs, May 31, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

⁴⁹ "Fines, Jail Penalty Due In 10 Days," *New Orleans States*, June 9, 1950, 1; "Ordinance to End B-Drinking Adopted," *Times-Picayune*, June 10, 1950, 3.

Members of the SCCVC attended the meeting in an effort to ensure its passage. When the Commission Council opened the floor for comments, SCCVC member William H. McClendon spoke first. He advised the council that the revised ordinance had already received Supt. Scheuering's approval. He also mentioned that since the existing ordinance was found to be inadequate, why not give the revised one a chance.⁵⁰

Commission Council member A. Brown Moore immediately raised an objection to the revisions. He believed the ordinance might be applied too broadly, saying it could be interpreted to include any two people who enter a bar "and the slightest suggestion on the part of one to the other 'buy me a drink' could be implied as an infraction of the ordinance." Rev. Jamieson pushed back on Moore's assertion. He stated the SCCVC worked on the revisions carefully to avoid any possibility of innocent people being arrested. Jamieson stated the ordinance would only apply to people who make it their business to solicit. After hearing this, a compromise was reached to amend the language of the revisions to alleviate Moore's concerns.⁵¹

With Moore's objection put to rest, the Commission Council voted unanimously to approve Ordinance #17832, more commonly known as the B-Girl ordinance. It would take effect ten days from the date of passage. The initial response by the press to the revised ordinance was positive. The *New Orleans States'* editorial board approved of the Council Commission's actions and described the ordinance as a "forward step in

⁵⁰ Report on Commission Council Meeting of June 9, June 9, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

⁵¹ Ibid.; "Ordinance to End B-Drinking Adopted," *Times-Picayune*, June 10, 1950, 3. Moore was not alone in believing the revised ordinance's language was too vague. In his meeting with the SCCVC subcommittee, he described portion of the ordinance as both "vague and too general." However, this did not change is decision to ultimately support the revisions, see "Urge License Ban to Stop Vieux Carré Bar Growth," *New Orleans States*, May 31, 1950, 1.

combating evil forces which took over the French Quarter and led to the Mickey Finn death of Robert E. Dunn.” With the passage of the ordinance, the editorial laid the effectiveness of the law on the actions of the police department. It pointedly stated “ If police ignore the law, it may as well never have been enacted. All law enforcement, in the end, lies with the man on the beat and the man in the precinct, and in this instance, with the men of the vice squad.”⁵²

The editorial concluded that since the ordinance gained the endorsement of Supt. Scheuering and the SCCVC, there was no excuse for the law not to be enforced. The *States* editorial made it clear the revised ordinance had the backing not only of the Commission Council, but also from a newspaper, that could help steer public opinion. But, as the editorial board made clear, the success of the ordinance laid squarely on the police to enforce it. There was hope the police now had the tools needed to make more arrests and deter B-drinking. This hope, however, was short lived.

Four weeks after the ordinance was passed, B-drinking continued unabated in the French Quarter. The SCCVC laid the blame squarely on the police department. Rev. Jamieson complained the committee had not received the full cooperation of the police to enforce the ordinance, even though Supt. Scheuering endorsed their work. “The police are not making too serious an effort to enforce the law aimed at B-drinking and prostitution,” Jamieson charged. “The police aren’t trying to get evidence to convict. They make no effort at all to break down the alibis offered by these women when they are brought to court.” He alleged the police looked the other way when evidence was presented to them. Thus, with a lack of evidence, the court could not convict. Jamieson

⁵² “Will the B-Girl Law Be Effective,” *New Orleans States*, June 12, 1950, 14.

came to this conclusion after visiting court hearings for those brought in for B-drinking. Rather than being charged under the revised ordinance, women were charged with lesser infractions. A July 25 report to Supt. Scheuering, which was also delivered to the SCCVC, confirmed Jamieson's conclusions. Even though Scheuering reported the ordinance was being enforced, he conceded that it still remained difficult to detect B-drinking.⁵³

Supt. Scheuering acknowledged the difficulty of enforcing the law at the SCCVC's April 26 meeting. In fact, that was his key concern with the recommendations. The committee took his concerns into account and decided to proceed with submitting the revised ordinance to the Commission Council anyway. Scheuering may have recognized the difficulty of enforcing the revised ordinance, but he did not outright reject to it. That was enough for committee members to feel confident about their work.

This difficulty, however, did not prevent the police from targeting women found in bars and nightclubs. The report also indicated that "beatmen" were ordered to visit nightclubs to "check over the women" they find in them. If it were difficult to detect B-drinking violations, police would arrest women who were unable to give a "good account of themselves," and charged them with either loitering or "no honest means of support."

Admittedly, the police used this as an intimidation tactic to prevent women from

⁵³ "City-wide Vice Cleanup Drive To Be Launched," *New Orleans States*, 26 July 1950, 16; Minutes, July 12, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46. As the commission called for Supt. Scheuering to issue a report on the effectiveness of the B-drinking ordinance, local papers reported municipal judge Harold J. Moore used the ordinance for the first time to convict two women, Thersia Veronia and Dorothy Worth, for soliciting drinks in the French Quarter and ordered them to pay a \$50 fine each and sentenced them to twenty-five days in jail. An additional twenty days in jail would be applied if they failed to pay the fine. Veronia was further charged with disturbing the peace by using foul language after she cursed Judge Moore when she was being escorted out of the courtroom. This led to an additional \$25 fine and twenty days in jail. Five more days would be added if she failed to pay the fine, see "Two B-Girls Jailed Under New Law," *New Orleans States*, July 13, 1950, 1; "Jail Terms Given Two As B-Girls," *Times-Picayune*, July 14, 1950, 14.

continuing to work in these establishments. Even though the ordinance allowed for the charging of bar owners and managers, police indicated they made no attempt to investigate them. Women were their primary targets and they made every effort to arrest them if they were employed by, and in the case of the report, frequented, bars and nightclubs.⁵⁴

Rev. Jamieson, not inclined to let the matter go unchallenged, was adamant about speaking to Mayor Morrison and Supt. Scheuring. He believed B-girls “[knew] how to get around the law covering B-drinking and other violations. And they [made] the law ineffective by their subterfuge.” Jamieson saw the futility in trying to arrest B-girls when the evidence gathered by police was insufficient to convict. Because of this, he suggested a possible amendment to the revised B-drinking ordinance to expand who could be charged with violating the ordinance. The expansion, however, never materialized.⁵⁵

A month after the revised B-drinking ordinance was passed members turned their attention to barmaids, who, it was suggested were the “source of B-drinking, prostitution, and evil.” Singling out barmaids served as a stepping-stone to going after those the SCCVC viewed as more trouble for the French Quarter: prostitutes.⁵⁶

Barmaids

Rumblings of eliminating barmaids began during the SCCVC’s July 12 meeting. Even before Supt. Scheuring’s report was delivered, committee members believed B-

⁵⁴ Report Relative to Arrests For Ordinance 17832, More Commonly Known As The “B-Drinking” Ordinance, July 25, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

⁵⁵ “City-wide Vice Cleanup Drive To Be Launched,” *New Orleans States*, July 13, 1950, 16.

⁵⁶ Minutes, July 12, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

drinking would not end unless they also eliminated barmaids. Thomas Schneidau, former member of the SCCVC and head of the Alcohol Beverage Control Board, suggested the elimination of barmaids would not only help combat B-drinking, but also help curb prostitution. Committee member Leonard Huber seconded the idea and brought up a report from the American Social Hygiene Association which contained “good points [that] the reduction of B-drinking, and the elimination of bar maids would in all probability alleviate the *evil* conditions now existing” [emphasis added]. By their next meeting on July 26, the Sub-Committee on Legislative Affairs agreed to study the proposal. The idea of further eliminating women from working in bars and nightclubs followed the same logic with which the B-drinking ordinance had been revised. Women were again seen as the common denominator for all the ills that plagued these businesses. Following B-drinking, targeting barmaids became the natural progression.⁵⁷

With the approval of the full SCCVC, the Sub-Committee on Legislative Affairs researched and examined the role of barmaids in the city. In an August 4 meeting of the sub-committee, they invited Bartenders Union president, Mr. Johnson, to speak regarding women working in bars. When asked by Huber whether he and the union were in favor of the removal of women as barmaids and bartenders, Johnson responded first by stating that only men can be bartenders. Because of this, women were not recognized as members of the union. Johnson used the remainder of his time to further show a disdain for women working in bars. “When you people eliminated B-girls, a number of them were taken from off the stools in front of the bar and placed behind it. In five instances,

⁵⁷ Meeting Minutes, July 12, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46; Meeting Minutes, July 26, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

men have been laid off as bartenders, and replaced by women.” He continued by asserting:

A woman bartender is more poisonous behind a bar than in front of one...they do not get the same wages as a man would, therefore are underpaid and must get the difference in their own way – whether they solicit the customer, roll him, or offer to commit prostitution, which is done in a number of instances. There are places I know of where you can get the so-called ‘bar-maid’ to go upstairs with you. There are only come-on girls, not bartenders, and that’s why they are in these places.⁵⁸

Johnson ended his rant by definitively stating “bartending is *strictly* a man’s job” [emphasis added].

Johnson played into the narrative that women who worked in bars and nightclubs were inherently doing so for immoral reasons. And if they did not start out that way, they would eventually be led down that path. Johnson, however, did not actually seek to eliminate barmaids and waitresses from these establishments. Rather, he believed a male bartender could keep a watchful eye on them as well as on the patrons who might try and get “overly familiar” with them. Notably, Johnson did not hold the owners or managers of these establishments responsible for any illegal activities occurring in their establishments.⁵⁹

On August 9, in a letter given to the SCCVC, the sub-committee presented their findings to full committee. They prefaced their report by indicating that prior to 1900 it was illegal for women to work as barmaids. Using this as precedent to support their recommendations, the sub-committee suggested the city should pass an ordinance to once again prohibiting the employment of women as barmaids. It was their opinion that “the

⁵⁸ Sub-committee on Legislative Affairs Meeting Minutes, August 4, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

⁵⁹ Ibid,

employment of barmaids [had] contributed greatly to the B-Drinking which led to the conditions which resulted in the death of the Mr. [Robert] Dunn.” The letter went on to state, “We are of the opinion that in many cases hole-in-the-wall establishments employing two, three, four and even in one case, six barmaids are merely fronts for houses of prostitution.” Their final assessment deemed barmaids as contributing to the “low character” of these establishments. Once again, the SCCVC put the onus of immoral and illegal behavior squarely on women. At no point in their report did they indicate that the predominately male proprietors contributed to the problem. Of course, even a small mention would have shown the committee intended to target all people associated with the problem. Nevertheless, the report failed to do so. This omission leads one to conclude that the SCCVC believed women, and only women, were the source of all the problems.⁶⁰

The proposed ordinance eliminating barmaids faced immediate opposition from the French Quarter Businessmen’s Association, an organization composed of bar and tavern owners. The attorney for the organization, Robert Pitard, attended the following SCCVC meeting and expressed his opposition to the ordinance, basing it on economic grounds. He stated the ordinance would create “a great hardship on many of the establishments that cannot afford to pay the wage asked by men.” Employers would be forced to pay a man \$60 a week rather than a woman at \$25 or \$30 a week. Picard also argued that barmaids in many places worked during the day and typically acted in clerical positions. He suggested the committee and police should place more time and energy on

⁶⁰ Leonard V. Huber to Robert R. Foster, August 9, 1950, New Orleans, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

rooting out establishments deemed houses of prostitution rather than targeting barmaids.⁶¹

After listening to the objections, Richard Foster defended the proposed ordinance. He informed the SCCVC of a report from the Army-Navy and Air Force board in New Orleans indicating a bar on Bourbon Street that employed barmaids was off limits to military personnel due to a high venereal disease rate. Foster then asked Pitard what could be done about this issue if the ordinance were not implemented. Pitard conceded the point and agreed restrictions on employment of barmaids might be needed. As a way to keep his clients' interests alive, he offered to submit his own recommendations on language that could potentially be used in any proposed ordinance.⁶²

The argument Pitard used in his objection to the barmaid ban showed the economics behind bar and nightclub owners' concerns. They preferred to employ women to serve as bartenders and barmaids because they found it cheaper than hiring a male in those same positions. Making money was their main objective. This meant agreeing to a compromise with the SCCVC to limit any possible damage a new ordinance might inflict on them.

The *States'* editorial board supported the SCCVC's decision to issue a barmaid ban recommendation to the Commission Council. The editorial stated bars were primarily a man's institution" and as such, there should be no reason to "accuse a bar of being

⁶¹ "Seek Ordinance Banning Employment of Barmaids," *New Orleans States*, August 10, 1950, 17.

⁶² "Vieux Carré May Banish Barmaids," *Times-Picayune*, August 10, 1950, 12. By their August 23 meeting, the SCCVC had yet to receive any recommendations from Pitard or the organization he represented. With no recommendations from Pitard, the committee pursued their own course in creating a barmaid ordinance without the input of Pitard or the union. He would eventually submit a letter to the committee, but the letter provided simply reiterated his argument and provided no new recommendations for the committee to consider, see Meeting Minutes, September 6, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46

anything but a place in which to buy a drink. That's what a bar is supposed to be." The editorial board believed bars were no place for women, feeding further into the stigma already being advanced by the SCCVC.⁶³

The issue came to a head on August 23 when the proposed ban was debated between SCCVC members. Huber firmly stood by his recommendation to eliminate barmaids in the city. Gulotta, on the other hand, soundly rejected this idea. As a bar owner himself, he believed women were no more likely to steal from a business than a man in a similar position. Gulotta offered an alternative to an outright ban to counter Huber's steadfastness. He recommended that one barmaid was allowed to work during the day, but none would be able to after 6 p.m. Huber, however, refused to budge from his stance and affirmed, "I can't in any conscience back down in my stand. I have studied it for a long time. If you want to put a woman in a bar there is certain to be trouble." After the exchange, the committee held a vote on the two proposals. Huber's was ultimately rejected. The SCCVC voted instead in favor of an ordinance along the lines of Gulotta's recommendation. Huber agreed to incorporate this language into the final draft of the ordinance.⁶⁴

The next day, the *States* published an editorial that gave the SCCVC's proposed ordinance mixed reviews. With regard to a barmaid ordinance, the editorial stated that while the committee made "a big step in the right direction" they still did not go far enough. They stood by their original August 14 editorial reiterating that, "women attendants have no place in a barroom, which is a man's institution...eliminating the

⁶³ "Barring Barmaids," *New Orleans States*, August 14, 1950, 10.

⁶⁴ Meeting Minutes, August 23, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46; "Report Long Will Kick Schneidau Off Liquor Board," *New Orleans States*, August 24, 1950, 1; "Fewer Barmaids Urged By Group," *Times-Picayune*, August 24, 1950, 15.

employment of barmaids altogether is the right course.” The editorial board made it clear they sided with Huber. The *States* took a more extreme position than the SCCVC was willing to take, but they provided no explanation as to why this was the case.⁶⁵

The SCCVC in the September 26 meeting agreed to submit their proposal to the city’s Commission Council. The proposed ordinance included Gulotta’s language as well as an additional paragraph regarding what acts were prohibited. Listed under “Rules of Operation,” the paragraph prohibited, “Employ[ment] as a singer or a dancer or employ[ment] as a beer carrier or waiter, girl bartender or barmaid; any courtesan, bawd, or lewd woman or any similar inmate of a brothel, or house of prostitution or of assignment.” The SCCVC sought to make the connection between barmaids and prostitutes. They saw no difference between the two, which former committee member Thomas Schneidau expressed in July. Barmaids were the “source of all evil” in the French Quarter he said, which also included prostitution. The language used in this additional paragraph, which was approved by the full SCCVC, continued to show how committee members believed women working in bars and nightclubs were there solely for immoral purposes.⁶⁶

The SCCVC through their actions and recommendations, continued to demonstrate their relentless bias against women. They looked at any woman who worked in a bar or nightclub with suspicion. To them, women who worked in these establishments were obviously prostitutes, especially if a place had more than one woman working there. Information collected through interviews, personal observations, and police data did not conclusively support their assumption. However, these assumptions

⁶⁵ “Vice Commission Charts Good Course,” *New Orleans States*, August 25, 1950, 10.

⁶⁶ Meeting Minutes, September 26, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

were not completely without merit. Houses of prostitution were prevalent in the French Quarter and the surrounding areas during the early 1950s. In some cases, they were found above bars and nightclubs. These examples were used as justification for linking the women who work in bars, either as bartenders or barmaids, with prostitution.

The city's Commission Council ultimately never took up the SCCVC's proposed barmaid ordinance. No official explanation was presented as to why this was the case. One can assume that the Commission Council felt pressure from French Quarter businesses not to pass the ordinance. Also, the issue was being overshadowed by the work Rev. Jamieson was doing in his own sub-committee. Jamieson's efforts focused on prostitution, which he saw as the most critical issue the SCCVC faced. They sought to not just go after the prostitutes themselves, but also those that helped to perpetuate its existence.

Prostitution

Finding a way to minimize prostitution in the French Quarter was a task SCCVC members like Rev. Jamieson wished to tackle head on. He realized that in order to make any progress in this endeavor, the committee had to look at the different methods prostitutes used to advertise their services and attract business. This led them to investigate taxi drivers, who had become many prostitute's main way of soliciting.

It must be noted that both women and men worked as prostitutes in the city. However, the SCCVC chose not to mention nor investigate male prostitutes. The most likely reason for this was because they grouped them under homosexual activities. But

even under this grouping, male prostitutes were not mentioned in any of the meeting minutes, reports, or ordinances created by the SCCVC.

Taxicabs

When Supt. Joseph Scheuering announced a crackdown on bars and nightclubs in the French Quarter in late March, this also included taxicabs, which he described as being a part the apparatus of the prostitution business. Taxi drivers would “leave their vehicle and walk down the street soliciting for prostitution” and women who attempted to pick up men from clubs, Scheuering said. It was because of this that the SCCVC’s members were more inclined to include them in their investigation.⁶⁷

It had become quite common for prostitutes in New Orleans to form a partnership with an individual taxi driver. When a driver picked up a male passenger, he would, using his best judgment, casually inquire whether the passenger was looking for a prostitute. If he were, then arrangements would be made to either drive the man to a house of prostitution, or “deliver” a woman to his hotel. Since this arrangement was not done out in the open for others to observe, this way of solicitation made prostitution more difficult to detect.⁶⁸

In their first meeting on March 31, the committee discussed their options. Their initial recommendations varied in scope, with one member suggesting they obtain all information on taxi drivers who worked in the French Quarter from sunset to sunrise in

⁶⁷ “Scheuering Orders Drive on ‘B-Girls,’” *New Orleans States*, March 25, 1950, 1. It must also be noted that during the investigation into Robert Dunn’s death, investigators interviewed a cab driver who they later found out had eight convictions. This was another justification used by the commission to investigate cab drivers who work at night in the French Quarter, see Meeting Minutes, April 5, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

⁶⁸ “Doris Gellman Questioned On Prostitution,” *New Orleans States*, December 30, 1950, 1.

an effort to determine if any of them had a criminal history Another suggestion called for the prohibition of drivers from leaving their cabs while on duty and making a driver convicted of soliciting face no less than ten days in jail.⁶⁹

After an initial investigation, on April 26 the SCCVC crafted and gave their approval of a proposed ordinance to regulate taxicab parking in the French Quarter. The ordinance called for the elimination of taxicab parking “in the area bounded by Esplanade Avenue, Howard Avenue, the Mississippi River and North and South Claiborne Avenue,” which is an area that encompasses the French Quarter and the adjacent Central Business District. Furthermore, it stipulated that “no cab is to stop except for the loading or unloading of passengers, or at designated stands within this area; said stands [are] to be in [the] area of hotels, restaurants, railroad stations, etc.” It also stated cab drivers could be no further than three feet from their car when on duty. With the approval of the full SCCVC, the committee presented the proposed ordinance to the Commission Council. A roadblock, however, soon appeared that prevented the Commission Council from taking up the matter, putting SCCVC’s proposal in jeopardy.⁷⁰

Weeks before the SCCVC delivered their recommendations the Commission Council had implemented a private vehicle-parking ban on Bourbon Street. The *States* posed a question to the city in an editorial, which asked, “Should parking be reinstated on Bourbon Street?” One response came from a salesman named Ed Andrews who wrote that conditions were so bad he “couldn’t walk down the street with [his] wife. It was disgraceful.” He praised the ban, saying he saw it as “a good thing because it [cut] down

⁶⁹ Meeting Minutes, March 31, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

⁷⁰ Meeting Minutes, April 26, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

on vice by not permitting cab drivers to solicit there.” Another respondent, John Jane, Jr., a clerk, wrote, “The ban not only help[ed] the traffic situation... but also ke[pt] cab drivers from pandering and soliciting for prostitution there.” Another proponent of the ban, O’Delle Brenan, believed the parking ban should remain because, “it’s good for the protection of the patrons of the French Quarter night clubs...” She went on to write, “Taxicab drivers have got to keep off Bourbon because that’s where they did so much soliciting.” In general, she believed, “the parking ban help[ed] to lower vice in the Vieux Carré.” All three responders agreed that a ban on taxicabs on Bourbon Street would help to lower and possibly eliminate vice in the French Quarter. And by vice, they mainly meant prostitution.⁷¹

Not everyone in the city held this view. Those who opposed the ban showed sympathy to legitimate businesses that were being hurt by it. B.L. Klein, a retailer, wrote, “I think parking should be allowed on Bourbon [Street]. By placing a ban on parking there we are depriving those people of making a living. The French Quarter nightclub owners are losing lots of legitimate business because of this ban.” He went on to state, “Most people will go to a place nearest to where they are parked, and as a result they aren’t going to the spots on Bourbon. We can’t hold everyone responsible for the actions of one or two men.” Another individual, C.J. Kennedy, a motion picture projectionist, believed cab drivers should be allowed to park in designated zones and “the police [sh]ould make sure they attended strictly to the taxi business.” For Kennedy, “Running a legitimate business in [the] French Quarter would bring a lot more tourists here.” The opinions given by these individuals, both for and against the ban, while not

⁷¹ “Most Favor Ban On Bourbon Street,” *New Orleans States*, April 24, 1950, 26.

indicative of the whole population, still managed to give an early indication of how any new taxicab-ban ordinance might be received if implemented.⁷²

The passage of the new ordinance was further hampered when on May 2, the Commission Council voted to restore parking rights on Bourbon Street, which drew a rebuke from the SCCVC. Committee members were blindsided by Supt. Scheuering's apparent reversal on the parking ban during the Commission Council's meeting before their vote. Scheuering had previously indicated to the SCCVC that he supported the parking ban. As a rebuke to Scheuering and the Commission Council's vote, the SCCVC voted in favor of a resolution in support of the ban. The resolution stated:

Be it resolved that the committee reiterates its position with regard to the banning of all parking on Bourbon St. The committee based its recommendations to the commission council on the advice of Police Superintendent Joseph I. Scheuering...whom at all times expressed themselves as opposed to all parking on Bourbon St. and upon the opinions of the committee members themselves. Therefore, while it does not agree with the action taken by the majority of the commission council on Tuesday, May 2, it accedes to their authority, reserving the right to carefully observe the resulting situation. Should the committee find that the parking of private cars on Bourbon St. causes or contributes to a return to conditions which have been so objectionable in the past, it will then demand that the commission council change its position and ban all parking on Bourbon St.⁷³

All but one committee member voted for the resolution. The lone dissenting vote came from Jay Weil, Jr., who objected to the language of the resolution, specifically the portion that indicated that the SCCVC "was acceding" to the action of the Commission Council.

⁷² "Most Favor Ban On Bourbon Street," *New Orleans States*, April 24, 1950, 26.

⁷³ "Creation of 'Czar' For French Quarter Bar Owners Seen," *New Orleans States*, May 4, 1950, 5.

The dissenting member believed the committee should not back down when a recommendation was made.⁷⁴

Weil's objection was largely ignored. The committee had a more pressing issue to address. Their proposed taxicab-parking ban faced new opposition from French Quarter business owners. The Commission Council's removal of the Bourbon Street parking ban gave business owners cover to speak out against the proposed ordinance. French Quarter restaurateur and SCCVC member, Owen Brennan, asserted that the previous parking ban caused a drop in business in the area. However, he conceded that the death of Robert Dunn brought a barrage of negative coverage to the French Quarter, which caused some people to stay away. Brennan's comments, along with other nightclub and bar owners, caused the Commission Council to balk at the idea of a taxicab-parking ban. This ultimately led them to shelve the SCCVC's proposal.⁷⁵

The SCCVC's strategy to target taxi drivers was the first time the group centered their focus on a male dominated profession. If implemented, men were to face real consequences if they helped solicit prostitutes. But the ordinance proved to be too unpopular for French Quarter business owners and to an extent, ordinary New Orleanians. This failure by the SCCVC revealed just how difficult it would be to at least minimize prostitution in the city. A main resource for prostitutes remained open. If the SCCVC were to be successful, they knew they had no choice but to target prostitutes directly.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Prostitutes

Reeling from the defeat of the taxicab-parking ban, the SCCVC on July 12 proposed a study of the conditions of areas that were considered hotspots in the French Quarter for prostitutes. Rev. Jamieson was chosen by Foster to be the chairman of the newly created Sub-Committee on Prostitution Activities, which began its work with an overnight investigation in late July. Investigators went to Decatur Street, on the periphery of the French Quarter, where they witnessed the arrest of three women for loitering. Their report made sure to note that police were actively engaged in making arrests in the area. It was concluded that there was “an [apparent] laxity on the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board in making spot checks on the bars located on Decatur Street.” It was particularly noteworthy because previous discussion of laxity of enforcement was laid at the feet of the police rather than the ABC board.⁷⁶

Rev. Jamieson managed to witness only two solicitations from known prostitutes, which occurred outside the French Quarter. The reason he did not witness more solicitation in the French Quarter could be one of two reasons. The first is that prostitution was not as rampant as Jamieson and the rest of the SCCVC believed it to be. The most likely reason, however, is because taxi drivers were working as middlemen, thereby avoiding the prying eyes of Jamieson and the police.

The sub-committee also included a study of court cases that involved prostitution from January 1 through August 15, 1950. The report indicated that out of twenty-six

⁷⁶ Meeting Minutes, July 12, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46; The Mayor’s Special Citizens Committee for the Vieux Carré Report on Prostitution Activities, July 26, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46. Rev. Jamieson’s involvement in the newly created subcommittee was initially kept secret. While the meeting minutes give no indication why the commission did this, it can be concluded that it was done to protect him from harassment, which he endured earlier in the year.

cases brought before the municipal court, twenty-one were outright dismissed and four were levied nominal fees or the women forfeited their bail. They also found that when women were brought before the court, the names of the houses of prostitution were not recorded, even if raids were conducted on the houses and women were arrested in the same house. In most instances, even if women were arrested in a brothel, they were charged with a lesser violation. Because of this, the sub-committee blamed the low conviction rate on “an inherent weakness in the [o]rdinance and its [s]ection covering prostitution.” This weakness, they observed, was because “it [was] almost necessary for the arresting officer not only to see the actual intercourse, but also the payment for same by one of the participating parties.”⁷⁷

Before the release of the sub-committee’s findings to the full commission, newspaper editorial boards made their opinion known about a revised prostitution ordinance. The *States* opined that the prostitution problem was not due to a lack of a clear ordinance, but rather a lack of enforcement of the existing ordinance. If the SCCVC could find a way to help with this, the editorial suggested, then the committee would “reap the appreciation of the people of the city.” The *Times-Picayune*, on the other hand, differed slightly in its approach. While its editors believed strict law enforcement was key to solving the problem, the *Picayune* opined that the ordinance on record lacked “teeth” which failed to discourage repeat offenders. And if criminals continued to flaunt the law, it was up to the police to do their duty and arrest the offending persons. They encouraged

⁷⁷ The Mayor’s Special Citizens Committee for the Vieux Carré Report on Prostitution Activities, July 26, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46. Rev Jamieson gave a slightly different set of court numbers in the commission’s August 23 meeting. In that meeting, he indicated thirty arrests were made. Out of those thirty, twenty-six were dismissed, one was convicted, and three were still pending, see Meeting Minutes, August 23, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

the SCCVC to fix these issues as well as shed light on why prostitution convictions were so low.⁷⁸

The editorials gave a sense of what work needed to still be done in order to fix the prostitution problem. They showed there was no unifying solution that would satisfy everyone. While both editorials sought more robust police action, the *Times-Picayune* expressed doubt that this alone would be enough. They believed the prostitution ordinance must be revised and updated to close any loopholes in the law and provide law enforcement the tools needed to obtain more convictions. Seeing this issue being discussed in such a public forum, the SCCVC felt the urgency to produce a solution.

A full report was presented to the SCCVC on September 6 and discussed at the following meeting. The report offered ten recommendations for a revised ordinance and provided a range of remedies to curb prostitution. They ranged from targeting the prostitutes themselves to going after those who employed them and those who employed their services. Key recommendations dealt directly with prostitutes, although some in a roundabout way. The first recommendation called for any “bawd, or lewd woman” found wandering the streets at night, or found frequenting houses of prostitution, to be charged and found guilty of a misdemeanor. The next two recommendations prohibited the employment of prostitutes, or “lewd women,” in public places, such as bars and nightclubs. It also prohibited these same women from being employed as singers or dancers who performed in a “lewd or indecent manner.” One recommendation went after

⁷⁸ “Vice Commission Charts Good Course,” *New Orleans States*, August 25, 1950, 10; “Vice Commission’s Work,” *Times-Picayune*, August 30, 1950, 10.

those who employed the prostitutes and the other went after the women themselves who were employed by the owner of the establishment.⁷⁹

The fourth recommendation targeted males connected with prostitution. The sub-committee suggested a male should be charged with a misdemeanor if they “inhabit[ed], [ate], or sle[pt] in a house of ill-fame, bawdy house, or house of prostitution...or house of bad reputation.” This also extended to those men who were found to be connected in any way with “the keeping, management, or control” of any house containing prostitutes. This was the only recommendation that specifically targeted men. The rest of the recommendations sought to strengthen existing law and called for an increase in fines. These tended to focus on the denying alcoholic beverage licenses to businesses that continuously employed or catered to prostitutes and those that solicited them.⁸⁰

The recommendations as a whole sought to keep women away from establishments that catered to men. The sub-committee wished to make sure that any woman, either a prostitute or one suspected of being an immoral woman, could not be employed. More specifically, not be employed in a business that might tempt men into engaging in an immoral act. The recommendations were similar to those made for the barmaid ban.

Even though the SCCVC released their recommendations for a revised prostitution ordinance in September, the committee would not deliver them to Mayor Morrison until November 16. Between that time, Rev. Jamieson and his sub-committee continued to investigate conditions on Decatur Street. On October 18, Jamieson delivered

⁷⁹ The Mayor’s Special Citizens Committee for the Vieux Carré Report on Prostitution Activities, July 26, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

a report indicating the “low character” which establishments on Decatur Street catered to. They observed prostitution flourish in the same places they observed in July. The aggressive police presence on the street then, was nowhere to be found in October. The situation had deteriorated so much that Jamieson was even approached by a man who asked if he wanted to “see the pretty girls.” The committee called on law enforcement to once again clean up the streets.⁸¹

Another update delivered to the SCCVC on November 15, showed that the efforts put forth by the committee had failed to produce the desired results. It also revealed the lack of interest by the police in enforcing the prostitution ordinance as it stood. Since the city’s Commission Council had yet to take up the recommendations, Jamieson inquired during this same meeting if prostitutes could be charged under the State Law of 1942, Act 241, which required a suspected prostitute to undergo a venereal disease test. If the woman was found to have a venereal disease, they could be charged and prosecuted by the District Attorney. This suggestion was dismissed when Police Capt. William Dwyer of the First District informed the committee that the law was found to be unconstitutional and could not be used as a tool to combat prostitution.⁸²

The harsh suggestion by Jamieson of forcibly testing alleged prostitutes showed the lengths he was willing to take to solve the issue. A skewed view that women were solely the reason prostitution existed ignored those individuals who helped perpetuate the practice. Rarely did the police seek to arrest and convict those who might possibly be exploiting them, which for women not associated with houses, tended to be men. But

⁸¹ Meeting Minutes, October 18, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

⁸² Meeting Minutes, November 15, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

Jamieson's updated report began to shift the blame in another direction, away from women and on to law enforcement. Areas deemed hotbeds for prostitution lacked a strong police presence thereby allowing prostitution to continue unabated. His conclusions were further proved in a subsequent report released before the Commission Council voted on the SCCVC's recommendations.

The final report issued by the Sub-Committee on Prostitution Activities on December 9 detailed what the sub-committee saw as a well-organized citywide prostitution syndicate. The proof offered in the report relied on the arrest records of two hundred and three white females for prostitution from January 1 to December 1, 1950, many of whom were arrested on multiple occasions for the same charge, but from different houses. Based on the records, the report concluded that a syndicate was the only way "prostitutes [could] be shifted from one establishment to another even though these houses [were] operated under separate management." The report also concluded that the police themselves were responsible for the lack of arrests and convictions of prostitutes. Jamieson and the sub-committee believed if the city's Commission Council failed to vote in favor of the prostitution ordinance or if the police did not properly enforce the law, then other measures would need to be taken to go around them. They suggested they would consult with Orleans Parish District Attorney Severn Darden in order to file suit in district court to padlock establishments found catering to prostitutes in order to "protect the citizenry, not only from the effects of this menace of prostitution, but from the lack of law enforcement on the part of the proper officials as well."⁸³

⁸³ *Report of Sub-Committee on Prostitution of the Mayor's Special Citizens Committee For the Vieux Carré*, December 9, 1950, within the *Public Hearing Before the Commission Council of the City of New Orleans During Pendency of Temporary Restraining Order Against Special Citizen's Investigating Council Committee*, December 29, 1953, p 247, City Council, Special Citizens Investigating Committee, Records,

The SCCVC was adamant about their recommendation for a revised prostitution ordinance. Though their threat to circumvent the city seemed genuine, it was uncertain whether it would have worked. Regardless on December 20, the Commission Council, almost three months after the SCCVC recommendations were submitted to them, voted and unanimously approved of them. Rev. Jamieson attended the meeting as a representative of the SCCVC. After the recommendations were approved, he stated, “The old ordinance [was] extremely full of loopholes. You have only 10 percent of convictions under the present ordinance.” City Attorney Henry B. Curtis agreed with Jamieson that a new ordinance was necessary to combat prostitution. Curtis even pledged to assign more assistant city attorneys to the municipal courts to help prosecute alleged prostitutes. They would make sure important cases moved forward as well as make sure witnesses, such as police officers, appeared before the court when summoned.⁸⁴

The passage of the revised prostitution ordinance was a great victory for the SCCVC, especially for Rev. Jamieson. It was the culmination of a yearlong campaign that resulted in not only the renewed effort by the city to combat prostitution, but also an effort that yielded positive results within the first few months of its enactment. Police Capt. Joseph Sonnenberg of the First District, provided information to confirm this point. He reported that one hundred six prostitutes were arrested by February 1951. These numbers allowed the committee to believe their work made a drastic improvement to the French Quarter atmosphere.⁸⁵

1953-1963, Folder 3, Box 10, New Orleans Public Library. The report gave a detailed record of the names of known prostitutes who were arrested on more than one occasion, as well as the addresses of known houses of prostitution. It was hoped that the police would use this list to keep these women behind bars and shut down the houses permanently.

⁸⁴ “Council Tightens French Quarter Vice Control,” *New Orleans States*, December 22, 1950, 1.

⁸⁵ “Crackdown on Vice Getting Results, Convictions,” *New Orleans States*, February 9, 1951, 26.

The End of the SCCVC

By the end of 1952, the Mayor's Special Citizens Committee for the Vieux Carré had lost its relevancy and disbanded. It must be noted that the eventual downfall of the SCCVC began soon after its creation. Richard Foster was the main reason for this, due to his advocacy and successful push for the creation of a new crime commission that largely encompassed many of the activities the SCCVC was established to perform. Foster, who had resigned as chairman of the committee, lobbied for a new crime commission with the help of Commission Council member J. Bernard McCloskey, and the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce. The announcement of a new crime commission appeared on September 27, 1950, approximately six months after the start of the SCCVC. Foster rationalized his decision by saying any new commission must be "composed of persons outside of the city government."⁸⁶

Foster said the objectives of the new commission would be to "correct inadequate law and procedure; help control and punish those guilty of crime and corruption; work with and encourage all good and honest public servants and help correct conditions that breed crime and make criminals." He wished to build on what the SCCVC had done and expand the range of territory to investigate. In other words, instead of focusing solely on the French Quarter, the new commission would take the entire city under its purview.⁸⁷

Chamber of Commerce president, C.C. Walther, agreed with Foster and decided to sponsor his efforts. But, he wanted the Chamber of Commerce to "watch [the crime commission's] formation from the sidelines, and later on take up the question of acting as

⁸⁶ "Citywide Group to be Proposed," *New Orleans States*, September 27, 1950, 1.

⁸⁷ "N.O. Citizens' Crime Commission Studied," *Times-Picayune*, September 28, 1950, 1.

a cosponsor.” Walther explained his hesitation was due to there not being a fully fleshed out plan for the organization. He also believed that the new commission should be composed of representatives like those who served on SCCVC.⁸⁸

Commissioner McCloskey’s support of the commission was viewed through an economic lens. He wanted to promote the city as a destination for business conventions as well as vacationing tourists. McCloskey wanted to ensure the safety of tourists within the French Quarter and beyond. If tourists felt safe to visit, then they would spend money in nightclubs and other establishments in the city. With the backing of the Chamber of Commerce, Foster’s crime commission would mainly focus on how the new commission could benefit business interests rather than focus primarily on the safety of city residents and tourists.⁸⁹

The final nail in the coffin for the SCCVC came from Mayor Chep Morrison who released a statement soon after McCloskey’s announcement. Morrison gave his support to Foster’s crime commission “in principle” after citing the success of the SCCVC, which had only been in existence for six months. Morrison explained that he spoke with Foster “about expanding the work of his committee...to include a broader field in law enforcement matters.” He further stated:

A citizens’ commission of this sort can accomplish a great deal of good. This has been the experience of the California, Chicago, Greater Miami, and other crime commissions throughout the country. There is no doubt the civic minded leaders who have the interests of the community at heart can actively assist the governing authorities – police department and courts – in the very important job of law enforcement, and that of building a better community... While we feel our situation has greatly improved in the last 4 ½ years, and New Orleans does not have some of the special problems

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

of these other areas mention, we still welcome the assistance and help of such a commission.⁹⁰

With Morrison's endorsement, the SCCVC's continued existence was in peril. Even though Foster was not the most influential member of the committee, the appearance that the chairman of the SCCVC was not as committed to the committee's work, made all the difference. But one of the major criticisms of the SCCVC was that their work did not go far enough in investigating vice. Crime existed in other areas of the city and the SCCVC was too narrowly focused.

Newspaper editorial boards also waded in on the issue of creating a new crime committee. The *Times-Picayune* endorsed the idea, even though they did not believe the city had the amount of organized crime that Sen. Kefauver's committee alleged existed in Louisiana. Still, they advocated for the committee, which they believed would benefit the city "both in fact and by reputation from an adequately supported, nonpartisan commission to fight as well as study and report on crime." They found it a necessity to bring attention to the "genesis and environment of rackets and lawlessness, and to the effectiveness of enforcement methods." The *Times-Picayune* editorial pointed to Morrison's SCCVC as an example of how a well-organized body could provide a "valuable service" to the city.⁹¹

The *New Orleans States* editorial board gave a mixed response to the idea. They endorsed the formation of a crime commission if its goals were to "survey the competence of law enforcement in the ordinary grist of murder, theft, robbery, banditry and assorted felonies." However, if the group were to "delve into the higher strata of

⁹⁰ "N.O. Citizens' Crime Commission Studied," *Time-Picayune*, September 28, 1950, 1.

⁹¹ "Needed Crime Commission," *Times-Picayune*, September 28 1950, 12.

crime, the organized brand concerned with large gambling, vice, narcotics and murder rings,” then they felt this job should be left to Sen. Kefauver and his committee. The *States* felt the Senate committee had certain powers, which a local crime committee would lack and any move to create one “should be held in abeyance pending an effort to get Sen. Kefauver’s investigators to sift the local connections, if any, of the big syndicates.”⁹²

The local papers supported the expansion of the work being done by the SCCVC. But, they gave no indication of their continued support for the committee, even as they debated the necessity for a new crime committee. The SCCVC seemed to get lost in the rush to create a new committee that it appeared no one bothered to ask or question if the SCCVC should just expand their duties rather than creating a whole new committee. Word eventually reached SCCVC members of Foster’s intentions. Leonard V. Huber asked what was to become of their committee if Foster’s crime commission came into existence. Foster assured him that any potential new crime commission would not supplant the SCCVC. He said, “A crime commission would have only publicity as a weapon, whereas this commission has the fist in back of it. It has the support of the mayor and the police.” Still, Foster expressed his support of a new organization when he said, “I do think, however, that a crime commission modeled along the lines of that in Chicago would be beneficial to the city.” With this assurance, SCCVC members agreed that in the event a new crime body was to be organized, their group would not disband.⁹³

Foster’s assurances, however, would ring hollow. As the Sen. Estes Kefauver prepared to convene his committee in New Orleans in January 1951, Foster pressed

⁹² “Sifting Crime in New Orleans,” *New Orleans States*, September 29, 1950, 16.

⁹³ “Decatur St. Bar Cleanup Branded ‘A Whitewash,’” *New Orleans States*, October 5, 1950, 21.

forward. On January 24, he attended a meeting of the Rotary Club where he informed the members that, “New Orleans has drawn groups of individuals here...who have set themselves up to prey not only on unwary visitors but on natives as well.” He went on to describe the prostitution racket the SCCVC subcommittee on prostitution had uncovered. Foster told the Rotarians, “It is apparent that New Orleans is a clearing house for the prostitution racket of this section...the mayor recently told the [SCCVC] that he would institute padlock proceedings against several notorious houses which were brought to his attention.”⁹⁴

In order to further sell his idea of a new committee to the Rotary club, Foster emphasized tourism. He indicated that because of New Orleans’ background, “it [was] easy to see it is the sort of city where gambling, prostitution and crime can flourish...Tourists are its second largest source of income and a great many of those who come here want in come in contact with the bizarre, the unusual, to do and see things they wouldn’t do at home.” Foster then went on to stress, “What makes this city a hard one to administer is the difficulty of determining where pleasure ends and vice begins.” Foster’s intention in his remarks was to show that he and many others accepted that people come to the city to experience things that they could not experience anywhere else. But, because of this Foster believed a new crime committee would be the safety net used by tourists to make sure that they could experience the care-free aspects of the city without worrying about harm that could come to them from various criminal elements.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ “Rackets Surviving Despite Reform Moves, Says Foster,” *Times-Picayune*, January 25, 1951, 3. Even though Morrison had indicated his intention to padlock houses of prostitution, many still remained open and most likely than not, the police were aware of their existence.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

The one thing that Foster could not do to create a new crime committee was to justify why a new one was needed even though the SCCVC still existed, and had, up to that point, produced results with their investigations. One can only guess that the reason for his push to for a new committee was because it would be one that he helped create. Foster had sought to create a crime committee since 1946 but had failed to achieve this goal till Dunn's death. Even though he was the chairman of the SCCVC, he still sought a committee of his own, one free of any political affiliation. The SCCVC, whose membership comprised of various business and civic members, still had a political aspect due to link to having been created Mayor Morrison.

Despite Foster's assurance to its members, the SCCVC officially disbanded with the establishment of the new Metropolitan Crime Commission in 1952. The two-year time span of the SCCVC existence can be seen as both a success and a failure. It was successful in its ability to convince the Commission Council to adopt the recommendations it presented. It was a failure because those recommendations did not fulfill what civic and business groups sought to accomplish. While there was an initial uptick in arrests, that did not last long. B-drinking and prostitution continued to persist in the French Quarter because of the same problems that existed before the adoption of the ordinances. Lack of convictions continued to be one of the major impediments to the cleanup effort. What the committee activities did reveal was that the police were integral to any cleanup efforts. Without their cooperation, any committees created by French Quarter residents, and civic and business organizations would ultimately fall short.

The SCCVC began to question why the lack of police cooperation in enforcement existed. Were the police doing this on purpose? Or did they lack the resources to enforce

the law effectively? These were questions that needed to be answered because the police were the key to eliminating undesirables in the French Quarter. The creation of the next committee sought to provide answers. This committee would delve into allegations of police corruption that many in the city believed to exist but lacked the proof. During this next committee's investigations one theme kept arising. That theme was the connection between the police and prostitution.

CHAPTER THREE

THE POLICE AND THE PROSTITUTION CONNECTION

The Mayor's Special Citizens Committee on the Vieux Carré (SCCVC) investigation into prostitution revealed how police raids and a new ordinance did little to change the trajectory of prostitution in the French Quarter. But it also exposed police officers' lax enforcement of the law, which became a hindrance to the work the SCCVC had accomplished. This revelation raised the question as to why this was the case. Was it a lack of interest on the part of the NOPD or was it purposeful? The effort to try and answer this question led to the formation of a new committee: the Special Citizens' Investigating Committee (SCIC). Its purpose was to investigate police actions and create a complete record of any corruption NOPD officers might be involved in. The goal was to eventually root out any corrupt police officers and hold them accountable, as well as recommend any new protocol or laws to better police the city. It was hoped that this could help alleviate vice in the city, particularly the prostitution problem, and stop its spread in the French Quarter and surrounding areas.

While realizing there might be a possible connection between police officers and proprietors of vice, there was little effort on the part of the Morrison administration and the NOPD to investigate the matter between the end of the SCCVC and the formation of the SCIC. This lack of will gave further credence to the criticism that the police were either involved in vice activities or were more than willing to look the other way for a price, thereby perpetuating the situation civic and business organizations sought to eliminate from the French Quarter. In either case, it provided enough cover for houses of prostitution to continue to operate with few interruptions.

Between 1950 and 1953, an inability or unwillingness on the part of the city and the NOPD to investigate their own officers allowed vice to fester and thrive in the French Quarter. During their first year the SCCVC did not broach the subject at all. Only when Sen. Estes Kefauver's 1951 national crime commission investigation in New Orleans exposed police corruption that allowed crime to fester in the city and state, did the issue appear on their radar. But even then, no full investigation was attempted. The SCCVC continued to investigate and make recommendations to the city's Commission Council, but their influence had begun to wane. Any information and work the Kefauver Committee could provide to the SCCVC went unused.

Realizing this could damage his reform image, Mayor Morrison launched a halfhearted effort to investigate police corruption; even going so far as to seek cooperation from state officials to help shut down disreputable establishments. But Morrison's actions soon after his request was made, show he never truly wanted their help. There existed a lack of willingness by Morrison and the NOPD to accept any responsibility for the conditions of the city and police force. Morrison sought only to deflect attention from his inaction and shift the blame to others.

A public feud arose between Morrison and Guy L. Deano, Jr., attorney for the state Revenue Department, who helped organize and execute raids on establishments in New Orleans with possible connections to criminal elements. The back and forth over who had jurisdiction over shutting down disreputable establishments caused a major rift that ultimately never healed. This feud played out in public with both Morrison and Deano making statements to the press. Newspapers captured this exchange and therefore provide a record of the events that led to the creation of the SCIC.

April 1953 was a critical month for Morrison. It began with a state police raid on a bar that saw NOPD officer Raymond Hughes arrested for ties to prostitution. This quickly snowballed into Morrison's public feud with Deano, creating an environment of mistrust as well as misdirection. The month ended with another police controversy. This time, evidence of police corruption emerged when a state Revenue Department informant tried to entrap NOPD officers. All these events provided the impetus for the creation of the SCIC. No matter how much Morrison tried to ignore the problem, police corruption was an issue that had to be addressed.

The purpose of the chapter is to not only to chronicle the creation of the SCIC, but also to explain the transition from the SCCVC to the SCIC. A correlation between the police and prostitution was established when evidence emerged through investigations conducted by the Kefauver crime commission and the subsequent Hughes raid that occurred in 1953. The SCCVC did not (either willingly or unwillingly) look into this issue. By having this corruption exposed to the public, Kefauver's commission gave local activists license to investigate this "open secret" further.

The Hughes Raid and Jack Richter controversy covered in this chapter show that attempts were made by Morrison and the NOPD, whether superficial or not, to tackle the problem. The Hughes Raid gives an example of how corrupt police officers conducted themselves when engaging in illegal activities. The raid also established the city's lack of interest in fully investigating their own officers, especially those who had previously been suspended for similar charges. More often than not, internal investigations favored the accused.

While Morrison asked for the state's help in the endeavor to close disreputable establishments, his actions immediately after his request suggest he never really wanted their help to begin with. The very public back and forth between Morrison and Deano also revealed Morrison's intentions of placing the blame on the state rather than acknowledging the city's own failings, which sabotaged the partnership. The Richter controversy gave Morrison the excuse he needed to abandon city/state cooperation. However, realizing his need to show he was doing something about the problem, Morrison sought to create what would become the SCIC.

Sen. Kefauver Comes to New Orleans

The anticipated arrival of Sen. Estes Kefauver's crime committee brought intense media attention to New Orleans. Newspaper accounts reported public reaction ranging from worry, fright, belligerence, and just plain eagerness to see what the committee would uncover. There were also those who viewed the proceedings with skepticism, believing the committee to be nothing more than a publicity stunt. Regardless of people's thoughts on the hearing, the Kefauver Committee, as it was colloquially known, held the attention of everyone in the city, including those who were involved in crime related activities.⁹⁶

Those involved in illegal activities had reason to pay attention. The purpose of the Kefauver Committee was to "investigate all phases of crime and rackets – gambling, prostitution, bribery of public officials, etc. – on a local scale to determine whether there are hookups between the underworlds throughout the country." In previous committee

⁹⁶ "Interest at Fever-Pitch As Kefauver Opens Probe," *New Orleans States*, January 25, 1951, 1.

hearings, Sen. Kefauver heard New Orleans mentioned as one of the places where a national gambling syndicate functioned. A committee spokesman later announced that New Orleans “appear[ed] to be part of the patchwork of a national crime quilt” that saw the likes of notorious New York underworld boss Frank Costello and his New Orleans associate Carlos Marcello.⁹⁷

Upon his arrival in late January 1951, Sen. Kefauver met with Morrison and former district attorney Herve Racivitch. He expressed hope that New Orleans was “brazen enough” to be wide open in its cooperation with the committee. He also informed them that his investigation had occurred in New Orleans, unbeknownst to them, from June 1 to August 2, 1950. While not disclosing what was uncovered during this time period, he hinted that investigators had looked into Mafia connections. What was also not disclosed was the extent to which the police were also included as subjects of their investigation.⁹⁸

On January 25, 1951, Sen. Kefauver and his assistants entered a packed courtroom filled with reporters and television cameras. After taking his seat in the judge’s chair, Kefauver gavelled the hearing to order. Prominent New Orleanians were in attendance including Rev. Robert Jamieson. His presence was notable because of his longtime crusade against prostitution. When the SCCVC disbanded 1952, his work came to a halt.⁹⁹

Mayor Chep Morrison was asked to testify before the committee. He touted his administration’s efforts to “wipe out” gambling in 1946, soon after he came to office.

⁹⁷ “Explain Objectives Of Crime Probe,” *New Orleans States*, January 25, 1951, 14.

⁹⁸ “Wide-Open Jefferson Parish Gambling Startles Kefauver,” *New Orleans States*, January 25, 1951, 14.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

“We immediately laid down the policy of law enforcement,” Morrison said, “which has since been consistently followed throughout the past five years of this administration.” He continued, “We say, with some justifiable pride, that in New Orleans today we have achieved the greatest degree of enforcement against gambling and related rackets within recent memory.” Morrison’s boasts about his administration’s efforts to combat gambling masked his true record. Gambling had not ceased in the city. In fact, as Morrison spoke at the Kefauver’s hearing, newspaper reports recounted lottery venders selling tickets in the central business district, near the very courthouse where he spoke. Gambling, in the form of a lottery racket, had never ceased to function in the city. Regardless of this situation, Morrison tried to convey a more positive outlook on his record. He informed the committee that the New Orleans Police Department had made an inordinate number of arrests from August to December 1950. Those numbers included 165 for prostitution and 10 for B-drinking.¹⁰⁰

The Kefauver Committee hearing continued for two days, during which the committee learned how illegal gambling and out-of-state crime organizations infiltrated Louisiana. Testimony revealed that sheriffs in the parishes surrounding New Orleans received kickbacks from local crime syndicates to overlook illegal gambling operations and prostitution within their jurisdictions. One such sheriff was Frank J. Clancy of Jefferson Parish. When called to testify before the committee, Clancy pled the Fifth Amendment when asked if gambling was against the law and if he had made any attempt to enforce the state’s antigambling law. His unwillingness to answer and his lack of

¹⁰⁰ “Open Gambling in City Wiped Out in 1946, Mayor Tells Probers,” *Times-Picayune*, January 26, 1951, 20; “Vice Crusaders at Hearing,” *New Orleans States*, January 25, 1951, 8; “Lotteries Operate Wide Open in City,” *New Orleans States*, January 25, 1951, 10.

transparency caused Kefauver and the committee to conclude that sheriffs such as Clancy were both directly and indirectly responsible for the state's thriving crime syndicates.¹⁰¹

When the committee proceedings concluded, the *Kefauver Committee Report on Organized Crime* was released. In its section on New Orleans, the report concluded law enforcement and local officials were partially to blame for the city's toleration of criminal elements. The committee wrote that law enforcement had a "deep-seated aversion" to enforce the laws which they pledged to uphold. This conclusion brought to public view what was already seen as an open secret; local authorities knew illegal actions were taking place under their noses and willingly let it happen. Civic and business leaders were reinvigorated in their attempts to cleanse the city of undesirables. Their only problem was, the institutional mechanism by which they could accomplish this goal stood accused of being directly and indirectly involved in criminal activities.¹⁰²

Various attempts to hold the police accountable through the creation of additional committees failed to materialize. Questionable practices continued to plague the police, especially when it came to prostitution. The Kefauver Committee revealed that police in the surrounding parishes also received kickbacks to look the other way when it came to vice in the New Orleans area. It could only be assumed that police in the city itself were no different. The SCCVC's last report on prostitution stated the police did not vigorously enforce recently-passed ordinances. This would continue until a raid on a bar on Magazine Street brought to light the extent of police corruption and extensive ties to between police and prostitution interests.

¹⁰¹ "Highlights of Hearing," *New Orleans States*, January 27, 1951, 1; "Clancy Clams Up; Faces U.S. Action," *New Orleans States*, January 27, 1951, 2; *The Kefauver Committee Report on Organized Crime*, (Didier Publishing; New York, 1951), 66.

¹⁰² *The Kefauver Committee Report on Organized Crime*, (Didier Publishing; New York, 1951), 70-1.

By January 1953, individuals such as Richard Foster sought to renew efforts to reengage the business community to help to rid the city of crime. On January 29, at the St. Charles Hotel, the Chamber of Commerce sponsored an event that was attended by business and civic leaders. The headline speaker was Spruille Braden, chairman of the New York City Crime Commission. Braden emphasized the need for businessmen to contribute organizationally and financially to efforts to clean up crime in the city. He argued that businesses would suffer if vice and other criminal activities infiltrated the city. “Well organized crime always shows up where money is and I prophesize that organized crime will come in and make a concerted effort to control business,” Braden warned.¹⁰³

Braden expressed his belief of an added benefit of the creation of a committee that fought extortion better than the public could. Citing the Kefauver Committee’s findings, Braden said it “listed over 100 types of legitimate businesses as being infiltrated by organized crime.” He explained that any complaints brought to the committee regarding business extortion would remain private and not be made public, unlike what would happen if these same businessmen went to the police and had to disclose information that would eventually be made public.¹⁰⁴

Braden’s argument made it clear that the business community had a vested interest in taking a prominent role in clearing the city of criminal elements. Keeping businesses free of extortion was just another reason for cleaning up the French Quarter. But Braden failed to mention the more probable impediment for business to function in the city; police corruption. Still, the renewed emphasis on the creation of a committee to

¹⁰³ “Help of Business Urged as Anticrime Crop Gets Spurs,” *New Orleans States*, January 30, 1953, 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*; “Organized Crime Held Far Worse Threat Than All Reds,” *Times-Picayune*, January 30, 1953, 1.

help with cleanup efforts was reborn. But this time, the focus would shift from focusing solely on vice elements, to focusing on how and why these vice elements continued to exist, even after new ordinances were passed by the Commission Council. Morrison would once again find himself in the middle of making a decision on how any new committee would be created and what it would look like. Things would eventually culminate in a one-month period that saw a flurry of events that led to swift action taken by Morrison.

The month of April 1953 would be a contentious time for Morrison and the NOPD. Not only were they dealing with the fallout from the feud Louisiana Revenue Department attorney Guy L. Deano, Jr., Morrison also sought the help of the city's Commission Council to form a new committee dedicated to investigating the police department. Events that occurred simultaneously that showed Morrison's ability to deflect from his unwillingness to investigate police corruption and shift the narrative to focus on cleanup efforts in the hopes of preserving his image. He did, however, manage to accomplish the creation of the SCIC, which would be considered a win for those groups and individuals who demanded police accountability and an end to the ties with vice operators, especially ones connected to prostitution.

Formation of a New Committee

On April 1, 1953 Morrison and Utilities Commissioner A. Brown Moore submitted two separate proposals to the commission council for the creation of a committee to investigate the NOPD. Moore believed Supt. Scheuering's internal investigations into his department were inadequate. "Despite the voluminous reports

received from the head of the police department,” he said, “several questions appear[ed] unanswered.” Both Morrison and Moore believed only an outside investigation could ascertain the truth behind any possible police corruption.¹⁰⁵

Morrison’s proposal called for a committee that encompassed the Commission Council members, excluding the mayor. Its job would be to investigate the police department’s administrative officials. The proposal also sought recommendations and advice about the objectives of the department “including specifically its recommendations regarding [the] need for additional personnel and increased pay.” Morrison also adamantly insisted that any investigation conducted into the police department must be done by a grand jury.¹⁰⁶

One can assume that Morrison’s decision to exclude himself from the committee is that he wanted to distance himself from any fallout the investigation might create. It can also be assumed that by not participating in the committee he insulated himself from making tough decisions that might affect his reform image. When compared to his previous effort in creating the SCCVC, a lack of community involvement also distinguished this second committee. Elected officials would be its only members, thereby making the committee appear political.

Moore’s proposal took a different approach. He called for a three-member committee comprised of appointed citizens who would be given subpoena power and the authority to take testimony under oath. This group would further have the power to investigate the police department and, if needed, authorize the hiring of private investigators. These three members would consist of representatives of the Society of

¹⁰⁵ “Mayor, Moore Submit Plans For Police Scandal Inquiry,” *New Orleans States*, April 1, 1953, 1.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

Former Special Agents of the FBI, the Bureau of Governmental Research, and a newly created local organization called the Metropolitan Crime Commission. Moore insisted the committee should be free of any political influence, which he said, “might be subject to the political stresses and cleavages normally found in any elective body.” With its reliance on citizen investigators and leaders, Moore’s proposal was a direct counter to Morrison’s proposal.¹⁰⁷

A few days after Morrison and Moore introduced their proposals, the Commission Council chose Morrison’s plan. The new committee, consisting of the entire council, was given the mandate to investigate the police department. They also had the ability to request help from outside agencies which Moore, who headed the new committee, advocated for in his initial proposal and immediately took advantage of. In a meeting of the new committee conducted in Moore’s office, representatives from the organizations Moore originally wished to be represented on the committee were in attendance.¹⁰⁸

After the meeting, Moore issued a statement to the press announcing the new committee’s promise to develop and use any process necessary to obtain facts in their investigation. They also sought to reassure citizens that “It is the intention of the committee to conduct an impartial and thorough investigation.” Moore made it clear the committee had no wish to conduct a witch-hunt or persecute anyone. The committee made the decision to keep the details of the plan of action secret but agreed to reveal it at a later date. The compromise committee, which incorporated both Morrison and Moore’s plan, allowed the process to include elected officials but also have the ability to allow for

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ “Probers, Research Unit Heads Confer,” *Times-Picayune*, April 7, 1953, 1.

citizen input in the process. Even though this compromise was reached, Moore was not completely finished fighting for his vision of the committee.¹⁰⁹

With the new committee taking shape under Moore's supervision, police corruption continued to come to light. This was apparent in the 1953 Hughes Raid, in which a police officer was arrested for managing a bar with ties to prostitution and B-drinking. The raid, conducted by Louisiana State Police, blindsided Morrison and the NOPD. But, much to the chagrin of civic and business organizations that saw this an opportunity to discuss police corruption and their ties to vice, Morrison used the situation to shift the topic to cleanup efforts. This would spark a month-long back and forth that would put police corruption on the backburner.

The Hughes Raid

Shortly after midnight on April 2, 1953, troopers from the Louisiana State Police raided four bars they alleged had connections to houses of prostitution and B-drinking. One of those bars was the Green Lantern at 1157 Magazine Street. Multiple people were arrested, including bar operator Raymond Hughes, a New Orleans police officer. On the surface, the raid appeared to be routine. However, the procedures taken by officials proved it to be anything but. State Police in conjunction with the state Revenue Department executed the raid and only made it known to the New Orleans Police Department after the fact. The raid's secrecy was so paramount that Guy L. Deano, Jr., attorney for the Revenue Department, acknowledged that the "troopers who made the raids, three from New Orleans and two from out of town, were not told of the impending

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

raids until 30 minutes beforehand so that there would be no leaks.” When asked if he believed these establishments had police protection, he responded, “That would be the great suspicion. These places had not been raided in several years.”¹¹⁰

The state police and the Revenue Department were right to be suspicious of the NOPD. In the case of Raymond Hughes, the April raid was not the first time he was arrested on prostitution related charges. He had been previously arrested in 1951 for operating a rooming house on Camp Street that housed a “scantily clad” 16-year old female tenant. The female also informed the police she worked as a barmaid at a Hughes-operated bar. Hughes adamantly denied the accusation and was eventually cleared. But the raids and arrest gave further evidence that police were heavily involved with the city’s prostitution problem. If they were not directly involved, many were willing to look the other way for a price.¹¹¹

Superintendent Joseph I. Scheuering vehemently denied the allegations brought by Deano. The denial, however, was not enough to satisfy a public that continued to view the NOPD with mistrust. To remedy this, Scheuering ordered Hughes suspended, pending an investigation into involvement with the bar and the alleged prostitution allowed on the premises. Scheuering made it clear that any officer found to have any knowledge that the establishment they operated housed prostitutes would be suspended or dismissed, depending on the level of knowledge. He wished to make Hughes an example of this policy. Scheuering then turned the investigation over to the precinct supervisor and ordered him to question Hughes, in addition to other beat policemen and captains in the precinct, about their knowledge of the bars raided and any possible links to prostitution.

¹¹⁰ “Protection Indicated by Crackdown,” *New Orleans States*, April 2, 1953, 1.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

Scheuering also transferred eighteen officers to the Sixth District to “strengthen” the area where the bar raids were conducted. This action was also recommended by Hughes’ review board, which ultimately deemed his involvement “unbecoming of an officer,” and dismissed him from the police force.¹¹²

The actions taken by Scheuering were cosmetic and did very little to persuade the public that the NOPD took the allegations of corruption seriously. In a press conference, Morrison rejected any idea that the police department was under a cloud of suspicion. He saw recent and past criminal activities as isolated incidents that were not indicative of the NOPD as a whole. He also expressed his belief that most of the criticism came “from rumors planted by persons who [were] hostile” to his administration. In an effort to show good will, Morrison suggested a pay increase that he hoped would help eliminate policemen’s temptation to seek outside work to supplement their income.¹¹³

Privately, Morrison knew corrupt police officers were a major problem not only for the city but also for his administration. On January 13, three months before the April raids, Morrison sent a memorandum to Scheuering and demanded he take action. He derided Scheuering for allowing the state police to have “better sources of information than our police.” He went further, writing that “we should know our own town better; we should know what’s going on more accurately than they do.” Raids were eventually conducted by the NOPD but as Edward Haas wrote, any impact these raids may have had, proved to be brief. Haas is correct in this assertion; however, it must also be said that Morrison’s image seemed to be the main point of these actions rather than any sincere

¹¹² “Protection Indicated by Crackdown,” *New Orleans States*, April 2, 1953, 1; “Transfer 18 Cops After Vice Raid,” *New Orleans States*, April 4, 1953, 1.

¹¹³ “City’s Police Underpaid, Mayor Morrison Declares,” *New Orleans States*, April 2, 1953, 6.

interest to stamp out corruption. The raids conducted in April only further proved to an embarrassment for the mayor and his administration.¹¹⁴

Feeling the pressure to take action, Morrison visited every police precinct and urged officers to be more aggressive in their enforcement of the law. His call to action resulted in the New Orleans vice squad, in an undercover operation, arresting five women: three for B-drinking and two for loitering in a house of prostitution. The arrests, which occurred on April 6, while making good headlines the following day, did nothing to address the issue of police corruption. Morrison and the NOPD skirted the issue and relied on old tactics of conducting raids to try and placate the public. He continued this approach when he sought help from the state to help crack down on crime in the city.¹¹⁵

A Different Tactic is Taken

Morrison continued to see this as a criminal issue rather than a police corruption problem. In a letter to Guy Deano, Jr. on April 24, Morrison requested the state Revenue Department and the NOPD cooperate in an effort to shut down “disreputable places,” especially those that continued to function as spaces for B-drinking and prostitution. Morrison directed his police superintendent to review past arrest records on establishments known for continuous vice problems. He also issued a standing order that police visit these places each day and write a report on “any conditions of vice, gambling, and or suspicion of same that might exist.” In an attempt to begin the process as soon as possible, Morrison enclosed in the letter a list of establishments he requested the Revenue

¹¹⁴ Edward F. Haas, *DeLesseps S. Morrison and the Image of Reform*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1974), 191-2

¹¹⁵ “Nab 5 Women in Vice Raids By City Cops,” *New Orleans States*, April 7, 1953, 2.

Department investigate in order to revoke their state liquor permits, thereby forcing them to shut down.¹¹⁶

Morrison's request for help from the state signaled a change in tactic. Until this point, Morrison directed any and all investigations be conducted internally and within the confines of city authorities. Raid after raid on "disreputable" establishments, however, made this untenable. The raids failed to achieve the results the city desired. Prostitution and B-drinking continued and nothing appeared to be stopping them. Morrison hoped, with the state's power to revoke liquor licenses, those establishments catering to vice would be shut down permanently. This would eventually be a point of contention between the city and the state.

Receptive to Morrison's request, Deano announced that state revenue agents and the NOPD prepared plans to raid establishments suspected of being in violation of state law. Two days later, these plans went into effect when the police raided various bars and arrested eight people on prostitution charges. The raids proved helpful in identifying bars that catered to prostitutes and arrested those who operated the establishments as well as the prostitutes themselves. While the arrests were appreciated, Morrison hoped the raids would lead to the quick revocation of the establishments' liquor licenses, especially those on the list he gave Deano in April. He made it publicly known that the Revenue Department was not acting fast enough, even though it had only been three days from when the letter was sent to Deano before joint-raid agreement was executed.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ deLesseps S. Morrison to Guy L. Deano, 24 April 1953, New Orleans, Louisiana, Police Department January-May 1953, deLesseps S. Morrison Papers, Folder 3, Box 72, Tulane University Louisiana Research Collection 1.

¹¹⁷ "N.O. Bars Face New Crackdown," *New Orleans States*, April 25, 1953, 3; "Revoking of 50 Liquor Permits Asked By Mayor," *Times-Picayune*, April 27, 1953, 1.

Morrison used the media as a tool to express his displeasure with Deano. He also used it to shift the blame of continued vice problems in the city to the state as a way to deflect from his own police department's ineffectiveness. Within days of initially writing Deano for help, Morrison publicly complained that the Revenue Department had ignored his requests to revoke liquor licenses for bars that had repeated liquor law violations. There were eighteen such establishments Morrison targeted for license revocation, eleven of which were on Bourbon Street. He described those establishments as "constant trouble spots for vice." Morrison stated the NOPD found it "wasteful, inefficient and frustrating" not to receive the help he requested.¹¹⁸

Deano took issue with Morrison's characterization of the work done, or not done, by his agency. In a letter responding to Morrison's accusations, which was also published in the local newspapers, Deano wrote that the mayor "showed a complete lack of knowledge of the work being done by the Department of Revenue and its co-operation with the law enforcement agencies of the city of New Orleans." He informed Morrison that of the fifty establishments on the list he provided, six had already forfeited their licenses. As for the eighteen bars Morrison accused of having been ignored by the Revenue Department, Deano shifted the onus to local municipal courts. If these bars were continuously cited for containing B-drinking, then it was the duty of local law enforcement and the courts to find them guilty, giving his department cause to revoke their licenses. Deano attempted to get in one last dig at Morrison when he wrote, "We have on several occasions attempted to meet with your honor to discuss our mutual

¹¹⁸ "Request to Close 18 Bars Refused by State-Mayor," *New Orleans States*, April 27, 1953, 2.

problems, but evidently your heavy schedule of business prevented meeting for that purpose.”¹¹⁹

It was clear even to Deano that Morrison wished to shift the blame of continued vice in the city to the state. Not only was it unrealistic to expect the state to revoke liquor licenses within four days of Morrison’s initial letter but, as Deano pointed out, it was mainly a failure of law enforcement to properly enforce the laws, make arrests, and gather evidence in order to achieve a conviction in court. But despite Morrison’s accusations, Deano advocated for continued close cooperation between the state and the city. Toward the end of his letter, Deano asserted:

If we are sincere in our desire to clean up our city, if we really want to offer our citizens the full protection to which they are entitled – if we are firm in our purpose to safeguard the morals of our youth and if we want to assure our visitors that they can enjoy our culture, entertainment and hospitality without fear of being victimized by unscrupulous operators, then we should get our heads together in co-operation without trying to excuse our own shortcomings and place the blame on someone else.¹²⁰

Deano ended his letter by emphasizing the state’s willingness to cooperate with the city when called upon to do so. The promised outreach to Morrison and the NOPD showed Deano’s attempt at reconciliation. His words, however, were not received that way. What his letter did accomplish was a tit-for-tat exchange between the state and the city of New Orleans.

In an effort to insulate himself from any blame, Superintendent Scheuering weighed in on Deano’s response. In a statement issued to the press, Scheuering wanted to clarify a particular accusation made toward the NOPD. Deano indicated in his letter the police department failed on many occasions to provide enough evidence to the Revenue

¹¹⁹ “Permits Crackdown On Bars Ordered: State Pledges Help,” *New Orleans States*, April 28, 1953, 1.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

Department to close down bar and tavern violators. Scheuering, wanting to “set the record straight,” stated, “We realize that even though we do try to obtain as much evidence as possibly can, there will be times when this evidence will be insufficient, but only in a hearing can the value of the evidence be determined and thus far these hearings have not been held.” And, once again shifting blame back to the Revenue Department, he stated, “The police department has in many instances during the past year sent in reports of arrests for ‘B’ drinking, prostitution, etc. to the Revenue Department, but not only have there been no hearings, but receipt of those reports [have] not been acknowledged by the state.”¹²¹

Morrison did not rely solely on state actions to show his commitment to combat vice. Less than a week after Morrison sent his letter to Deano, he issued a statement indicating his wish to strengthen city ordinances on liquor licenses for barrooms and taverns. “I expect to call on the council, Morrison stated, “to put more teeth in the ordinances and to authorize the Finance Department to suspend or revoke license when convictions have been secured for vice and gambling.” Morrison noted the ordinance would only permit revocation in cases of a felony conviction. Since vice violations were considered misdemeanors under the current ordinance, the city and police had little recourse to close repeated offenders.¹²²

When word reached Deano about Morrison’s intentions for a new ordinance, he reached out to him and urged patience in taking any action. “It is my opinion...we should not adopt just any ordinance in haste – we should call upon all persons experienced with

¹²¹ “City Able to Close Bars, Avers Deano,” *Times-Picayune*, April 28, 1953, 1.

¹²² Press Release, City of New Orleans, New Orleans Louisiana, 27 April 1953, Police Department January-May 1953, deLesseps S. Morrison Papers, Folder 3, Box 72, Tulane Louisiana Research Collection.

such regulation and make use of their experience in formulating the proper course of procedure.” Deano also urged the Commission Council to be involved in the process. “In fact,” he emphasized “all of the departments of city government particularly the department of safety and the department of public health, should be consulted in preparing an ordinance which is to regulate an industry which can promote or affect the public health, safety and morals of our citizens and out tourists.”¹²³

Liquor retailers also wished to be included in the ordinance discussion. The American Association of Small Business sent a letter to Morrison and requested a meeting to address the possible new ordinance. “The members of this organization engaged in this industry,” association managing director, J.D. Henderson, stated in his letter to Morrison, “will be very grateful [for] an opportunity to meet with you, or a committee which you may appoint, so that they may act in an advisory capacity in the preparation of any ordinance or amendments to those now in existence, before they are submitted for approval by the [C]ommission [C]ouncil.” They too saw the rush to create a stricter ordinance as not taking into account those liquor retailers who do not violate the law and conduct their business in a respectable manner.¹²⁴

As the ordinance was being debated, Rev. Robert Jamieson, former member of the SCCVC, added his voice to the push for a stricter liquor-licensing ordinance. He publicly reminded the Commission Council of the SCCVC’s proposed liquor licensing ordinance which had been drafted three years prior. Jamieson remarked that the SCCVC ordinance was “kicked around for months and finally at a conference in the city attorney’s office commissioner Ott recommended it be held in abeyance because he said

¹²³ “Warns City Against Haste in New Liquor Permit Law,” *New Orleans States*, May 14, 1953, 3.

¹²⁴ “Session is Asked on Liquor Laws,” *Times-Picayune*, May 1, 1953, 13.

it would cost \$40,000 or \$50,000 to hire plainclothesmen to enforce it.” He stated further that, “Now that the heat is on and the subject has such strong political implications, the city would probably be glad to spend the \$75,000 to enforce a tighter ordinance.”

Jamieson concluded his remarks bitterly by saying he had a “sneaking suspicion” that the ordinance being discussed by the Commission Council had the same provisions as the one proposed by the SCCVC who “worked so hard on and got kicked in the teeth for their pains.”¹²⁵

The rush to pass a new liquor-licensing ordinance concerned French Quarter liquor retailers. They questioned the reasoning behind such drastic moves and feared that any crackdown on violators of any new ordinance would eventually affect them. They made their concerns known in a letter to Morrison from Lyall G. Shiell, an attorney who represented over half of the establishments Morrison recommended closed.¹²⁶

In his letter, Shiell wished for the mayor to clarify the reason behind the list that targeted specific establishments. More specifically, they wished to know if these moves were “a sincere effort to enforce existing laws uniformly for the benefit of the entire city or [was] it a political move directed solely at the French Quarter.” In order to stave off the appearance of the list being political, Shiell recommended that other establishments should be included on the list for closure, such as stores, large hotels, restaurants, grocery stores, and other places that he indicated had “at one time or another been involved with prostitution, lottery, gambling, B-drinking, or other various prescribed violations of the law.” While he admitted that the establishments he represented were mainly involved in alleged B-drinking violations, Shiell asserted that ninety percent of those violations were

¹²⁵ “Pastor Charges City Hall Delay,” *Times-Picayune*, May 2, 1953, 10.

¹²⁶ “Quarter Singled Out, Says Shiell,” *Times-Picayune*, May 3, 1953, 11.

due to police entrapment. Shiell wished not to condone violations of the law. However, those he represented in the French Quarter did not wish to be used as pawns in any political game or “victimized merely because of their geographical locations.”¹²⁷

The French Quarter establishments Shiell represented decided to form their own organization to help combat “any discriminatory actions” taken by the city or state related to any alleged B-drinking, gambling, or prostitution violations. Shiell spoke on behalf of the organization and reminded the public that while those establishments Morrison recommended for closure were charged with violations, none of them were ever convicted. Shiell continued to reinforce the idea that the actions taken by Morrison were “strictly an arbitrary and prejudicial move with political implications.”¹²⁸

With input from Supt. Scheuering, Morrison responded to Shiell’s statements. He informed him that the intent of his request for action was a sincere effort to improve conditions in the French Quarter and the list of establishments he sent to Deano were given on the basis of their past violations. Morrison also dispelled the idea that the move was political when he questioned if Shiell had “considered the political aspect of calling on the State Revenue Department to assist...in our desire to improve conditions in bars and taverns, then I would not have listed any places and would have limited myself to broad generalization.”¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Lyall G. Shiell, Jr. to deLesseps S. Morrison, 1 May 1953, New Orleans Louisiana, Police Department January-May 1953, deLesseps S. Morrison Papers, Folder 3, Box 72, Tulane Louisiana Research Collection.

¹²⁸ “Group to Fight ‘Prejudicial’ Bar Closures,” *New Orleans States*, May 7, 1953, 14.

¹²⁹ deLesseps S. Morrison to Lyall G. Shiell, Jr., 6 May 1953, New Orleans Louisiana, Police Department January-May 1953, deLesseps S. Morrison Papers, Folder 3, Box 72, Tulane Louisiana Research Collection; deLesseps S. Morrison to Lyall G. Shiell, Jr., 14 May 1953, New Orleans Louisiana, Police Department January-May 1953, deLesseps S. Morrison Papers, Folder 3, Box 72, Tulane Louisiana Research Collection

In an effort to turn the tables on Shuell, Morrison informed him that any law-abiding establishment would have nothing to fear from any new ordinance or from the State Revenue Department. "As a matter of fact," Morrison added, "I should think that the operators of decent and wholesome bars and taverns would applaud any effort to crack down on those who bring disrepute upon the retail liquor business." Morrison continued when he questioned the liquor sellers' objections to his efforts. "I find it difficult to understand," he wrote, "this complaint against the efforts of the city government to clean up and improve conditions among those establishments which have been chronic violators."¹³⁰

Shuell's letter and along with the new liquor retailers' organizations failed to impede Morrison's momentum. A new liquor-license ordinance passed the Commission Council five to zero on May 15. The new ordinance was designed to streamline the suspension or revocation of liquor licenses of those establishments that violated the law. The ordinance also paralleled state law, which triggered any violation of the city ordinance to be violation of state law as well. The provisions ranged from what age a person could apply for a permit to preventing a person convicted of a felony, or on a narcotics or moral charge, from obtaining a license. The ordinance also prohibited prostitution, B-drinking, central nervous system stimulants and all anesthetic drugs (knockout drops), and any gambling prohibited by law. A provision to set up a special five-man plainclothes police squad to monitor bars and nightclubs was proposed by ultimately not included in the final passage of the ordinance.¹³¹

¹³⁰ deLesseps S. Morrison to Lyall G. Shuell, Jr., 14 May 1953, New Orleans Louisiana, Police Department January-May 1953, deLesseps S. Morrison Papers, Folder 3, Box 72, Tulane Louisiana Research Collection

¹³¹ "Bar Supervision Squad Proposed," *Times-Picayune*, May 8, 1953, 2; "New Ordinance to Control Liquor, Beer Traffic Passes," *Times-Picayune*, May 16, 1953, 1.

The public back and forth between Morrison and Deano that played out in the press did little to show the public that Morrison and the NOPD took the city's cleanup efforts and police corruption seriously. Morrison's successful attempt to amend the liquor-license ordinance showed his intention to work around the state. But the feud did manage to serve one purpose. It shifted the subject from police corruption back to cleanup efforts, which allowed Morrison to blame the state for the failure to close down disreputable bars and taverns. Scheuering's remarks only furthered the burgeoning tension between the city and the state. Cooperation appeared all but dead in the water. The distrust only widened with the revelation of an undercover operation conducted by the Revenue Department and the *New Orleans Item* into NOPD corruption. It was a situation that took Morrison and the NOPD by surprise. It left Morrison with a controversy he could no longer ignore.

The Jack Richter Controversy

On April 27, 1953, Jack Richter, an underworld figure with an extensive criminal record, was arrested in connection with a string of robberies and on charges of being a fugitive from justice in Memphis and New Orleans. He was also charged with attempted bribery of a police officer. It was reported that Richter attempted to bribe NOPD officer Louis Brackman in order to secure permission to open a house of prostitution. After the arrest, it was quickly revealed Richter was in fact an informant for the Revenue Department who worked in conjunction with the *New Orleans Item*. He was paid to gather information on a police protection racket. When this revelation reached Morrison and Scheuering, any goodwill between the state and the city immediately evaporated. Not

only had the state failed to inform the NOPD and the mayor's office that an investigation into liquor law violations was occurring, it also appeared that the state intended to entrap New Orleans police officers. Brackman just happened to be the officer caught up in the operation.¹³²

The origins of the state-funded investigation began when Richter met with the *Item's* editor, George Chaplin. Richter informed Chaplin he had information on bars that functioned as houses of prostitution as well as on police payoffs. Chaplin informed the Revenue Department and put them in contact with Richter. After conducting a background check, the department entered into an arrangement with him and agreed to pay for any verifiable information he could provide. Their four-week long investigation proved lucrative. Raids were conducted on bars in which a number of people were arrested and charged with prostitution and operating an establishment that housed prostitutes.¹³³

Though effective, the agreement with Richter proved to be problematic. While the use of underworld figures as informants is not unusual, the agreement was controversial because Morrison and the NOPD were left completely in the dark about the operation. What also made it unusual was how close the Revenue Department was working with the *Item*. It was agreed to that the *Item* would be the first to receive any information Richter obtained from his undercover meetings, thereby allowing them to assign a reporter to the

¹³² "Arrest Special Prober Hired By State Revenue Department," *New Orleans States*, April 28, 1953, 1; "Richter's Police Records," *New Orleans States*, April 28, 1953, 1; "State-Paid Informer's Arrest Leads to Series of Disclosures," *Times-Picayune*, April 29, 1953, 1.

¹³³ "Copy of Richter's Agreement with Revenue Office," *New Orleans States*, April 28, 1953, 1.; "Item Tells Role In Richter Case," *New Orleans States*, April 29, 1953, 1.

potential story. Only after that was done, would Richter's information be turned over to the Revenue Department so raids could be conducted.¹³⁴

Morrison viewed this as a "flagrant interference and a scheme entered into with one newspaper for the obvious purpose to produce a scandal." In a letter to Deano, which was again printed in newspapers, Morrison relayed his grievances when he pointed to the hypocrisy of Deano's promise of cooperation. "You speak of co-operation with the city," Morrison wrote, "but your activities obviously have been directed at undermining and attempting to create unfavorable publicity in one newspaper." Morrison continued, "In so far [sic] as crime detection is concerned, there has been little or none. Six prostitution arrests in two months have added, in my opinion, very little to the cause of law enforcement." He went on to compare the Revenue Department's record to that of the NOPD's, which arrested and convicted ninety-seven persons for the same crime during the same period.¹³⁵

Once again, Morrison took this as an opportunity to shift the narrative. Rather than see this situation as a police corruption problem, he chose to see it as an image problem. The investigation conducted by the Revenue Department embarrassed Morrison and the NOPD. It proved again that Morrison chose to focus more on his image than discuss the more important issue of police corruption. Morrison's complaint about Deano's actions, however, was not without merit. Deano's letter to Morrison, which ended with him trying to create a spirit of cooperation, seemed hollow. The investigation conducted by the Revenue Department intentionally kept Morrison and the NOPD out of the loop. The reason behind this is unknown, but it can be assumed that the state did not

¹³⁴ "State-Paid Informer's Arrest Leads to Series of Disclosures," *Times-Picayune*, April 29, 1953, 1.

¹³⁵ "Morrison Flays Deano-Item as Scandal Scheme," *New Orleans States*, April 29, 1953, 1.

fully trust Morrison or the NOPD. Much like the raids conducted at the beginning of the month, Deano wished to keep their investigation from leaking to any corrupt police officers.

As expected, Deano denied the allegations. Like he did previously, Deano wrote a letter placing the blame on Morrison and Scheuering for lack of cooperation. “Your opinion of our activities is of interest to us only after you have demonstrated a sincere desire to clean up our city and meet with us to discuss our future plans toward that end.” He also took another personal swipe at Morrison when he wrote, “You have been in office for seven years and our police officials have been on the force for a much greater period of time. It certainly does not flatter your law enforcement program to now complain to the Department of Revenue about ‘chronic violators’” But even with these remarks, Deano closed his letter with again appealing for cooperation between the state and the city.¹³⁶

Deano’s counter-letter to Morrison, which was also printed in newspapers, got to the heart of the city’s continued problem with vice. Although Morrison and the NOPD leadership had been in control for almost a decade these problems persisted. Lack of leadership or the desire to do anything about the problem, especially when it came to possible collusion between vice elements and corrupt police officers, allowed these issues to fester. Police officers had the revised ordinances to go after prostitution and B-drinking. Enforcement of those laws, however, became the prime issue.

The public feud that played out in the local press between Morrison and Deano destroyed any kind of working relationship they could have had. Their inability to

¹³⁶ “Deano Answers Mayor’s Charge Of Scandal Plan,” *New Orleans States*, May 1, 1953, 29.

establish trust hindered cooperation and allowed for vice activities to continue unopposed. Newspapers took notice of this ineffective policing but did not blame the Revenue Department or the state police. They instead questioned the NOPD's inaction. The *Times-Picayune* editorial board questioned if the NOPD was up to the task of cleaning house in their own ranks as well as the city. They also opined that the "failure of the department to spot and prove wrongdoing of its own members seems to have been characteristic" of the NOPD. They pointed to Raymond Hughes' arrest as proof of their charge. The editorial credited the state police with this arrest. The "the official contention that the trouble in the department has been caused by 'a sour apple or two' [was] no answer to the record of the department in leaving it to outsiders to expose its misdoings." The editorial board concluded by questioning whether Morrison would actively commit to improving the police department or continue to ignore the NOPD's inability to purge itself of corrupt officers.¹³⁷

Morrison's cooperation with the state had reached its limit. Over the span of the month of April, relations deteriorated rapidly. Accusations lobbed at Morrison by Deano, along with the Jack Richter controversy, left no room for future collaborations. Local actions would have to be taken if he and the NOPD were to see results and regain the public's trust. Morrison would have to rely on the new committee he formed as a saving grace.

¹³⁷ "Able to Clean House?," *Times-Picayune*, May 1, 1953, 10.

The Final Plan

When the committee's final plans were released to the public, a special citizens' committee, created by the commission council and finalized in an ordinance passed on April 24, resembled Moore's original proposal. The committee would be comprised of three representatives from the organizations Moore had previously listed. Each selected member would be approved by the Commission Council before taking up the task of investigating the police. Moore noted that the method used in "selecting a citizens' committee was chosen in order that the public may have confidence in the fact that they are an independently selected, nonpartisan, qualified group of citizens." He went further when he stated, "The council committee has [taken] no part in the selection of these citizens...and has in no way assumed responsibility for them."¹³⁸

Politics was almost completely removed from the process. The only political situation that remained was through the appointment and confirmation of the representatives by the Commission Council. Moore stressed, however, that establishing the citizens' committee was not intended to relieve the Commission Council of the responsibility of helping to fix vice and police corruption. Rather, it was seen as "simply an instrumentality to achieve a complete discharge of those responsibilities without a duplication of effort or waste of funds." The responsibilities invested in the new committee were to employ investigators and to actively supervise the investigation. They also had the power to subpoena witnesses, documents, and other materials, as well as administer oaths when taking testimony. Moore noted, "The citizens' committee will make available to the [Commission Council] facts and recommendations from time to

¹³⁸ "Three Names for Citizens' Probe," *New Orleans States*, April 17, 1953, 1.

time as may be appropriate.” Despite the appearance of the special citizens’ committee taking on the bulk of the responsibility to investigate police corruption, Moore emphasized the Commission Council would be the ones to act on any recommendations. “The primary responsibility for both phases of the investigation, administration and criminal,” he wrote, “rest on the commission council.”¹³⁹

Moore wished to inspire public confidence in the newly formed committee by filling it with people whose credentials would allow people to believe any wrongdoing discovered would be corrected. Representing the Metropolitan Crime Commission was George C. Stohlman, executive general agent for the Missouri Pacific and Gulf Coast railroad lines. He was also on the board of directors of the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce. From the Bureau of Governmental Research, Tulane Law professor and former U.S. attorney for the eastern district of Louisiana, Leon D. Hubert, Jr. was chosen. And from the Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI, former agent Dudley C. Foley, Jr. was appointed.¹⁴⁰

The final component to the formation of the Special Citizens’ Investigative Committee was to find a person to lead it. Aaron M. Kohn, a lawyer and former FBI agent, served as head of the Chicago Crime Commission, which in 1952, conducted a ten-month study on corruption in the Chicago police department. Its final report issued a damning set of facts about the state of corruption in the Chicago police department. The recognition Kohn received from his tenure as chief investigator caught the attention of civic and business groups in New Orleans. They wished for Kohn to do for their city

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ “Citizens Named for Cop Inquiry,” *Times-Picayune*, April 18, 1953, 1.

what he did for Chicago. When an invitation to lead the newly created committee was extended to Kohn, he readily accepted.¹⁴¹

Moore's new committee emphasized citizen participation in fixing the vice and police corruption problem. He believed it was necessary in order to keep the process as transparent as possible. Morrison's political plan, if implemented, could have led to more accusations of police corruption and a continuation of the status quo with regard to vice in the city. Over the ensuing months, the committee would prove to be apolitical, which Moore had advocated, and an effective tool to uncover the extent of police corruption. Specifically, it would uncover the connection between police officers and prostitution in the city.

The new committee, which was officially called the Special Citizens' Investigating Committee (SCIC), was created under six specific circumstances:

- 1) Lack of community confidence in the integrity and efficiency of the police department.
- 2) Generally observed violations of the law accompanied by apparent lack of enforcement by the department.
- 3) Frustration of grand juries, law enforcement officials and the Mayor's Special Citizens' Committee for the Vieux Carré in their efforts to obtain the facts with cooperation of the police department.
- 4) Charges of rape, theft, bribery, and self-burglaries* allegedly committed by police officers.
- 5) Statements that the police department is under-paid and under-manned.
- 6) The need for a non-political, unbiased and thorough investigation of the police department with the results thereof to be made available for appropriate action by the Commission Council, the grand jury, and the community as a whole.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Haas, *DeLesseps S. Morrison*, 195; "Citizens' Cop Probe Will Head Crime Body," *New Orleans States*, June 4, 1953, 22; Kyle P. Willshire, "Aaron Kohn Attacks Corruption in New Orleans: An Intersection of Media and Politics, 1953-1955" (Thesis, University of New Orleans, 2013), 20.

¹⁴² Report of the Special Citizens Investigating Committee of the Commission Council of New Orleans, The New Orleans Police Department, Vol. I Conclusions and Recommendations, 1, Special Citizens Investigating Committee, Vol. I (annotated), 1954, Eugene S. Pennebaker and Frances Ohrum Pennebaker Papers, Box 6, Folder 3, Tulane Louisiana Research Collection. The listed "self-burglaries" implies that police officers staged burglaries on their own properties or businesses.

Its goal was “to conduct an investigation which would result in such administrative and legislative changes as would improve the efficiency, capabilities and morale of the police department and gain for it a position of public trust and confidence.”¹⁴³

With an official mandate in place, the SCIC began their investigations into the NOPD. But, like with most corrupt government apparatuses, the committee faced considerable pushback from the NOPD as well as from the Morrison administration. The efforts to stonewall and outright end the SCIC’s investigations proved both the NOPD and Chep Morrison sought to maintain a status quo that saw a continuation of certain vice in the city. Too much money would be lost, either from police payoffs or loss of tourism revenue, if the SCIC were to be completely successful.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 2-3.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SPECIAL CITIZENS' INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE

The Special Citizens' Investigating Committee's (SCIC) objective to end corruption in the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) was met with the reality of the status quo championed by Morrison and the NOPD. Police involvement in criminal activities, particularly prostitution, served as a detriment to civic and business organizations' efforts to cleanse the French Quarter of undesirables. The positive work accomplished through the SCCVC proved to be all for naught due to the protection police officers offered to prostitutes in exchange for monetary gain. The SCIC's effort to investigate the police also served as a way to uncover criminal activities that routinely occurred in bars and nightclubs all over the French Quarter, most of which the SCCVC was unable to address due to lack of resources and manpower. In reality, the police were part of a system that allowed for the perpetuation of prostitution because they shielded these women from prosecution. Token raids were conducted as a way to show the police were doing something about the problem, but no one arrested during these raids stayed in jail longer than a few hours; most being bailed out by the madam of the house they worked in.

The SCIC was plagued from the beginning by stonewalling from the Morrison administration and lawsuits filed by members of the Fraternal Order of Police to stop the committee from holding public hearings. The lawsuits were ultimately successful when on December 2, 1953 a Civil District Court Judge Frank J. Stich issued a preliminary injunction that stopped the hearings from continuing. Stich ruled that section five of the city charter, which gives the city council the power to issue subpoenas and dole out punishment if they go unanswered, was unconstitutional. He did not however, rule

whether the SCIC itself was unconstitutional. The injunction left Aaron Kohn and the SCIC in a precarious situation. Even though the injunction was eventually lifted and the hearings were allowed to continue, Kohn realized the obstacles facing him and the committee. He had no choice but to continue with the SCIC's work using the information previously gathered.¹⁴⁴

Just as Morrison relied on his reform image to advance his own interests, so too did Kohn. By using television cameras that were present during the SCIC public testimonies, Kohn was able to reach the public in a way that could achieve maximum impact. He sought to portray a corrupt police force working hand in hand with prostitution operators.

It must be noted that the SCIC was not a committee that centered on the clean-up efforts that civic and business organizations had envisioned. Despite this, it managed to serve a purpose that was just as valuable as investigations into vice crimes themselves. Rooting out police corruption was at the heart of the SCIC's investigation. If the committee were to help remedy the problem and force out any corrupt police officers, then the cleanup efforts started by the SCCVC could continue to eliminate undesirables from the French Quarter as the civic and business groups originally intended. This chapter lays out the extent of the involvement police officers had with prostitution. Not only did the investigations reveal they received kickbacks for protection, it also exposed the charade behind brothel raids. In doing so, the SCIC proved that police were partially responsible for the continued criminal activities in the French Quarter - and that the police had no intention of changing this.

¹⁴⁴ "Probe of Orleans Police Halted by Court Order," *Times-Picayune*, December 2, 1953, 1.

The Investigation

From June to December 1953, the SCIC, led by chief investigator Aaron M. Kohn, employed undercover operatives to study various hotspots of potential criminal activities. They focused their attention mainly on bars and nightclubs in the French Quarter. Once an investigator's observations were complete, the investigator submitted their findings in a written report to Kohn. These reports contained information of alleged illegal activities and where they took place. It must be noted, however, that they did not cite what specific laws were actually broken. The investigations were fact-finding missions. It was up to Kohn and his committee to determine how to classify which laws were broken. The majority of reports detailed encounters with prostitutes, pimps, drug dealers, and other criminal elements. When all the investigations were complete, Kohn used these reports to create a witness list and to develop possible questions to ask in the next phase of the SCIC.

The reports themselves portray a city filled with vice activities that police appeared unable or unwilling to contain. In one finding, George Stevens, an undercover investigator, stated "prostitution existed in a pretty big scale at this time in the city of New Orleans. It's not open but it's open enough so that if a blind man, well dressed, was going down the street, he would be solicited..." When Stevens turned to the description of possible police payoffs, he implied it was impossible for the police not to know these houses existed. "It appears strange that the man on the beat, or anyone under the jurisdiction of the New Orleans police department, could not, or would not, know unless he was not interested." While he admitted that he did not personally observe any police

payoffs, he strongly believed they existed, especially in the French Quarter, by way of gifts or cash payments.¹⁴⁵

Beyond employing undercover operatives, Kohn requested citizens send the SCIC any tips and other helpful information. Citizens heeded his call, most often anonymously. In one instance, Kohn received a call that stated three police captains conducted “shakedowns” on gambling, narcotics, and prostitution operations in exchange for protection. The anonymous informant, who claimed to be a police officer, indicated that the police would raid any business that did not make the payoff and receive the “O.K.” from one of the captains. Police Captain Joseph Guilliot, who led the NOPD vice squad and was alleged to be one of the corrupt captains, was purported to have collected payoffs from five hundred illegal establishments. But the anonymous informant’s most damning information was the accusation that the entire narcotics squad was part of the shakedown operations. Drug addicts, dealers, and prostitutes were their primary targets. The money collected would then be delivered directly to the office of Superintendent Joseph I. Scheuering every Monday at 3:00 p.m.¹⁴⁶

This anonymous informant directly implicated the vice and narcotics squad and confirmed accusations that the police were in some form of collusion with vice operators. And the fact that the information allegedly came from a police officer made it even more damning. But, one must be skeptical of the information provided. It was never verified by Kohn or the SCIC that the informant was indeed a police officer. This did not stop Kohn,

¹⁴⁵ George Stevens, interviewed by James F. Delany, 10 September 1953, Box 3, Folder 63, 5-7, City Council Special Citizens Investigating Committee, 1953-1963, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

¹⁴⁶ Aaron M Kohn Investigative Report, 30 July 1953, Box 1, Folder 13, 1-2, City Council Special Citizens Investigating Committee, 1953-1963, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

however, from using this information to confirm his preconceived narrative about the NOPD.

Citizens also sent in their tips and information was through letters, both signed and anonymously. A typical letter sent to Kohn gave names and addresses of known places where criminal elements conducted business. One such letter, signed by a J.J. Sheffield, indicated that Sam's Colombo Vanity, on Iberville near Exchange Alley in the French Quarter, was frequented by "cut throats, [and] women of the streets." Sheffield also alleged that the establishment had police protection. Another letter, sent anonymously, designated Punch & Judy, another French Quarter bar, of having engaged in "very undesirable and shady situation[s]." The writer suggested the bar "operat[ed] what appear[ed] to be a very flourishing house of prostitution." Letters like these were straight and to the point and their sheer number showed the widespread support for the SCIC's effort to clean up the city. It also revealed the extent to which citizens viewed the police department with distrust.¹⁴⁷

Not all letters sent to the SCIC were as informative as Sheffield's or the anonymous writer. Some people sent in opinion pieces that gave their view of the state of affairs in the city. One such letter, sent anonymously, blamed women for the problems facing the city. "Prostitution activities can be considered stable business in every town and city in the country," the letter stated, "where women are bartenders, women allowed in bars after the late hours of the night or morning, rooming houses above and near bars and hotels and motels" and so on. Putting the argument in moral terms, the writer asked

¹⁴⁷ J.J. Sheffield to Aaron M. Kohn, 9 July 1953, Box 1, Folder 15, City Council Special Citizens Investigating Committee, 1953-1963, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library; Anonymous to Aaron M. Kohn, 29 July 1953, Box 1, Folder 15, City Council Special Citizens Investigating Committee, 1953-1963, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

Kohn, "How can men respect their wives and children when they have the temptation and encouragement of other women who have no ambition to earn a living by work or toil?"

According to the writer, the solution to this problem rested on the actions of moral women:

All such women should be given treatment and encouragement to change their way of life and to work for a living in a respectable manner as the average housewife has to earn hers by daily hard work and toil. The [s]ocial [w]elfare should work together with the [p]olice [w]omen in conjunction with [r]eligious [s]ocieties in various parishes to find work for these bartenders and B-drinkers and Pros[titutes]. If there are no women in the bars during the late hours of the night there will be very few or no men in many a bar after midnight.¹⁴⁸

The writer's letter disclosed the thinking of some citizens who believed the root of the prostitution problem lay with women, themselves, much like the members of the SCCVC did. An un-virtuous woman tempted men into drinking, which could guide them to other actions that led to "broken homes and divorce[d] families." This sexist and dangerous thinking placed too much blame on women and not enough on the men who were willing participants in any such "immoral" action. Accountability for men seemed to be lacking in the writer's logic.¹⁴⁹

Other letters expressed a cynical attitude toward the success of the cleanup effort. One anonymous letter sent to Kohn stated:

You must forgive my cynicism regarding the success of your undertaking, but reform waves have struck New Orleans many times in the past years and have receded, leaving conditions the same as before, and may times, even worse. Those who do not accept graft to turn their backs on

¹⁴⁸ Anonymous letter to Special Citizens' Investigating Committee, 10 July 1953, Box 1, Folder 15, 1-7, City Council Special Citizens Investigating Committee, 1953-1963, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

organized vice, do so in order to assist friends, or as political favors; and consequently are equally as guilty as the ones who line their pockets.¹⁵⁰

The letter did, however, provide encouragement to Kohn. “Hit and hit hard,” it read, “do what you can, you will have the thanks of all the good citizenry...” This letter, while not providing helpful information, showed Kohn that he and the SCIC had the support of many New Orleanians, though even sympathetic writers recognized that most likely very little could be done.¹⁵¹

The main objective of Kohn’s investigators and the request for information from citizens was to identify witnesses willing to testify that they saw a police officer receive a payoff. His efforts achieved mixed results. In most cases, the investigators relied on hearsay and other secondhand information given to them when they interviewed people. On other occasions, the investigators witnessed an implied payoff. This was the case when an investigator saw two police officers enter a bar and head toward a back office to speak with a group of men who appeared to run the establishment. The investigator observed one of those men go behind the bar, pull cash out of the register and then return to the rear of the bar to continue to converse with the police officers. No direct payoff was actually witnessed.¹⁵²

One informant spoke with an embittered cab driver who hated Morrison for leading a cleanup of vice activities. But the driver, who despised the police even more, believed they “weren’t satisfied with getting paid off in their districts – they all had to come down to the Quarter.” Since cab drivers were a leading conduit for connecting

¹⁵⁰ Anonymous letter to Aaron M. Kohn, 24 July 1953, Box 1, Folder 17, City Council Special Citizens Investigating Committee, 1953-1963, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Confidential Investigator #5 Investigative Report, 7 September 1953, Box 1, Folder 17, 1-2, City Council Special Citizens Investigating Committee, 1953-1963, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

clients with prostitutes, his anger revealed how the police were most likely cutting into money the cab drivers would normally receive from house operators, perhaps because operators were paying off the police using a portion of money that would normally go to cab drivers.¹⁵³

While not exactly what Kohn had hoped for, the multiple investigator accounts allowed him to claim payoffs did exist since such transactions would most likely not happen out in the open. The information gathered by both the investigators and public contributions revealed a history of police complacency and complicity of city vice. If police officers did not receive direct payoffs from house operators and other business establishments, then they willingly turned a blind eye to the problem. This information became the basis for the public hearings that soon followed. Kohn sought to present his findings and hammer at the close ties between the NOPD and vice operators, which, based on the reports he had, were tight knit.

The Police Department Under Scrutiny

On November 24, Supt. Joseph I. Scheuring testified publicly in front of the SCIC. He sought to convey the impression that the police department under his stewardship did everything within its power to curb prostitution. But Scheuring's words provided little evidence to support his narrative. During this testimony, Kohn asked an array of questions regarding the methods used by the police when confronted with alleged prostitution. Scheuring answered that all complaints were investigated, even if they came from an anonymous source. However, when asked, "If a member of his

¹⁵³ Confidential Investigator #1 Investigative Report, 20 July 1953, Box 1, Folder 15, 1, City Council Special Citizens Investigating Committee, 1953-1963, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

department makes contact with a house of prostitution is he required to report the contact?" His response was mixed; at times even contradicting what he previously said "If it is a known establishment of prostitution he would be required to make report. However," he continued, "if he makes contact with someone suspected of being in prostitution he would not be required to report." Scheuering explained that the only time the officer would be required to report alleged houses was if they were questioned about it.¹⁵⁴

Scheuering's statement disclosed the procedure used by police officers when targeting prostitutes. They chose to focus mainly on easier targets; targets that were known by the police. They turned a blind eye to the rest. He doubled-down on this head-in-the-sand approach when he adamantly stated, "I do not believe there are houses of prostitution." This denial and lack of awareness showed Scheuering's complacency with the status quo and lack of interest in curbing the prostitution problem.¹⁵⁵

Kohn's next line of questioning sought to test Scheuering's knowledge of existing laws. When asked about property that housed prostitutes, Scheuering answered that he was not familiar with that aspect of the law and did not recall any instance wherein an owner was ever even charged with running a house of prostitution. When asked if the department had ever thought to notify the property owner that police suspected prostitution was being conducted on their premises, he replied that he did not believe this had ever happened but agreed the idea was worth considering. The problem with his statement is that Scheuering consulted with the SCCVC when the revised ordinances were being considered in the fall of 1950. He also would have known all the provisions

¹⁵⁴ "Police Make Own Inquires on Graft, Says Scheuering," *Times-Picayune*, November 24, 1953, 8.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

of the revised ordinances once they were passed. Thus, Scheuering's claims of ignorance of the law were highly suspect.¹⁵⁶

Scheuering's testimony provided insight into the indifference shown by the police department. His answers to Kohn's questions revealed the lack of enforcement even though laws were in place to address prostitution operators. This inaction proved to be a pattern that led to Scheuering's immediate suspension and eventual indictment for maleficence in office. The next witness would only add to these problems.¹⁵⁷

Kohn continued to question others in the police department who would have knowledge of the department's efforts to curb prostitution. Each officer confirmed Scheuering's lax enforcement. During Acting Superintendent Milton I. Durel's testimony, he indicated he knew of no arrests of the owners of houses of prostitution. When asked why this was the case, Durel replied, "The superintendent orders such action." Kohn followed up his question by asking if he had ever suggested to Scheuering that they arrest the owners. Durel stated, "No, I don't believe." But the question that Kohn posed to Durel that he could not answer dealt with the fact that the SCIC received more calls and complaints about houses of prostitution than the police department did. While Scheuering indicated that the NOPD investigated every complaint sent to them, Durel stated that the police department did not receive many complaints. Kohn went further by asking, "Will you explain why repeatedly persons who call the office of the citizens committee and are told to call the police district without exception say that it doesn't do any good? That nothing happens, or if something does happen, the police go

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Scheuering was eventually indicted on December 8, 1953, stemming from an incident that happened two years prior to his SCIC testimony. His indictment was due to his failure to report a burglary to the district attorney as well as his failure to charge police officers connected to the incident, see "Scheuering and Daniels Will Get Speedy Trials," *New Orleans States*, December 9, 1953, 1.

to the house and embarrass the complainant.” Durel only responded with, “I don’t know.”¹⁵⁸

Durel had his own stigma of covering up prostitution issues. In a letter dated October 12, 1953, Kohn received an anonymous letter offering information on a house of prostitution operated by Mabel Clifton. The letter stated that even though various bars working in conjunction with Clifton were closed, new establishments opened to take their place. It was also alleged that Durel had the position of “top fixer” when it came to complaints about houses of prostitution. The letter asserted Durel handled complaints directly with the operator of the house in an attempt to smooth over the issue when possible. No evidence was provided regarding the accusation toward Durel. But the fact that the author implicated him only cemented the notion that the police wished to keep a certain status quo with these houses. This fact was even stated at the end of the letter:

Hoping that I have been of help in some measure to all the important work you are doing for the betterment of the city and the people who are native as well as others who have come here to live permanently but have been powerless most of the time in not being able to keep their immediate neighborhood clean because of indifferen[ce] to hands off police work.¹⁵⁹

Scheuering and Durel’s testimony left the public’s faith in the police department at a low point. A *New Orleans States* editorial expressed this when it described the police department as being “under a cloud” due to the “widespread reports of possible corruption and mismanagement in the department.” In the end, the *States* opined, “Not

¹⁵⁸ “Acting Police Superintendent Durel’s Testimony at Hearing of City Council,” *Times-Picayune*, December 8, 1953, 16.

¹⁵⁹ Anonymous to Aaron M. Kohn, 12 October 1953, New Orleans, Louisiana, Vice Activities Prostitution, City Council Special Citizens Investigating Committee Records, 1953-1963, Folder 69, Box 3, New Orleans Public Library City Archives.

much ha[d] dispell[ed] those doubts.” They pointed to Scheuering’s indictment as an example of the corruption and mismanagement.¹⁶⁰

Two conclusions resulted from Scheuering and Durel’s testimony about the state of the police department. Both gave answers that disclosed the NOPD had an unwritten policy of maintaining a status quo with houses of prostitution. It was also revealed that within this status quo existed a system in which police and house operators created an illusion of enforcement, when in fact, there was very little being done.

Members of the NOPD were not the only people Kohn questioned during the public hearings. Knowing he needed to examine previous work done on this subject, he turned to former SCCVC member Rev. Robert Jamieson. Well versed in efforts to eradicate prostitution from the French Quarter, Jamieson was more than willing to give his testimony on the matter.

The Return of Rev. Robert Jamieson

In preparation for his investigation, Kohn researched previous efforts to clean up prostitution in the city. The most recent of those efforts was the short-lived SCCVC created in the wake of the Robert Dunn murder. Jamieson had been the committee’s most outspoken critic of prostitution. Wishing to continue his moral crusade, Jamieson volunteered to testify, both publicly and privately, in front of the SCIC.

Rev. Jamieson’s previous work with the SCCVC produced two reports on prostitution. The first report delivered in September 1950 gave a list of ten recommendations on a revised prostitution ordinance. The final report delivered in

¹⁶⁰ “Police Indicated,” *New Orleans States*, December 9, 1953, 12.

December, was of interest to the Kohn and the SCIC. In this report, Jamieson described a well-organized citywide prostitution syndicate. Using municipal court records and newspaper files, Jamieson and his sub-committee pointed not only to the number of convictions that were disproportionate to the number of arrests for prostitution, but also to the fact that two well-known houses of prostitutes that were frequented by “exclusive clientele” were not raided, even though Supt. Scheuering allegedly knew about them. Jamieson wished to share this information to help strengthen Kohn’s case for the existence of police corruption.¹⁶¹

In a series of interviews conducted, between August 1953 and February 1954, Jamieson provided insight into the workings of Morrison’s defunct SCCVC. Specifically, he spoke of his work as chairman of the commission’s sub-committee on prostitution. Jamieson’s interview furthered the narrative that the police and courts had a history of lax enforcement of the prostitution ordinance. He also spoke of the important findings of the Kefauver investigation, which found that a “new era” of prostitution operations had arisen. Jamieson stated:

No longer did you have the women tapping on windows or accosting on the streets of the French Quarter, but a more elaborate system made it much more difficult to contact prostitutes, a system of calls girls and party girls, that were not necessarily in residence upon the premises but were on call either by a madam who lived on the premise or cab drivers who knew their phone numbers and so on.¹⁶²

This new system of prostitution made it difficult to root out the problem because it was easier to hide in plain sight. While houses of prostitution continued to exist, their main

¹⁶¹ *Report of Sub-Committee on Prostitution of the Mayor’s Special Citizens Committee For the Vieux Carré*, December 9, 1950, within the *Public Hearing Before the Commission Council of the City of New Orleans During Pendency of Temporary Restraining Order Against Special Citizen’s Investigating Council Committee*, December 29, 1953, p 247, City Council, Special Citizens Investigating Committee, Records, 1953-1963, Folder 3, Box 10, New Orleans Public Library.

¹⁶² Jamieson Private Testimony, 214

form of advertising was word of mouth. In other words, people had to know what and whom they were looking for in order to find a prostitute.

Jamieson informed Kohn that during his sub-committee's investigation, he discovered only thirty-two prostitutes were arrested within a six-month period. However, those who were arrested were ultimately charged with vagrancy rather than prostitution. Jamieson blamed the presiding judges for not having held hearings to properly charge and prosecute the women. This changed once the revised ordinance was enacted. But Jamieson did not quite believe it would last. He confirmed this when he corroborated Kohn's suspicion that Morrison and the police were involved in "double talk" with regard to actively cleaning up vice in the city.¹⁶³

As proof of this allegation, Jamieson provided Kohn a confidential memorandum issued to Morrison that contained comments on the SCCVC's investigation as of May 31, 1951. The memo indicated that houses of prostitution, which were brought to Morrison and the police's attention by the sub-committee, were, with the exception of one, still operating. One house, the memorandum read, remained open despite being raided six times within a six-month period.¹⁶⁴

Jamieson publicly testified to this information on December 29, 1953. His testimony provided the public the same information he gave in private interviews Kohn and even described the time he was personally propositioned in the French Quarter.

¹⁶³ Investigative Report, Subject: Vieux Carré Commission, 9 November 1953, Special Citizens Investigative Bodies (Special Citizens Committee for the Vieux Carré), City Council, Special Citizens Investigating Committee Records, 1953-1963, Folder 25, Box 7, New Orleans Public Library City Archives.

¹⁶⁴ Investigative Report, Subject: Vieux Carré Commission, 26 February 1953, Special Citizens Investigative Bodies (Special Citizens Committee for the Vieux Carré), City Council, Special Citizens Investigating Committee Records, 1953-1963, Folder 25, Box 7, New Orleans Public Library City Archives.

Recounting his work on the Sub-Committee on Prostitution Activities, Jamieson stated its findings that “Prostitution was a problem not only because there were women involved in it and it existed not only because there were women, but we found of the major reason for prostitution existing was the fact that it was profitable to individuals other than the women involved.” The sub-committee used this reasoning as the basis for its recommendation to the Commission Council to revise the prostitution ordinance to better enforce and prosecute prostitutes and those who profited from their labor. The unanimously approved ordinance, Jamieson said, even gained the approval of the American Social Hygiene Association (ASHA), an organization that conducted its own investigation of prostitution in the city for the previous three years. Each of ASHA’s reports continued to give the city a *poor* rating due to the ease of obtaining a prostitute as an outsider as well as the number of places that could provide a prostitute.¹⁶⁵

Jamieson’s invocation of the ASHA’s reports allowed the SCIC to review an outsider’s perspective on the issue. He pointed to a report issued by the group in April 1953 that found many of the places they investigated and listed in prior reports continued to be in operation. In an effort to be thorough, Jamieson met with the ASHA investigative representative and participated in a ride along. After the meeting, he concluded the information provided by ASHA was credible. Based on these facts, Jamieson stated, “The conclusion we arrived at...was that prostitution, as it was being practiced in the City of New Orleans, could only possibly continue because of a laxity of enforcement.” The

¹⁶⁵ Rev. Robert R. Jamieson, Public Hearing Before the Commission Council of the City of New Orleans, 29 December 1953, 211, 215-216, Public Hearing, City Council. Special Citizens Investigating Committee Records, 1953-1963, Folder 10, Box 3, New Orleans Public Library City Archives.

revised prostitution ordinance was helpful, but without enforcement it remained a hollow gesture.¹⁶⁶

During his time on the Sub-Committee on Prostitution Activities, Jamieson interviewed prostitutes and inquired about their mode of operation. While he found no evidence of an organized syndicate, he did find that various houses worked in conjunction with each other, which allowed them to shuffle women from house to house as needed. Jamieson also discovered through the course of his interviews that houses of prostitution created a procedure in the event of a raid. Someone would tip off the house that a raid was to occur, and when the police arrived only a few women in the house were picked up, leaving others behind. The house operator created a system in which women would alternate who would be arrested and who would stay behind. No direct evidence was discovered, however, that connect the police to tipping off the houses. Nevertheless, it was strongly implied the police were involved due to the fact that the tip had to have come from someone with direct knowledge of the raids or worked close to those who organized and executed them.¹⁶⁷

Rev. Jamieson's interviews and public testimony served two purposes. Firstly, it gave insight into the workings of prostitution in the city by confirming the Kefauver report's conclusion about the existence of a new system arising out of the older known form of prostitution and how prostitution continued to exist despite the introduction of the revised prostitution ordinance in 1950. Secondly, it served to further Kohn's case against the mayor and the police department. Kohn viewed their inactions as a direct

¹⁶⁶ Rev. Robert R. Jamieson, Public Hearing Before the Commission Council of the City of New Orleans, 29 December 1953, 217, Public Hearing, City Council. Special Citizens Investigating Committee Records, 1953-1963, Folder 10, Box 3, New Orleans Public Library City Archives.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 212, 222.

dereliction of their duties. He believed they had no interest or intention of completely closing down the houses.

Any moral outrage perceived by the Morrison administration came out of the need to appear to tackle a problem the public deemed a nuisance. But it was businesses and civic groups with a stake in keeping the city safe for residents and tourists who were actually driving the action rather than the public at large. Jamieson fit in the middle. He was a civic leader who sought to clean up the French Quarter because his congregation was located next to a known house of prostitution. Rather than abandon his crusade, Jamieson continued to fight against prostitution even though he had left his French Quarter congregation and moved to his new one in Harahan, a suburb of New Orleans.

Having publicly interviewed police officers and a member of the former SCCVC who had knowledge of prostitution in the city, Kohn sought the testimony of an actual prostitute who could give a first-hand account of operations as well as show how the police fit into their daily activities. The witness, Kohn hoped, would provide the final undisputed piece of evidence needed to tie the prostitutes and police together. This witness was Doris Gellman.

Doris Gellman

On December 20th, Doris Gellman sat before the SCIC, her testimony televised for all of New Orleans to witness. She was tasked by Kohn to describe her experience as a prostitute from 1946 to 1951. Kohn hoped her testimony would provide further evidence of the lack of police enforcement of prostitution laws as well as shed light on any possible collusion with houses of prostitution. Gellman's testimony, however, was

marked by interruptions by Morrison and censorship from members of the committee. They allegedly did not wish for her to describe her work in great detail in order to maintain an air of decorum for the people watching the proceedings at home.

During her testimony, Gellman described the various ways “girls” worked as prostitutes. Some worked in houses where men arrived and sought their services, and others worked in houses where “the girls were there to call for dates.” According to Gellman, men would call the operator of the house and the prostitute would leave the house accompanied by a chauffeur to meet up with the client. House operators used this method as a way to limit their business’ visibility.¹⁶⁸

Gellman admitted to working for various notable house operators intermittently during her time as a prostitute, usually going “where the most money was.” Each operator conducted their business as they saw fit in order to keep functioning. One such person was Norma Wallace, whom Gellman worked for. Wallace, a well-established madam, or landlady, was well-known throughout the city due, in part, to many influential people who were her clients.¹⁶⁹

Christine Wiltz’s historical narrative, *The Last Madam*, delves into Wallace’s life using Wallace’s tape recordings, which Wallace recorded in the last two years of her life. Wiltz was able to piece together Wallace’s interactions during the 1950s, during the decade-long effort to clean up the city. In that time period, Wiltz concludes that Wallace developed a relationship with Superintendent Scheuring. She was quoted as saying, “He said I had a nice place and he would go along with it as long as he could.” Wallace’s statements confirm that Scheuring and the police knew of these houses and sought to

¹⁶⁸ “Doris Gellman Questioned On Prostitution,” *New Orleans States*, December 30, 1953, 1.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

protect the status quo. One has to be cautious, however, about taking her words as fact. Neither Wallace nor Wiltz provide direct evidence of this relationship. It is all based on Wallace's recollection.¹⁷⁰

Gellman described the process women went through before they started working for Wallace. She explained that women would first go to Wallace's house to be interviewed by her. Then, after the interview was conducted, "If she wants you to go work," Gellman said, "she put you on." When Wallace accepted a woman, she gave them the option of either staying in the house full-time or, like Gellman, work only when she needed to. However, when the "heat was on," Gellman indicated she worked at a call house for another operator.¹⁷¹

One such operator was Cody Morris, for whom Gellman was employed off and on from 1944 to 1949. She alleged that Morris had between nine and eleven women working a night. Those women on call would travel rather than have clients visit the house. Regardless of whom she worked for, there was one rule every woman had to follow. Each woman, according to Gellman, was required to get a blood test every week by Friday in order to work. "We had to show slips that said we had no venereal diseases," she stated. This slip of paper had to be from the Board of Health. In Gellman's case the doctor who examined her and other prostitutes worked for the Board of Health and provided the documentation. If a woman were found to have a sexually transmitted infection, she would have to go to a drug store to buy the appropriate medication. The health of the prostitute was important not only to continue repeat business but also to

¹⁷⁰ Christine Wiltz, *The Last Madam: A Life in the New Orleans Underworld* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2000), 81.

¹⁷¹ "Doris Gellman Questioned On Prostitution," *New Orleans States*, December 30, 1953, 1.

avoid having a disgruntled client who could decide to contact the police. When asked by Kohn if the police helped procure medication, Gellman answered no.¹⁷²

Gellman's time as a prostitute for Wallace and Morris allowed her to become familiar with how the prostitution business functioned in the city and how they managed to stay in operation for so long. This is what made her an important witness for Kohn. She could specifically describe how each operator differed in their dealings with clients and the police. The house call operations were more complex system of the two. Kohn pressed Gellman to explain the system with as much detail as possible. His first set of questions revolved around how the clients, or "dates," were arranged and how money was exchanged for services. She explained, "[the date] would call the house. He would call Cody [Morris] and tell him how many girls he needed. Sometimes there was a party and he wanted three or four. Sometimes just one or two. We'd get the money first and then give him the date." The dates would be arranged by either cab driver or by the hotel's house detective.¹⁷³

Once a date was set, the woman would be driven to the hotel where the client was staying. A bellhop, who the woman tipped on arrival, would then escort her inconspicuously towards an elevator to the client's room. Each date cost approximately ten dollars. Once the date was over, money would be divvied up depending on who arranged the date. If a cab driver made the arrangement, he received forty percent, the woman received thirty percent, and the house received a dollar. The rest went to the people at the hotel. If the house detective arranged the date, he received five to ten

¹⁷² Ibid.; "Testimony of Doris Gellman at Police Probe Hearing," *New Orleans States*, December 31, 1953, 5.

¹⁷³ "Doris Gellman Questioned On Prostitution," *New Orleans States*, December 30, 1953, 1. House detectives are employed by a hotel to investigate and prevent thefts.

dollars. This was separate from the amount paid by the client. Morris kept ledgers containing names of the girls, the dates they went on, the cab driver who picked up the dates, how much money the girls received, and how much money the cab driver got. According to Gellman, these records were meticulously maintained. With regard to traditional house operations, cab drivers were relied on to deliver clients to the house. As with the other system, cab drivers were given a cut of any money made from a client. The less complex system contained more risks due to its centralized location and the potential foot traffic it drew from men seeking their services.¹⁷⁴

The information presented by Gellman helped set the stage for what came next in her appearance before the SCIC. Kohn's most important line of questioning dealt with the description of a routine police raid on a house and what came afterwards. Gellman explained that when a complaint was made to the police on a house, the house operator would be tipped off beforehand. When the police arrived, "They [took] two or three girls out of the place and [left] the rest. You see, we took turns going to jail. They didn't want us to go out of business." Even though she never indicated who "they" were, nor did Kohn ask for clarification, it can be inferred that she was referring to the police. The next line of questioning reflected this assumption. Gellman informed the committee that during the times she was arrested, the police never actually charged her with prostitution. "They always charged us with loitering," she said. Even when caught in the act, she stated, "They charged us with loitering – playing cards in a house of prostitution." When they were arrested, the house operator would give them one hundred dollars for bail. The

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

money was given to the desk sergeant and the women waited for someone from the house to pick them up.¹⁷⁵

Kohn continued with his line of questioning and asked Gellman if a trial had ever occurred. She responded that trials did occur, however, no one was ever found guilty. “This happened so many times I can’t remember. It was a joke to us. We’d just go down, put up the money and get out.” Gellman even recounted a time when the police raided a house she was working in and a police officer “[came] up and [said] to us, ‘Who’s going to jail tonight?’ He would say he would rough us up a little bit to make it look good.” In a sense, the arresting officer put on a show for the people who gathered once the police wagon arrived to take the women to jail. It gave off the appearance that police were serious about cracking down on prostitution. Gellman’s description of the orchestrated arrests added to Kohn’s narrative. It became more than apparent that police were involved with house operators. Almost to the point that it was nothing out of the ordinary, that was routine and to be expected.¹⁷⁶

As Gellman continued to testify about the city’s prostitution operations, Kohn’s next line of questioning became a story of its own. At one moment Kohn veered toward a topic more sexual in nature when he asked her to explain what a “French Parisian show” was, causing Morrison to interrupt before she could answer. He advised Gellman not to go into graphic detail about the subject matter, while city attorney Henry B. Curtis advised the SCIC that her “testimony is improper and indecent and immoral. It is indecent and shocking. I would recommend to the council that this line of questioning be

¹⁷⁵ “Testimony of Doris Gellman at Police Probe Hearing,” *New Orleans States*, December 31, 1953, 5.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

stopped.” Rather than allow Gellman to answer the question and draw the ire of the rest of the committee, Kohn dropped the matter and moved on.¹⁷⁷

One has to wonder what Kohn’s reasoning was to ask such a sexually charged question in this particular public form. Even Gellman appeared hesitant to answer. He already knew what the term meant due to Gellman having told him in a private interview. It can be assumed that this was done to show the public the extent prostitutes went to please a client, even if that meant engaging in an act of lesbianism, which was considered a crime against nature.¹⁷⁸

Morrison and Curtis’ objections were understandable if Gellman’s private description was revealed in front of TV cameras. Even the *New Orleans States* objected to this question and opined, “It is not necessary for any witness to describe to [the committee] what constitutes an act of prostitution.” The editor acknowledged the importance of Gellman’s testimony, but asked the committee to stick to questions regarding the purpose of the investigation, which was to investigate the police department.¹⁷⁹

Up to this point, Gellman’s testimony had yet to provide the SCIC with firm confirmation that police were paid off by house operators. Kohn continued to press Gellman for this piece of evidence, but she admitted she never saw any money being exchanged. She did, however, give three examples of times where money was collected and possibly used to pay off the police. The first was when she worked in a house where the operator would take two dollars a night for “towel money.” She made it very clear

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Louisiana Revised Statute 14:89 Crime against nature.

¹⁷⁹ “Whence Our Investigation?,” *New Orleans States*, December 31, 1953, 8.

though that “They called it towel money, but we knew it was for police protection.” Asked if the operators recorded this money in their ledgers, she explained that they did not out of fear that other police officers might find them and cause more problems for their officers. Another example given was when she saw a police captain “hanging around” one of Morris’ businesses. Kohn asked if she heard any discussion around the house as to whether any money was given to the captain. She said yes, “I heard Cody say that’s all he came around for.” The third example dealt with Frank Rivard, a city official connected to the commission council. Gellman stated she saw him multiple times at businesses frequented by prostitutes. Much like with the police captain, while she did not see money exchange hands, she testified that the reason Rivard came around was to collect money. However, she provided no evidence to support her assertion. Gellman also indicated that Rivard had on various occasions solicited the services of prostitutes.¹⁸⁰

These pieces of evidence were not exactly what Kohn was hoping to uncover when he questioned Gellman. She failed to provide him with the eyewitness account that would have helped solidify his belief that the police were colluding with house operators. Furthermore, Gellman failed to mention during her testimony that while she was “dating” Police Detective Frank Marullo, a former member of the vice squad, he admitted that he was the collector for all the “cat” houses. The money he collected came from the two dollars women paid for “towel money.” Why Gellman did not say this in her public testimony, especially when she said that she knew what the towel money was used for, is

¹⁸⁰ “Doris Gellman Testimony at Police Hearing,” *New Orleans States*, January 6, 1954, 8.

not clear. One can assume she was either nervous when speaking to the committee and forgot or she was trying to protect Marullo.¹⁸¹

Gellman's testimony allowed the SCIC to gain an insider's perspective of the life of a prostitute and with it, how prostitution operated in the city. She also acknowledged and confirmed that a system of arrest and release existed, which allowed for the perpetuation of prostitution. Her admission that women tended not to be charged with prostitution, even when caught in the act, was telling. If anything, her testimony showed that police officers were more than willing to turn a blind eye on the problem. As for the motive for doing so, it is logical to believe it was mostly done for monetary gain. In either case, the police, by their actions or inactions, kept prostitution functioning in the city despite their rhetoric to the contrary.

Gellman's appearance before the SCIC allowed the public to hear an in-depth account of how prostitution operated in the city. Through her testimony she was able to convey the police had firsthand knowledge of the workings of a house of prostitution and that they had no intentions of shutting them down. If anything, this confirmed the suspicions of Kohn and New Orleanians who believed police corruption contributed to the problem. Newspaper editorials likewise believed prostitution's continued existence in the city was due to police corruption and indifference. Scheuering, Rev. Jamieson, and Gellman's testimony only confirmed this suspicion.

¹⁸¹ Informant #75 interviewed by Aaron M. Kohn, 28 October 1953, Box 1, Folder 13, 6, City Council Citizens Investigating Committee Records, 1953-1963, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

The Report

On April 26, 1954, the SCIC's official report was delivered to Commissioner A. Brown Moore along with seven copies distributed to other members of the Commission Council and Mayor Morrison. The report contained the SCIC's final assessment of the state of the police department and its involvement with vice elements, as well as its recommendations for how to remedy these problems. The SCIC concluded existing laws were adequate to combat illegal activities, but evidence existed that unequivocally indicated they suffered "from the failure of city officials and employees to discharge their sworn duty to enforce" them. In other words, the police department, whose responsibility was to enforce the laws, was the target of their criticism. The committee's conclusion applied to all aspects of illegal activities, particularly prostitution, which the report provided damning evidence of lax enforcement and payoffs. Testimony from people such as Gellman finally allowed for the failures of the police department and the city to be publicly exposed.¹⁸²

One example given by the SCIC regarding the city and police department's inaction to curb crime was the back and forth between Morrison and Guy Deano, Jr. of the Louisiana Department of Revenue that occurred the previous year. The committee did not understand why the city did not take action against those establishments labeled "chronic violators of the law." The report concluded that, "No explanation was given why such action was not being taken, or had not been taken, against these acknowledged illicit establishment by the municipal authorities, both from the standpoint of effective

¹⁸² Report of the Special Citizens Investigating Committee of the Commission Council of New Orleans, The New Orleans Police Department, Vol. I Conclusions and Recommendations, 6, Special Citizens Investigating Committee, Vol. I (annotated), 1954, Eugene S. Pennebaker and Frances Ohrum Pennebaker Papers, Box 6, Folder 3, Tulane Louisiana Research Collection.

arrests and municipal licenses revocation authority.” While Morrison tried to place the blame for lack of action on the Department of Revenue, the SCIC concluded Morrison and the city were actually responsible, thereby vindicating Deano. They simply refused to act in accordance with the authority provided to them under the law. The police, the enforcers of the law, were just as complicit because they too refused to act despite the clear authority provided to them.¹⁸³

The Morrison administration and the police department’s inaction, however, were just a portion of the problem. Bars and nightclubs housed many of the illegal activities in the city and the SCIC report placed them at the epicenter of the problem. They provided space for “vice and corrupt practices” to flourish. Investigators found these establishments were breeding grounds for vice, yet were left “relatively unhampered by police.” The report concluded that these places rarely concealed their operations and “existed with the New Orleans police alternately encouraging and harassing [bars], while sharing in their profits.” Police officers were routinely, and on certain occasions, in an organized fashion, accepting payment in the form of money, services, and even liquor. Some of the laws being violated in these establishments were B-drinking, prostitution, serving as headquarters for prostitutes, and the sale of pornographic and salacious materials.¹⁸⁴

The SCIC found the city had yet to “elevate itself, through law enforcement, from the bottom category in the national perspective of prostitution.” Meaning, the police department had failed to elevate its standards of employing police officers that exhibited a higher standard of professionalism. They based their conclusion on evidence discovered

¹⁸³ Ibid. 12-13.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 8-9, 11.

during their investigation that revealed, “organized prostitution, though curtailed by effective police work between 1946 and 1949, had been permitted to return.” The committee estimated the return to have occurred in early 1950, which saw “flagrant law violations in the Vieux Carré.” The SCCVC had helped draft and pass a newly revised ordinance to strengthen laws against prostitution, thereby giving police the tools to tackle the problem. However, the SCIC concluded the police had failed to enforce this revised ordinance.¹⁸⁵

The SCIC also found evidence of an “alliance between police and panderers in the vice of New Orleans.” Per Louisiana statute, pandering is defined in one of its forms as “receiving or accepting by a male, as support of maintaining, anything of value which is known to be from earnings of any female engaged in prostitution.” The committee used this definition to implicate police officers who took payoffs from vice operators. The report stated:

There is substantial amount of evidence to indicate that the process of enforcing the laws against prostitution has bred a number of public officials and employees, who, to protect the law violators while creating the appearance of police activity for the record for the press, engage in the preparation of false police reports, and commit one or more of the following crimes: perjury, pandering, bribery, extortion, or malfeasance.¹⁸⁶

Police payoffs were not the only issue the committee uncovered. The prostitution problem was compounded by the apparent incompetence of Superintendent Scheuering, who the report singled out. Scheuering denied knowing anything about brothel operators. But evidence collected by the SCIC investigators, along with a report by the American

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 22.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 23.

Social Hygiene Association proved his denial to be false. Scheuring was well aware of what was happening and chose indifferent over action.¹⁸⁷

The evidence presented in the report showed not only individual police officers' involvement in the perpetuation of prostitution, but also revealed the extent to which the police department, as a whole, was intertwined with the city's vice operators.

Scheuring's denial of knowing anything about houses of prostitution, and the evidence disproving it, showcased a concerted effort to cover up how the upper echelons of the police department were in one way or another involved with the problem. According to the report, "Some policemen ha[d] informed the committee and its staff either that they are not administratively authorized to take legal action against these establishments, or that in the past they have been penalized for taking conscientious action against them."¹⁸⁸

The committee ultimately concluded organized prostitution continued to exist, even though the police knew of various operations, due to "collusion between prostitution and the police" and stated the police department "in order to provide statistics of police activity and pacify the public...conducted 'token' raids, varying in number with the pulse of the community attitude." Superintendent Scheuring was placed at the center of the problems. The committee went so far as to state that while between 1946 and 1949 prostitution was effectively policed. "The change of law enforcement from good to bad was immediate upon the appointment of Joseph Scheuring to be superintendent of police."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. 24.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. 25.

Scheuering, whether he had direct involvement with payoffs or not, managed to foster a culture in the police department that made it conducive for these actions to have taken place, including the continued operation of houses of prostitution. This is why a cycle of arrest and release existed. Both house operators and police officers knew the unwritten arrangement, and they both profited from it. The SCIC report laid bare the arrangement for the public to see. What was once only alluded to, became fact by the release of the SCIC's report. The police and vice elements colluded with each other for mutual benefit.

The SCIC investigation and report revealed the extent to which a culture of prostitution existed in the city. Neither the police nor the city administration did much to counter this besides undertaking small token raids, and making announcements professing their commitment to clean up the city. In the end, the police, in coordination with house operators, helped sustain prostitution in the French Quarter. Since 1950, business and civic groups seemed to be the only ones pushing for a cleanup of vice in the French Quarter and city. But their efforts, while appearing to have made some minor advances, faced setbacks from the two groups that were integral in making those advances permanent: city hall and the police department.

The success of the SCIC came in the form of the disclosure of the extent of corruption in the NOPD, especially when it came to prostitution. While not being able to complete their entire investigation, the SCIC was able to prove Kohn's narrative of a corrupt police department that cared more about money and keeping a status quo than following and enforcing the law. The lawsuit filed by the NOPD, which ultimately stopped the investigations, was the first sign that police officials were involved in double

speak about their support for the committee. Even Morrison engaged in this double speak. He supported the SCIC only to the extent that it was good for him politically to do so. Yet, when it came to public hearings, he was adamantly against them. He opposed them because the hearings showed to the city the amount of corruption that was allowed to exist under his watch. Morrison's reform image appeared hollow and took a political hit.¹⁹⁰

What made the SCIC a failure was that nothing really changed because of the SCIC investigations. Morrison agreed with only a third of the recommendations the committee laid out, and those that he agreed with were only superficial in nature. Morrison also refused to fire Scheuring even though he proved himself to be incompetent, willfully ignorant of the law, and was implicated by witnesses of being heavily involved in payoffs.¹⁹¹

Though the legacy of the SCIC is mixed, the report they issued gave a detailed account of the kinds of illegal activities that continued to occur in bars and nightclubs, throughout the city and French Quarter. B-drinking, prostitution, the hiring of prostitutes as barmaids, and allowing bars to service as headquarters for houses of prostitution were just a few of the many of the activities witnessed by investigators. This discovery showed that with as much effort civic and business organizations exerted to clean up the French Quarter of undesirables, their efforts appeared to be in vain. But this did not stop them from continuing to try.

During their investigation, SCIC also inquired about homosexual activities in the city.

While not thoroughly explored by the committee, its work can be seen a continuation of

¹⁹⁰ Haas, *DeLesseps S. Morrison*, 200, 217.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 208.

the investigation conducted under the SCCVC. No committee in the city had devoted its work solely to this issue. However, four years after the end of the SCIC, Jacob Morrison would seek to continue his work into what he considered the homosexual issue. This new committee would be known as the Committee on the Problem of Sex Deviates.

CHAPTER FIVE SEXUAL DEVIATES

By the late 1950s, civic and business organizations had successfully pressured the city into creating the Special Citizens Committee for the Vieux Carré (SCCVC) and the Special Citizens' Investigating Committee (SCIC), which were both designed to advance their reform agenda aimed at ridding the French Quarter of B-drinkers, barmaids, prostitutes, corrupt police officers, and all those they deemed undesirables. One group that they had yet to target in a focused way were homosexuals. An early attempt by the SCCVC had not led to any sustained investigation due to their attention being drawn to targeting women they deemed immoral. But the rise of homosexual visibility continued to be an issue for those who saw them as a hindrance to gentrification efforts. They were also seen as not being the right kind of tourists and residents the city wished to attract. Because of this, their elimination or, at the very least, driving them back into the shadows, became a priority.

Raids on bars and taverns that catered to homosexuals were the most common tool used by the police. But to many in the French Quarter community, it was not enough. The raids failed to permanently close down these establishments thereby allowing homosexuals to continue patronizing, congregating, and working in them. Police were limited as to what actions they could take. The creation of the Committee on the Problem of Sex Deviates (CPSD) sought to rectify the problem and draft recommendations to better police homosexuals within the confines of local authority.

The creation of the CPSD did not stem from any one specific event or public outcry like the two previous committees did. This was an issue French Quarter residents, particularly Jacob Morrison, had tried to bring to the attention of municipal authorities

including the police. With the SCCVC, they felt their concerns had finally been listened to. And while the SCCVC did attempt to investigate the issue, it was placed on the backburner. The SCIC managed to point out the how widespread the problem was in the French Quarter, but since the committee was charged only with investigating police corruption, they had no mandate to proceed on this issue. The Sex Deviates committee offered French Quarter residents, and civic and business groups the opportunity to push the city into acting on the issue. This was the first time these allied reformers had managed to place the issue front and center and they had no intention of wasting the moment.

The newly formed City Council appointed Jacob Morrison to lead the CPSD. Morrison had a history of not only being a crusader against prostitutes, but also against homosexuality. In 1952 he drafted a “homosexual ordinance” for the SCCVC that sought to amend an ordinance that sanctioned people dressed in clothing of the opposite sex. The ordinance, however, was shelved because the committee believed more investigation was needed. It never received a vote by the city’s Commission Council. Morrison also helped lead the charge in helping to close down Starlet Lounge, an establishment frequented by homosexuals, in 1953 and 1954. His tenacious investigative approach and his legal background gave him the credentials to lead this committee. The other committee members were Inez Phillips who represented the Chamber of Commerce, Philip J. Kroll from the Young Men’s Business Club, and Irving Ton, who represented the Metropolitan Crime Commission. The addition of Inez Phillips to the committee marks the first time

that a woman was included on such a committee that had up until the creation of the CPSD were dominated by white men.¹⁹²

Homosexuals, who for most of the decade faced harassment both locally and nationally, became an easy target for police and civic leaders to demonize. Seen as being outside of societal norms, they were categorized as “sex deviates,” which was not something that was exclusive to this time period. What made them targets in the 1950s was their increased visibility, especially after the more permissive war years. Just as men wished to push women back into traditional gender roles, so too, did they wish to do the same for homosexuals.¹⁹³

By the 1950s, homosexuals were perceived to be a problem not only for the city’s tourism efforts but also for its residents. Those in the French Quarter complained to the police about the criminal elements homosexuals supposedly attracted to the area. However, the dislike of these individuals went beyond just the idea that they were magnets for crime. The attack against homosexuals and homosexual acts was a moral crusade. It showed that while crime was one aspect these organizations focused on, morality was another, and at times, a more important concern.

Male prostitutes existed and worked in the French Quarter, which Doris Gellman documented in her testimony before the SCIC. Kenneth Marlowe also wrote a memoir describing his brief experience as a male prostitute around the time Sen. Estes Kefauver came to the city. But neither the SCCVC nor the police appeared to equate prostitution

¹⁹² “Group Discusses New Ordinance,” *Times-Picayune*, April 10, 1952, 52.

¹⁹³ Douglas M. Charles, *Hoover’s War on Gays: Exposing the FBI’s “Sex Deviates” Program* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2015); David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Prosecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Allan Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II*. (Chapel Hill; The University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

and homosexuality, particularly in relation to gay men. They were treated as separate problems as evident in the SCCVC's meeting minutes.¹⁹⁴

Historians who have focused on homosexual life in New Orleans generally agree that the 1950s was a time of targeted efforts to harass and intimidate a group of people viewed as undesirable. The efforts put forth by civic and business groups during this decade showed that they took the issue seriously and tried to combat this rise in visibility. They also sought to impose a moralistic way of living that many reform-minded individuals, particularly Richard Foster, believed had become too loose and tolerant. Speeches given by Foster when he was the chairman of the SCCVC took on a moralistic tone that told of the evils of homosexuals, especially with regard to them "continuously recruiting" children.¹⁹⁵

But for those who took the lead in promoting continued targeting and harassment of these people, it became a morally driven effort. The language used by these individuals showed the focus of such cleanup efforts was more about strict moral objections rather than about cleaning the French Quarter for tourism purposes.¹⁹⁶

This chapter explains the origins of the first and only municipal committee ever created in New Orleans that focused exclusively on homosexuals. It also considers the work done on the issue earlier in the decade by previous committees. The SCCVC and the SCIC played a role in the early development of identifying the problem and trying to figure out solutions to remedy it. But each committee encountered roadblocks that

¹⁹⁴ Kenneth Marlowe, *Mr. Madam: Confessions of a Male Madam* (Los Angeles: Sherbourne Press, 1964)

¹⁹⁵ "Curb Advocated On Homosexuals," *Times-Picayune*, April 28, 1951, 4.

¹⁹⁶ Palmquist and Perez, *In Exile*; Smith, *Unveiling the Muse*

prevented them from going further. The Sex Deviate committee sought to break that trend.

Previous Attempts

The 1950-52 SCIC succeeded in its attempts to convince the city's Commission Council to adopt their ordinances on B-drinking and prostitution. This emboldened them to try and tackle another issue on their agenda, the "homosexual problem" in the French Quarter. In their first meeting on March 31 Chairman Richard R. Foster brought up the issue to the entire committee. He stated homosexuals had flocked to the French Quarter in great numbers due to not being tolerated by other cities which had driven them out. Because of this, Foster believed, they created "deplorable" conditions in the Vieux Carré, "more so than people realize."¹⁹⁷

Foster again brought up the issue in the committee's second meeting. He asked Captains Joseph A. Guillot and Joseph Sonnenberg what the police were doing about homosexuals in the French Quarter. Guillot responded that his initial investigation found only a few instances of homosexuals working at or patronizing bars in the Vieux Carré. Capt. Sonnenberg believed that many had left town because "the heat [was] on." By the end of the year, however, the committee revealed they had received numerous complaints of an influx of homosexuals into the city, particularly those frequenting the Starlet Lounge located in the French Quarter.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Meeting Minutes, March 31, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

¹⁹⁸ Meeting Minutes, April 5, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46; Meeting Minutes, January 17, 1951, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46

The subject would not be broached again until September 6 when committee members requested and received a response from municipal Judge Harold J. Moore concerning how to successfully rid the city of homosexuals. He stated he was in favor of longer jail sentences for those convicted of homosexual acts for a second time. He preferred, however, to set up a probation department to keep track of repeat violators. Moore also recognized the problem with obtaining convictions. "In many cases," Moore stated, "testimony is so weak that you cannot convict and brand a man a homosexual." He cautioned that arresting officers and the courts must be sure of their case. If an individual were to be arrested and not convicted, it could ruin the individual's reputation. This caution caused the committee to focus their efforts on other issues, which could be more easily resolved. Nonetheless, the issue remained on the SCCVC's agenda.¹⁹⁹

On February 23, 1951, with the success of the passage of the B-drinking and prostitution ordinances, the committee redoubled their efforts to target homosexuals. Rev. Robert Jamieson and Jacob Morrison informed the committee there was an "alarming" influx of them into the city. Jamieson phrased the homosexual problem in stark terms when he stated, "these degenerates are striking younger generations and that New Orleans, from all indications, is getting cast-offs from all over the United States." This predatory description of homosexuals showed the committee's commitment to further label homosexuals as immoral and dangerous individuals. His statement was given more credence by a complaint received from parents who believed these adult "degenerates" were "induc[ing] teen-agers to join them."²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Meeting Minutes, September 6, 1950, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

²⁰⁰ Meeting Minutes, February 23, 1951, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

The complaint above came from the mother of a sixteen-year-old girl who discovered her daughter frequented the Starlet Lounge and “joined in with the degenerates at the establishment.” The mother wanted to know if these people could be driven from the community. Jamieson answered that the police did not have the necessary “tool[s] in their hands” to handle the situation. Capt. William Dwyer of the First Police District, who was also in attendance, agreed that the police lacked the means to fully handle the situation. His main problem was the lack of an ordinance through which homosexuals could be charged. Without a specific ordinance, the police could only charge them with loitering and vagrancy. It was agreed that the Sub-committee on Legislative Affairs would investigate the situation and draft an ordinance, if at all possible, to combat homosexuals. Both Jamieson and Morrison pledged their cooperation with the investigation, including obtaining information from other cities about how they dealt with the issue.²⁰¹

The following month, during a review of a report on prostitution, Jamieson announced his sub-committee had also made the effort to study homosexual activity in the French Quarter. The report identified at least six establishments in the area that catered to homosexuals. Furthermore, he believed homosexuals targeted many establishments frequented by servicemen, such as bars, and areas where juveniles congregated, particularly high schools, in an attempt to recruit them. He concluded that homosexual activities had reached a high not previously seen in the city. The one thing the subcommittee did not indicate was whether it was their opinion that the homosexuals

²⁰¹ Meeting Minutes, February 23, 1951, Richard R. Foster Civic and Community Papers, MSS 553, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, Box 5, Folder 46.

who frequented these establishments were also prostitutes, especially in those places that service members congregated.²⁰²

At the same meeting, Foster reviewed the report and agreed to establish a new sub-committee dedicated to the homosexual problem. Headed by Leonard V. Huber and frequent guest, Jacob H. Morrison, the sub-committee sought to create an ordinance to discourage “perverts” from coming into the French Quarter, whom Foster believed were comprised mostly of “out-of-towners.” Capt. Dwyer, also in attendance, reiterated his call for the creation of a new law against “degenerates.” Again, Superintendent Joseph Scheuering cautioned the SCCVC on the language included in any new ordinance. As he expressed a year before, Scheuering believed mass raids of known homosexual establishments were not the answer because “wholesale raids where you have to arrest everyone, leads to the injuring of someone’s character.” Scheuering advised a more cautious and precise approach to the new sub-committee’s work. As to what specifically could be done, he provided no details.²⁰³

While the official minutes showcase how individuals in the SCCVC advocated for a new ordinance against homosexuals, outside activities by these individuals give a sense of how seriously they took this issue. In a speech to the Civic Council of New Orleans, Foster spoke of the dangers of homosexuals by continuing his theme that they were set on converting the city’s youths by targeting high school boys and girls in an effort to recruit them. He saw homosexuals as “continuously recruiting” by “enticing [boys and girls] into places habituated by homosexuals” where they “see an obscene show or something of

²⁰² “Vieux Carré Unit Seeks Ordinance,” *Times-Picayune*, March 8, 1951, 33; “Vice Group Asks For Tough Pervert Law,” *New Orleans Items*, March 3, 1951, 20.

²⁰³ “Crackdown Planned on Homosexuals,” *New Orleans States*, March 8, 1951, 3; “Vice Group Asks For Tough Pervert Law,” *New Orleans Items*, March 3, 1951, 20.

that nature as a starter.” He even said parents went to the police, “begging them to save their children.” Foster continued to promote his belief that a strong ordinance to ward off homosexuals was desperately needed.²⁰⁴

Foster’s speech showed the extent to which he tried to garner public support for his and the SCCVC’s anti-homosexual efforts. Whether this effort garnered public popularity is unknown. However in the February 23 meeting, Rev. Dana Dawson, a friend of Rev. Jamieson and in attendance at his request, opined that the people of the city were fully behind the committee’s work due to the dangers homosexuals presented to the city’s youths. While he did not provide definitive proof of his assertion, Dawson’s presence showed that at least some members the city’s clergy were fully supportive of the effort.²⁰⁵

On March 9, the new sub-committee issued letters to law enforcement agencies in Houston, Washington, D.C., Cleveland, Ohio, Chicago, Boston, New York City, and Philadelphia. These letters inquired whether they experienced a similar increase in homosexual activities, as well as if they had any laws, statutes, and ordinances on the books that were useful in combating the problem. Instead of receiving responses from the cities’ police department, local chambers of commerce issued replies on their behalf.

Three types of responses were received. The Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry responded by pointing to municipal codes relating to prostitution. Their letter stated that these codes “give the police the power to arrest and prosecute persons of evil fame who congregate in public.” The letter, however, did not provide any actual ordinances relating to homosexuals. Moreover, the author acknowledged he did not know

²⁰⁴ “Curb Advocated On Homosexuals,” *Times-Picayune*, April 28, 1951, 4

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

if the city had a homosexual problem or whether the police even used this code to arrest them.²⁰⁶

The Cleveland and Boston Chambers of Commerce issued responses explicitly detailing how their cities relied on state statutes to combat homosexuals. The Cleveland Chamber of Commerce explained that Ohio statute §13043 regarding sodomy was used to arrest possible homosexuals in their city. However, they indicated the city had not experienced the same problems as New Orleans and saw no rise of homosexuals coming into the city. The Boston Chamber of Commerce informed them police used Massachusetts' Chapter 272, Sections 34-35, which outlawed sodomy, buggery, and unnatural and lascivious acts. Unlike Cleveland though, the Boston Chamber of Commerce indicated that their city had in fact seen an influx of homosexuals to the city and therefore more arrests were made.²⁰⁷

The last type of response was one of general denial of any problem whatsoever. The Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia plainly stated, "we wish to advise that Philadelphia has not had the same problem as you have at this time." Furthermore, unlike the others, this two-sentence response named no state statute or city ordinance regarding homosexuals. However, it does leave questions as to whether this denial

²⁰⁶ Louis A. Dumond to George H. Deckert, 12 March 1951, Chicago, Illinois, Mayors Special Citizens Committee 1960, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Folder 3, Box 102, Historic New Orleans Collection.

²⁰⁷ Kenneth S. Nash to George H. Deckert, 13 March 1951, Cleveland, Ohio, Mayors Special Citizens Committee 1960, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Folder 3, Box 102, Historic New Orleans Collection; Fred J. Gibney to George H. Deckert, 15 March 1951, Boston, Massachusetts, Mayors Special Citizens Committee 1960, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Folder 3, Box 102, Historic New Orleans Collection.

stemmed from the Philadelphia's desire to sweep the issue under the rug or if the city's culture allowed for more tolerance with regard to homosexuality.²⁰⁸

These three responses showed that most cities had not taken any steps in combating homosexual activities through local ordinances. Local municipalities seemed to prefer the state pass anti-homosexual laws, which allowed them in some instances, such as in Philadelphia, to deny there was a problem at all. However, no matter which side created the law or ordinance, the goal was the same: criminalize homosexuality. The responses also revealed that New Orleans was not the only city where local civic and business groups took an active role in attempting to rid their city of the homosexual problem.

After reviewing the information sent to the sub-committee, Foster came to the conclusion that "it [would] be necessary to have the [state] legislature pass a law or laws on the subject. A city ordinance would not be comprehensive enough." Morrison agreed and appeared to shelve the idea of creating such an ordinance. A few months later, Morrison sent a letter to State Senator Robert R. Richards, whose district comprised the French Quarter. In his letter, he attached a proposed draft of a bill that sought to "clarify and make more effective the punishment of unnatural sexual crimes, particularly where minors are concerned."²⁰⁹

Despite the growing consensus that any efforts to create anti-homosexual laws should be handled by the State, Foster informed the SCCVC on April 9 that a new

²⁰⁸ Joann Shakoski to George H. Deckert, 12 March 1951, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Mayors Special Citizens Committee 1960, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Folder 3, Box 102, Historic New Orleans Collection.

²⁰⁹ Jacob H. Morrison to Robert E. Richards, 21 March 1951, Mayors Special Citizens Committee 1960, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Folder 3, Box 102, Historic New Orleans Collection; Jacob H. Morrison to Richard R. Foster, 5 October 1951, New Orleans, Mayors Special Citizens Committee 1960, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Folder 3, Box 102, Historic New Orleans Collection

ordinance drafted by Morrison was ready for consideration. It focused on amending an existing ordinance concerning publicly dressing in clothing of the opposite sex. But after consideration by the committee, they believed further investigation was still needed and Morrison's ordinance was once again shelved.²¹⁰

On April 14, in a letter to Morrison, Foster reported that he had spoken with Beuker Amann, an Assistant City Attorney who was working with the SSCVC, who agreed that any further action should be taken by the state legislature. Morrison responded with his own letter which stated that while he acquiesced to Amann's suggestion, he still believed a city ordinance would be beneficial and argued the ordinance was "designed to prevent the enticing and luring of persons in bars, saloons, etc. to engage in any indecent, immoral and unnatural practices." This was the final action taken regarding the draft ordinance. The SCCVC soon disbanded after some in the community, and even the committee itself, felt the group did not go far enough in its actions. The defunct SCCVC's efforts to take local legislative action against homosexuals became dormant.²¹¹

The SCIC Efforts

Even though the legal effort to create laws to prevent the gathering of homosexuals in the city moved to the state legislature, local officials still maintained their focus on the issue. During their investigation in 1953 and 1954, the Special Citizens'

²¹⁰ "Group Discusses New Ordinance," *Times Picayune*, April 10, 1952, 52.

²¹¹ Richard R. Foster to Jacob H. Morrison, 14 April 1952, New Orleans, Mayors Special Citizens Committee 1960, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Folder 3, Box 102, Historic New Orleans Collection; Jacob H. Morrison to Richard R. Foster, 15 April 1952, New Orleans, Mayors Special Citizens Committee 1960, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Folder 3, Box 102, Historic New Orleans Collection.

Investigating Committee (SCIC) exposed several bars and nightclubs that notably catered to homosexuals. These allegedly problematic places including Tony Bacino's, the Rendez-vous, and the Starlet Lounge, which were all located within the French Quarter. Interestingly, the investigation also revealed how police corruption helped perpetuate the city's homosexual problem, much like it did with prostitution. It was discovered that "gay kids" who frequented these establishments were often the targets of police shakedowns. In order to continue the money flow, corrupt police officers allowed establishments that catered to homosexuals to remain in operation, thereby allowing homosexuals, both residents and out-of-towners, to continue to frequent these places. It was a cycle, much like with prostitution, that perpetuated itself because of the corruption.²¹²

The SCIC's final report concluded the mayor's office and the police department had allowed these conditions to continue unchecked from 1950 to 1954. At various times throughout their inquiry, the investigators found these bars and nightclubs consistently violated various city ordinances, including "lewd homosexual activity." The committee further found "juvenile homosexuality" received "consistent stimulus from the open and immoral practices permitted, and apparently encouraged by some bar operators" due to police inaction. While not specifically making the connection, one can conclude that based on the SCIC's report, this inaction resulted more from the police-led corrupt shakedown practices rather than any other motive.²¹³

²¹² J.J. Sheffield to Aaron M. Kohn, 9 July 1953, New Orleans, Box 1, Folder 15, City Council. Special Citizens Investigating Committee Records, 1953-1963, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library; George Stevens, interviewed by James F. Delany, 10 September 1953, New Orleans, Folder 63, Box 3, p. 10, City Council. Special Citizens Investigating Committee Records, 1953-1963, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library;

²¹³ Report of the Special Citizens Investigating Committee of the Commission Council of New Orleans, The New Orleans Police Department, Vol. I Conclusions and Recommendations, 9-11, Special Citizens Investigating Committee, Vol. I (annotated), 1954, Eugene S Pennebaker and Frances Ohrum Pennebaker Papers, Folder 3, Box 6, Tulane Louisiana Research Collection.

The report recommended that the police “should be required to report immediately...any violations of the regulations controlling the right of individuals and/or groups of individuals to operate a retail liquor establishment.” The committee also recommended all employees should be required to submit a personal history form and be fingerprinted. It was hoped that by taking these actions, the police could uncover homosexuals who worked at these establishments and force them out of their jobs. If this failed to get rid of these individuals, then continued police harassment would run these establishments out of business.²¹⁴

The SCIC’s recommendations did not specifically aim to curb homosexual activity in the city. The recommendations, however, had the potential to be used by the police as justification to shut down these bars and nightclubs. The two committees showed the determination of local civic and business leaders to make a moralistic case against homosexuals. These leaders were willing to use scare tactics to show the dangers that homosexuals presented not only to the residents to the French Quarter but also to New Orleanian families in general. It had become their moral duty to suppress and, if possible, run them out of town. The only way they saw this possibly happening was for the police to thoroughly conduct raids that struck at the center of the city’s gay life: bars and nightclubs.

After the end of the SCIC, efforts to legislate homosexual activity in the city remained dormant for almost four years. In that time, police relied on raids and targeted harassment as a way to remedy the situation. The results, however, were not what civic

²¹⁴ Report of the Special Citizens Investigating Committee of the Commission Council of New Orleans, The New Orleans Police Department, Vol. I Conclusions and Recommendations, 38, 65, Special Citizens Investigating Committee, Vol. I (annotated), 1954, Eugene S Pennebaker and Frances Ohrum Pennebaker Papers, Folder 3, Box 6, Tulane Louisiana Research Collection.

and business organizations had intended. On the one hand, raids publicly shamed those individuals caught in homosexual establishments, on occasions even charged them with loitering and vagrancy. On the other hand, police used extortion and shakedowns for monetary gain, which gave them motivation not to completely eliminate the problem. Either way, there was no major incentive to close establishments that catered to homosexuals, nor was there a dedicated drive to completely remove them from the French Quarter.

In 1958, four years after the ended of the SCIC, a committee established by the newly formed New Orleans City Council, took aim solely at the homosexual problem. Jacob Morrison, a familiar individual who had previously led efforts against prostitution, would chair this committee. He hoped to follow the success of shutting down the Starlet Lounge with finding a way to minimize or even eliminate homosexuals from the French Quarter. But the question became, how could he succeed where others failed? And, outside of existing state sodomy laws, what else could be recommended that was not already being done?

The Committee on the Problem of Sex Deviate in New Orleans

It is not clear why a new committee was formed four years after the end of the SCIC. There is no one specific event or situation that occurred in the city that would have allowed for its creation. However, on July 22, 1958, the New Orleans city council voted on the establishment of a citizens committee dedicated to studying “the acute problems caused by sex deviates in New Orleans.” Council president Glenn P. Classen appointed Jacob H. Morrison to lead this effort, which consisted partially of French Quarter

residents. It was deemed necessary for the committee to be comprised of “residents and civic workers from the area who had first-hand experience in coping with the behavior of the homosexual, the pervert and the lesbian.” The committee was also comprised of civic group representatives from the Metropolitan Crime Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Young Men’s Business Club. Religious leaders were asked to join but none accepted even though clergymen repeatedly asked for the city council to take action against homosexual activity.²¹⁵

Councilman Fred J. Cassibry suggested the committee study the issue and meet with representatives of the city attorney’s office, the police department, and the city finance department, which issued liquor licenses. Cassibry believed sex deviates “create[d] disturbances. They are up all hours of the night. They are a source of constant irritation to the people in the Quarter.” The irony of this is that that the French Quarter historically catered to people who were up at all hours creating disturbances. One simply cannot definitively determine whether homosexual or heterosexuals were the cause of this problem. But to fit the narrative, people like Cassibry and Morrison were more than willing to place the blame on homosexuals.²¹⁶

During the meeting, various individuals in attendance relayed their frustration with sex deviates in the French Quarter. One resident told the council that Jackson Square, Pirates Alley, and Pere Antoine, areas that buttress the St. Louis Cathedral, were gathering spots for them. “I’ve tried for the past 12 years to do something about it,” the resident said. “We should have foot policemen patrolling Jackson Square and the two alleys.” Aaron M. Kohn, director of the Metropolitan Crime Commission, spoke in

²¹⁵ “Report of Committee on the Problem of Sex Deviates in New Orleans,” 1958, Box 102, MSS 553, 1, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison. Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection;

²¹⁶ “Action Set to Curb Deviates,” *Times Picayune*, July 23, 1958, 10.

agreement. He described bars as the “center of all kinds of vice.” He believed these bars attracted homosexual clientele by employing homosexuals to draw them in. “They have no intention to be legitimate buyers of liquor,” he said. “These people operate actually as a public nuisance.”²¹⁷

The intriguing part of Kohn’s statement is his mention of bars attracting homosexuals by employing homosexuals. The revised ordinances drafted by the SCCVC and passed by the city’s Commission Council, had made it illegal for bars to employ “sexual perverts.” The ordinances even forbid those they deemed sexual perverts from patronizing these establishments. If these ordinances were put in place as an alternative way of making homosexuality illegal, it poses the question as to why the police did not use them more frequently. The most obvious answer is that, much like with prostitution, it was difficult to determine who was homosexual without having a police officer witness a person engage in a homosexual act or have direct evidence that a person was in fact a homosexual.

When police Superintendent Provosty A. Dayries spoke to the council, he conveyed the police department’s frustration in policing homosexuals. “You cannot just point to a person and say that he or she is a sex deviate,” he said. He further explained the obstacles of charging a person with a homosexual offense. Under state law, a person must be found committing or attempting to commit a “degenerate” act. Outside of this, they could only be charged with loitering or other similar offenses under municipal ordinance. Detective Rene Sabrier, leader of the special (vice) squad, informed the council that after he visited various cities, he found they “all [had] the same problems that we have”

²¹⁷ Ibid.

regarding homosexuals. However, he suggested that if the police could not obtain evidence of homosexual acts, then a person could still be charged with vagrancy, no visible means of support, public intoxication, disturbing the peace, wearing clothes of the opposite sex, or using obscene language.²¹⁸

The meeting continued with council members and residents offering various opinions about what should be done to combat the homosexual problem. Councilman Victor Schiro believed the city should revoke the liquor licenses of bars frequented by homosexuals. French Quarter residents, such as P.J. Kroll agreed with this measure. So did Jacob Morrison, who stated, “the whole thing revolves around the control of barrooms, night clubs and the places where people congregate.” Morrison stated the council already had the power to do so but acknowledged there were legal problems involved. He did not, however, specify what those problems were. The only known effective method to shutter these establishments was to continuously raid them until the operators eventually gave up and closed the business down.²¹⁹

Also in attendance was New Orleans area state Rep. Edward F. LeBreton, Jr. He advised that the homosexual problem was complicated and did not believe the issue could be resolved in a few meetings. LeBreton’s caution stemmed from his own past legislative efforts to curb sex deviates. In June 1958, LeBreton spearheaded the state legislature’s effort to convene a six-member committee to study the problem of sex crimes and deviates. The proposed committee would be tasked with reviewing laws already on the books and recommending any changes that might be needed. LeBreton mentioned, “In California they [sex deviates] are forced to register. Once they knew that they had to

²¹⁸ “Action Set to Curb Deviates,” *Times Picayune*, July 23 1958, 10.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* The court case *Maggio et al v. City of New Orleans* asked the question whether these targeted harassments on bars were legal.

register they just got out of California.” He continued that “New Orleans offer[ed] a fine rendezvous for them to come.” Months later when the six-member committee was formally established, LeBreton declared “the number and extent of sex crimes in Louisiana [was] on the increase and constitutes of one of the most serious problems in law enforcement in the state today.”²²⁰

Raids were the tool most used by police to deal with the problem. Existing city ordinances allowed for this, but they did not end the problem. On July 24, 1958, Superintendent Dayries took it upon himself to look into possible ways to curb the presence homosexuals in the city. As the SCCVC did previously, Dayries circulated a letter to forty-two city police departments that inquired whether their cities had a problem with gay men and lesbians. Dayries explained that the French Quarter had an “atmosphere which appeals to these people,” that resulted in “complaints from residents of the immediate vicinity” of bars and nightclubs within the neighborhood. “Although we know certain establishments cater almost exclusively to such person[s],” he continued, “there is no way of proving such to be the case.” Dayries requested information on what steps these cities had taken to counter their own problems with these “undesirables.” Specifically, he asked: 1) was there any specific legislation for handling homosexuals and lesbian?, 2) If not, what action is taken to keep them out of the city?, 3) Did they take action against bars and nightclubs that catered to them?, and 4) If action is taken against

²²⁰ “Sexual Crimes Study Is Urged,” *Times Picayune*, June 13, 1958, 9; “Action Set to Curb Deviates,” *Times Picayune*, July 23, 1958, 10; “State Probe of Sex Crimes Begins Sept. 18,” *New Orleans States*, September 10, 1958, 33. The committee eventually drafted bills focused mainly on obscenity and what they deemed pornographic material. It also made it a misdemeanor for a bars and nightclubs to have any obscenity on the premises, see “LA House Votes Obscenity Bills,” *Times Picayune*, June 14, 1960, 33.

the bars, is it accomplished through special ordinance or strict enforcement of regulations concerning bars?²²¹

Within the next few months, Superintendent Dayries received varied responses. Much like the responses given to the SCCVC in 1951, the majority of the cities indicated that they had no special legislation to handle the problem. Instead they used strict enforcement of liquor license laws. Cities such as Buffalo, New York, Cincinnati, Ohio, Cleveland, Ohio, and Tampa, Florida kept known homosexual establishments under constant surveillance and made arrests if any laws were violated. Others used frequent raids and harassment in handling the issue. In Houston, for example, the police not only performed raids but kept records “on all known degenerates.” Louisville, Kentucky, however, said the problem was minor and took no action. With regard to taking action against bars and nightclubs, strict enforcement of liquor license violations was the preferred method.²²²

The responses revealed that the efforts by these cities were no different than those of the New Orleans Police Department. Raids and harassment were the preferred way to deal with the problem. It also revealed the continued limitations of the NOPD. Without actually witnessing a homosexual act, the police had little recourse but to continue their harassment strategy in the hopes of driving out homosexuals from the French Quarter and the city. Therefore, the NOPD limited their response to only one option: going after bars and nightclubs where homosexuals congregated.

²²¹ “Report of Committee on the Problem of Sex Deviates in New Orleans,” 1958, Box 102, MSS553, 17, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection.

²²² “Report of Committee on the Problem of Sex Deviates in New Orleans,” 1958, Box 102, MSS553, 18-22, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection.

Those individuals and organizations that sought to eliminate homosexuals from the French Quarter knew the task would be difficult. Based on past recommendations from the SCCVC, anything that could be legally done was being done already. Unless a police officer witnessed an activity that would fall under the state's sodomy law, there was very little they could do besides charge them with lesser crimes. This would not be enough to push homosexuals out of the neighborhood. Raids conducted on bars and nightclubs, as well as targeted police harassment, had a minimal effect. It was up to Jacob Morrison to try and discover a way to change this.

The Committee on the Problem of Sex Deviates was a way for Morrison to accomplish this goal. French Quarter residents, civic, and business organizations counted on Morrison and the CPSD's success. Their previous attempts with the SCCVC proved unfruitful. However, because the sole purpose of the committee was to find a solution to the homosexual problem, this was their best chance to enact the change they wanted. Whether the CPSD would succeed where the SCCVC failed depended on the cooperation from the City Council and the NOPD. Without their full support, any recommendations that could come from the committee would ultimately be all for naught.

CHAPTER SIX

THE COMMITTEE ON THE PROBLEM OF SEX DEVIATES

The Committee on the Problem of Sex Deviates (CPSD) was the first great chance for French Quarter residents, and civic and business organizations to deal with the Vieux Carré's homosexual problem. The investigation and subsequent report contained recommendations that were either already being implemented by the police or relied on, even encouraged, citizens to openly discriminate against homosexuals. The main issue with the CPSD was that, just like with the SCCVC, it proved difficult to draft city ordinances that could effectively police homosexuals and keep them out of the French Quarter, much less the entire city. From this perspective, the committee can be seen as a failure. But one cannot overlook the fact that the CPSD sanctioned the actions police had used against homosexuals, which was to raid bars, individually harass them, and even turn a blind eye when homosexuals were targeted and assaulted in an act commonly known as "rolling." These aggressive actions gave those who sought to rid the French Quarter of homosexuals a reason to declare the committee a success.

The success of the CPSD is relative in the sense that the report created by Jacob Morrison allowed for the NOPD to create winners and losers. The winners were people like Morrison who finally had his issue heard by the City Council and allowed for multiple raids and closures of establishments that catered to homosexuals. The losers were homosexuals who became the target of those raids, which on occasion led to arrests. While the arrests were humiliating, the subsequent printing of a person's name and the arresting offense in the daily newspapers was much worse. This tended to lead to a person being fired from their job or disowned by their families. In fact, Morrison and

those that supported his efforts most likely welcomed those humiliating consequences even though it was possible that a wrongful arrest could ruin a person's life or livelihood.

The bulk of the report created by the CPSD consisted of summaries from other studies conducted, both in the United States and the United Kingdom, that place homosexuality in a historical, social, and moral context. It also included information gathered by police Superintendent Provosty A. Dayries, who had sent letters to various cities asking about their homosexual problem and what ordinances were available to combat it. The CPSD similarly sent a letter and requested the same information. Using this information, they were able to compile a list of recommendations the City Council could use to create ordinances.

The difficulty with drafting recommendations was that they could not conflict with state law. The only reasonable recommendations Morrison could provide were either those that were already being implemented or to ask citizens to conduct themselves in a manner that openly discriminated against homosexuals. The report admitted that being a homosexual was not illegal. However, homosexual acts were offenses that could lead to an arrest. These arrests tended to come from the state' sodomy law or the city ordinance banning cross-dressing. But much like with prostitution, the act had to be witnessed, which happened outside of homosexual establishments private spaces.

This chapter examines the CPSD report and the recommendations offered to the New Orleans City Council. It also seeks to place the committee into the larger context of the cleanup effort in the French Quarter. Jacob Morrison became the de-facto face of the movement to gentrify the neighborhood for the betterment of its residents and to help promote tourism. But his efforts proved to be no different than those that came before

him. Yet it is worth considering the impact this seemingly insignificant committee had on homosexual life in New Orleans. The sanctioning of police harassment by city officials made it so that the government, not just the police, residents, and civic and business organizations, were against homosexuals who lived and visited the French Quarter.

The Report

When the CPSD report was released in late 1958, it sought to answer the questions, “What accounts for the...apparent increase in homosexuality?” and “Why do certain cities or sections of cities have an overflow of sex deviates, while others seem to have almost none?” To answer this question, the report contained a compilation of information consisting not only of the responses gathered from various cities, but also a brief history of homosexual figures and excerpts from Dr. Alfred Kinsey’s *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. This information allowed the committee to base their report on perceived historical facts and related scientific efforts, which addressed the much larger issue of homosexuality that the committee itself could not completely comprehend. “The general over-all problem of sex offenses is beyond our province,” it said. “However, it has become so acute in all of its phases that we could not avoid exploring certain of its aspects that are not, strictly speaking, our concern.” While the report acknowledged that their efforts were to combat homosexuals in the city, a “cure” was, the report opined, “beyond the power of mankind.”²²³

The report argued that environment was paramount to the spread of homosexuality. A person could be homosexual and not act on their impulses. However, if

²²³ “Report of Committee on the Problem of Sex Deviates in New Orleans,” 1958, Box 102, MSS553, 2, Papers of Mary and Jacob Morrison, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection.

there existed an avenue for them to act on this impulse, such as a bar or a nightclub, then a person would cross that line between being and becoming a “practicing homosexual.” This is what Morrison and the committee were trying to avoid. If there were no establishments that catered to homosexuals, then in their view, there would be no way for a homosexual to actively engage in homosexuality, which would “prevent the spread of the evils of sex deviation.”²²⁴

Even with the parsing of an active and inactive homosexual, the CPSD continued to classified homosexuality as a “sex deviation” that “plagued society.” This helped outline their stated desire to find a way to “control” the conduct and behavior of homosexuals. Their historical conclusion led them to link homosexuality with crime, supporting their argument that homosexuality “inspired lust” and was a “fruitful source of corruption.”²²⁵

The report also sought to make a moral argument against homosexuals. Terms such as “evil,” “immoral,” and “deviate,” were used to show that even though a person might have homosexual tendencies and not act on them, they were still viewed through this moral lens. The phrase “inspired lust” was used in connection with the idea that sex perversion “bred crime” and was a “fruitful source of corruption.” This language played into the narrative that homosexuals in the French Quarter, especially at places where they congregated, were breeding grounds for crime and other harmful antics.²²⁶

Residents, like civic and business organizations saw no moral difference between homosexuals and B-drinking and prostitution. All three were seen as corrupting and tied

²²⁴ Ibid., 8.

²²⁵ Ibid., 2.

²²⁶ Ibid., 4.

to crime. The “Report to Britain’s Parliament on Homosexual Offenses and Prostitution,” which was cited by the report, stated “the general loosening of former moral standards” was a reason for an increase in tolerance of homosexuals. It is this tolerance that Morrison and the people he represented rejected. For them, tolerance allowed homosexuals to thrive and become more visible. But for the CPSD, there was very little that could be done to diminish the tolerance shown toward homosexuals. Their only options were police raids and trying to make it illegal for landlords to rent to homosexuals.²²⁷

The issue of economic tolerance was a sticking point in the report. The committee found that economic tolerance of homosexuals and their activities made it more difficult to police and control them. This was especially a problem when seen through the idea that environment and contact helped spread homosexual activity. The report made a distinction between actually being a homosexual and acting on these homosexual tendencies. Being a homosexual, in and of itself, did not constitute a crime. It was only those who acted on it that the committee wished to combat. Having businesses that tolerated such actions allowed those with homosexual tendencies to give in to their “weaknesses” and cross into criminal and immoral activities. Because of this, it was concluded that the “regulation of the conduct of the sex deviate may well prevent the spread of the evils of sex deviation.”²²⁸

Policing was therefore key to not only stopping the spread of homosexuals in the city but also to protect the French Quarter and the public at large from homosexuals’ “contamination and evil influence.” When the report discussed the “tolerance” of

²²⁷ Ibid., 4-5.

²²⁸ Ibid., 13-14.

homosexuality, it framed the issue as “the passive tolerance of evil begets more evil.” The solution to this problem was to publicly shame and condemn homosexuals so that a “climate of hostility” could arise. Their hope was that bars and nightclubs would avoid catering to homosexuals and “the evils it brings forth.”²²⁹

At the start of their investigation, the committee contacted and received twenty responses from major cities asking about their efforts to regulate homosexuals. As stipulated in the report, the majority of the cities did not have a specific ordinance dealing with this issue. However, they did use certain aspects of ordinances that pertained to bars and nightclubs to justify their policing. These ordinances tended to deal with cross-dressing, solicitation for the purposes of prostitution or any act of “sexual perversion,” and any establishment that permitted lewd acts. The report gave further evidence that the major focus for any effort to control homosexuals would be through controlling the locations where they gathered. If these establishments simply did not exist, then the “flagrant public conduct of homosexuals would hardly be noticeable.” It was also concluded that if these establishments were to be controlled or eliminated, it would help stop the spread of homosexuals because it would take away an avenue for them to meet, “awaken” and act on their homosexual tendencies. Liquor, after all, was a “high-pressure aphrodisiac” according to the report.²³⁰

Even though the CPSD acknowledged the effective use of Ordinance No: 18,565 CCS, which was commonly known as the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, that prohibited new barrooms and nightclubs in residential and commercial sections of the French Quarter, and enforcement of state law as success stories for limiting the spread of

²²⁹ Ibid., 13-14.

²³⁰ Ibid., 11, 23-33.

bars and “queer shops,” targeted harassment was the only action that seemed to work. This was simply not enough for the committee and its members. They continued to believe that even though they were able to shut down various nightclubs, the French Quarter continued to be “teeming with homosexuals who brazenly flaunt public decency in many of its barrooms and even on the street.” Therefore, the committee believed targeted harassment needed to not only continue, but also be expanded. The *Maggio et al v. City of New Orleans* case was the prime example of what such targeted harassment could accomplish.

On the night of July 22, 1958, at the direction of Superintendent Dayries, the vice squad conducted raids on bars and nightclubs all across the French Quarter that catered to homosexuals. In Supt. Dayrie’s own words, the objective was to “get rid of the undesirable elements of the French Quarter” which included “sex deviates,” “degenerates,” and “persons of lewd nature.” In total, eighteen persons were arrested. Included were Roy Maggio, Louis Robichaux and Amos McFarlane of Tony Bacino’s bar. Maggio, the manager of bar, and Robichaux and Amos, bartenders, were charged with violating 828 M.C.S. Section 5-66, which provided:

No person of lewd, immoral or dissolute character, sexual pervert, inmate of brother or house of prostitution or assignation, B-drinker.... shall be employed in such a place as a singer, dancer, beer carrier, waiter, bartender, waitress, girl bartender or barmaid. Nor shall such persons be allowed to congregate or frequent such places.²³¹

When the bar opened for business the following night, it was raided yet again. The police were determined to target this particular bar and those who ran it. An example was being made. The police continued their raids for six more nights. However instead of

²³¹ “Halt Quarter Bar Arrests, Court Asked,” *New Orleans States*, August 7, 1958, 2.

acquiescing to the continuous raids or shutting down the bar, Maggio, Robichaux, and McFarlene decided to sue the city to prevent further raids and arrests. While the court on August 6, 1958 granted their restraining order, it was eventually overturned.²³²

The overturning of the restraining gave the police the legal recourse to continue their raids. With this, the police continued to use raids as a form of harassment and intimidation against homosexuals and homosexual establishment. There was very little these individuals could do to stop the police from eventually putting these places out business, which left few places for homosexuals to congregate within the French Quarter.

The CPSD summarized their research and came to two conclusions. The first is that American cities “made little progress in legislating the subject, which is exemplified by the fact that out of twenty leading cities, there are ordinances of only six which contain specific references to homosexuals and sex perverts, and enact[ed] regulations affecting their behavior.” The common theme among the cities was that the state had a better legal handling of such laws than a city would. However, the responses received by the committee made it obvious that there was no direct way to combat homosexuals. As the responses showed, they relied on other ordinances to justify an arrest.

The second conclusion discussed the need for police to rely on liquor laws and other barroom ordinances to regulate homosexual conduct. In other words, the police must better enforce laws pertaining to places where homosexuals gather. The CPSD believed that homosexuals used alcohol to lower their inhibition in order to engage in homosexual activities. If the city were able to eliminate bars and nightclubs from this equation, then “it is doubtful if the problem of a public nuisance would arise from the

²³² “Police Launch Quarter Drive,” *Times Picayune*, July 23, 1958, 2.

activities of homosexuals.” While they did not believe sex deviate crimes would completely go away, they did believe that the numbers would lessen and that “flagrant public conduct of homosexuals would hardly be noticeable” and “would not become a stench in the nostrils of the public.”²³³

This proposed solution not only dealt with the visibility problem, but, in their eyes, also removed an avenue for which homosexuals could “entice others, particularly youths, into perversion.” The committee invited a moral argument to be made for the elimination homosexuals from the French Quarter and the city. However, the idea that homosexuals were recruiting others, especially youths, was not an argument that gained much traction when it came to demanding action from the city. Richard Foster made the same case in 1951 when he spoke to the Civic Council of New Orleans and accused homosexuals of targeting high school boys and girls. But, the SCCVC’s actions did not reflect an urgency to combat the issue, unlike their efforts against B-drinking and prostitution.²³⁴

But their blanket accusations went further than just recruiting youths. In a French Quarter tour taken in 1951 by SCCVC member Rev. Robert H. Jamieson and other prominent residents, Mrs. Lou W. Van Sicklen informed them that male prostitutes were also targeting people in the French Quarter. “[There] were male prostitutes preying on young boys and sailors and soldiers” she said, and even conveyed how she “heard a boy...solicited and saw the degenerate give him a key to be used in case he wanted to visit him.” She even told of a doctor who worked at Charity Hospital who told her that homosexuals were “full of V.D. (venereal disease) but [were] not subject to examinations

²³³ “Report of Committee,” 11.

²³⁴ “Curb Advocated on Homosexuals,” *Times-Picayune*, April 28, 1951, 4.

given to female prostitutes.” Mrs. Van Sicklen noted the Starlet Lounge was a hang out for them, and that they recruited high school children from there.²³⁵

While Mrs. Van Sicklen’s story was not mentioned in the CPSD report, Jacob Morrison would have heard stories of male prostitution in the French Quarter from either observing it himself or from in account from a fellow Vieux Carré residents. But to him and the committee, being a homosexual or prostitute made no difference. The danger of visibility was still present. The report veritably bragged that homosexual bars were closed due to police harassment, and possible replacement were unable to open due to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance that prohibited new bars from opening in residential and commercial sections of the Vieux Carré, and Ordinance No. 17,855, which required neighborhood consent to open a new bar. This, however, did not prevent homosexuals, as worded in the report, from “brazenly flaunt[ing] public decency” in bars that remained open.²³⁶

The CPSD knew that the police alone could not monitor all homosexual activity in the French Quarter. They relied on tips and complaints from people in order to crack down on homosexual establishments. This kind of information was crucial for any policing to be functional. This is why the committee found it crucial to gain and keep public opinion on their side. Economic tolerance by businesses allowed places for homosexuals to continue to congregate. Tolerance by individuals also made this possible. According to the report, there were many people who supported the police effort but where hesitant to come forward for fear of being “tarred by the same abominable brush.”

²³⁵ Memorandum to Commissioner Victor Schiro Re: Vieux Carré Tour Taken October 22, 1951, Vieux Carré Commission, Commissioner Victor H. Schiro, Folder 3, Box 8, New Orleans Public Library.

²³⁶ “Report of Committee,” 12.

The committee hoped that by publicizing their work and the problem of sex deviates, individual opinions would shift, thereby creating a “frigid climate of hostility.” With this hostility, bars and nightclubs would reject homosexuals because they would be bad for business, which would either force homosexuals to conform to societal norms or be driven out of town. It all came down to public perception and support. Raids on bars and nightclubs were part of this strategy. The more the police could villainize homosexuals, the easier it would become for them to continue their raids and target individuals without any criticism from the public.²³⁷

The report’s mixture of history, scientific research, legal procedures, and committee members’ own personal prejudice became the basis for the recommendations the CPSD submitted to the City Council. The basis of their recommendations came down to the idea that the city should create a climate of fear to discourage homosexual activities in public spaces. But, as indicated in their report, their main objective was to prevent homosexuals from acting on their impulses, thereby reducing their numbers. Their initial priority then was to obliterate the existence of places where they could gather.

The Recommendations

The report submitted for consideration contained three “practical” recommendations that pertained to the police, landlords, and the City Council. The recommendations were made in consultation with director of the Department of Finance, the Superintendent of police, and a representative of the City Attorney’s office. The

²³⁷ “Report of Committee,” 13.

CPSD prefaced these recommendations by acknowledging the uniqueness of New Orleans as a place where people pride themselves on being “care-free, broad-minded and easy-going.” People come to the city to “see something different.” But that “different” did not include homosexuals. The recommendations sought to remedy this by making it clear that it would take more than just the City Council passing an ordinance.

The first recommendation pertained to the police. Through their investigation they discovered that police departments, who admitted to having a homosexual problem, relied on procedures and laws the NOPD had already at their disposal. It was recommended that:

Continue [to maintain] strict supervision over the activities of such barrooms, nightclubs and saloons [that] attract known sex deviates among their clientele. Prompt action in arresting and changing sex perverts who act as entertainers, waiters and bartenders should be continued and multiple charges preferred against these persons as authorized by City Code (Section 5-66).²³⁸

In other words, the CPSD recommended the police department continue to target, harass, and arrest homosexuals in bars and nightclubs under an existing city code. The committee found these actions worked not only in humiliating and shaming homosexuals, but it also served as warning to any future individuals who might be thinking of attending and congregating in these locations. As they said in their report, the less visible homosexuals were in public, the less likely they will choose to act on their homosexual impulses.

The second recommendation concerned landlords. The CPSD indicated that “Persons who don’t hesitate to rent their premises to individuals with all the appearances, mannerisms and repulsive conduct of sex deviates, should take a new look at their sordid

²³⁸ “Report of Committee,” 14.

consequences that stem from the acts of such persons.” In other words, they asked that they did not rent to homosexuals. It would have been difficult for the CPSD, the police, or the City Council to recommend an ordinance that forbids landlords from renting to homosexuals. The same argument that Supt. Joseph I. Scheuering made in 1950 still stood; it was difficult to determine who was and was not a homosexual. And if a person was falsely accused and arrested, it could ruin their lives. If in some instances police were unable to determine who was a homosexual, then landlords would have the same problem. But, even if a landlord could tell or knowingly rented to a homosexual, it was their prerogative to do so since it was not illegal to be a homosexual. The CPSD knew this, which is why they made no legal recommendation other than to plead with landlords not to rent to known homosexuals.²³⁹

The third recommendation consisted of a list of seven “practical and enforceable” amendments to city codes that the City Council could adopt. The first proposal called for fingerprinting and photographing applicants for permits to operate a bar or nightclub. The application should also be given to the owner of the property to make them aware of how the property was being used. This recommendation was not new. Jacob Morrison, during his time working with the SCCVC, had advocated for this policy. Not only could it have been used against prostitutes and other vice operators, which would have been the case under the SCCVC, but it could also be used against possible homosexuals who wished to be employed by bars and nightclubs.²⁴⁰

The second proposal sought to amend 828 M.C.S. Section 5-66, that forbids the employment of sex perverts as well as allowing them to congregate in an establishment.

²³⁹ “Report of Committee,” 14.

²⁴⁰ “Report of Committee,” 15.

They advised that the ordinance should be amended so that anyone found in violation of this ordinance could be prosecuted by either the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, the State Board of Tax Appeals, or the City Department of Finance. While their case was being investigated, an operator's permits for selling liquor would be suspended or revoked. If found guilty, the establishment would be barred from being used as an "alcoholic beverage outlet" for at least six months and a day, or one year depending on the severity of the violation. In this same vein, the next proposal suggested the city should restore its ability to revoke and suspend alcohol licenses and permits, and place the power in the hands of the Finance Department.²⁴¹

This recommendation went straight for the bars themselves. The most important part of this proposal was the idea that liquor licenses should be suspended while an establishment operator's case was being heard, which would financially cripple the business until the time the case was ruled on. If an establishment were not permitted to serve liquor on the premises, then more often than not, people would be disinclined to patronize it. This would have been a de facto closure of a bar or nightclub that catered to homosexuals. Also, with regard to revoking or suspending alcohol licenses, the city already had the authority to refuse the renewal of licenses. The proposal would simply expand it.

The next proposal advocated for the expansion of an ordinance that forbid the leasing of property for houses of prostitution. The CPSD suggested this be expanded to include the leasing of property that would be used as a "congregation point for known sex deviates." Much like the previous proposal, this one aimed to limit the creation of any

²⁴¹ "Report of Committee," 15.

new bars and nightclubs that might cater to homosexuals. Having these two connected in the same ordinance is revealing of how the CPSD and its supporters saw homosexuals. They were just as immoral as prostitutes, both using sex to lure people to them, and the case of homosexuals, to convert them.²⁴²

The fifth proposal suggested amending Section 63-18 of the City Code, which pertained to persons wearing clothes of the opposite sex. The CPSD wished to clarify the prohibition to include wearing clothes of the opposite sex “in any place of entertainment,” and believed it should “forbid lascivious conduct in such places.” This expansion specifically targeted entertainers. It was assumed that most, if not all, cross-dressing entertainers were homosexual. But what the committee failed to mention was that this type of entertainment was popular among locals and tourists alike. Club My-O-My, a nightclub located on Lake Pontchartrain, was popular with homosexuals as well as heterosexuals. Even celebrities such as Carman Miranda and Howard Hughes were said to have visited the place. While it made sense to target these entertainers due to the visibility of perceived homosexual activities, businesswise it could also prove a mistake because this form of entertainment drew in tourists and their money.²⁴³

The prostitution ordinance, in the sixth proposal, was suggested to expand and “inflict its penalties on those who entice to or engage in sex perversion.” This recommendation was broad and gave no specifics about what exactly consisted of sex perversion. It can be assumed, however, that it specifically meant engaging in a homosexual act. Why the CPSD included this in their recommendations is unclear.

²⁴² Report of Committee,” 15.

²⁴³ Ibid. 15; Perez and Palmquist, *In Exile*, 44.

Louisiana already had a sodomy law (Revised Statute 14:89) on the books by 1958. This made any expansion of the prostitution ordinance to include homosexuals redundant.²⁴⁴

The last proposal asked the City Council to consider increasing the penalties to those who violated the city ordinance to control sex deviates, which at the time stood at a maximum of \$100.00 fine and ninety day in jail. The CPSD did not, however, give a recommendation as to what the fine should be or how much more jail time should be issued. What it did do was warn those who wished to engage in homosexual acts would pay not only a social penalty, but also a financial one and increased jail time. The committee did not care how homosexuals remained invisible, as long as they were, whether it is by remaining in the closet, in jail, or driven out of town.²⁴⁵

Taken as a whole, the proposed recommendations were not a major adjustment to what the police and the city were already doing to combat the perceived homosexual problem. The report advocated for the continuation of the status quo of harassing individuals and raiding establishments because the CPSD believed it was the most effective way of controlling the city's homosexual populace. As much as they tried to convey their report in a balanced manner by including Dr. Kinsey's report and other historical individuals, the committee members' bias was still apparent in the report, mainly due to the moralistic language used. The committee made clear that even though they knew homosexuals existed, and in all probability, were born that way, they were not welcome within the city.

In January 1959, Councilman Fred J. Cassibry, after his review of the CPSD report, blamed Mayor deLesseps S. Morrison for not pressing the police department to

²⁴⁴ "Report of Committee," 15.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

better clean up the French Quarter. In a statement to the press, Cassibry said, "I have heard alibis and excuses from the mayor about enforcing the law in the Vieux Carré. Notorious barroom owners in whose bars crime has been repeatedly exposed have been allowed to continue to operate." He told of French Quarter residents who spoke with him about the troubles they saw continue to occur:

It was the same old story of shakedowns, 'B' drinking, lewd and immoral shows, thefts through the device of so-called 'rolls' and in addition to these complaints we had the usual protest from residents of the quarter about the large number of homosexuals frequenting certain of the barrooms of the area. A large number of these French Quarter barrooms, particularly on Bourbon St., persist in flouting our laws and prey upon our visitors and tourists, which does tremendous damage to our name and our prestige throughout the nation.²⁴⁶

The only action the Morrison administration took was the refusal to renew alcohol licenses to certain bars and nightclubs that had a history of violating city ordinances. And because of this, Morrison refuted Cassibry's accusations against him. Morrison also managed to deflect responsibility due to his emphasis that the state had the final say in who would receive a renewed license.²⁴⁷

Within days of his statement, Cassibry announced his intention to introduce and sponsor six ordinances based on the CPSD recommendations. These included the photographing and fingerprinting of employees, including entertainers, in establishments that sold alcohol. Another ordinance stated that "members of a show or cast or any entertainer attired in clothes other than the type worn by his or her sex shall not be

²⁴⁶ "Cassibry Flays Quarter Policy," *Times-Picayune*, January 8, 1959, 61.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

permitted to mix with the public attending a place of entertainment.”²⁴⁸ The ordinance went further by also prohibiting these people from wearing

Clothes, ornaments, accouterments, facial makeup or costume as (1) are designed to denote that the wearer is a homosexual or lesbian or sex pervert; (2) or that is designed to stimulate or arouse unnatural sex desires; (3) or that is reasonably likely to entice any person or persons to unnatural sex practices.²⁴⁹

The provisions would not apply during Mardi Gras, when cross-dressing was an acceptable action. Another provision of this ordinance pertained to patrons, which stated:

No patron of any barroom, cocktail lounge, night club or other place holding a liquor permit shall engage in lewd or lascivious conduct or in excessive kissing, fondling or embracing of an adult person of the same sex, or in the intentional touching or caressing of the sexual organs of another person of either sex.²⁵⁰

The third ordinance expanded the city ordinance prohibiting the leasing of property to be used as houses of prostitution. This ordinance would be extended to include the prohibiting of property to be used “as a gathering place where known homosexuals, lesbians or sex perverts, engage in lewd, indecent, obscene or lascivious practices.” The ordinance also stipulated that:

It shall be an offense for homosexuals, lesbians and sex perverts to accost, importune, or entice to lewdness or sex perversion any person on the city streets, or alleys or in any park, playground, depot station, terminal or other public place, site or building or to behave in public as to occasion scandal or offend the peace and good morals of the people.²⁵¹

The fourth ordinance concerned employment, which was an expansion of Section 5-66. In this amended version, the ordinance specifically included the wording, “No person of known or admitted lewd, immoral or lascivious character, homosexual, sex

²⁴⁸ “Cassibry Urges Bar Crackdown,” *Times-Picayune*, January 16, 1959, 13.

²⁴⁹ “Fingerprinting Bar Folk Goal,” *Times-Picayune*, January 23, 1959, 12.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

pervert, [or] lesbian” to the ordinance. The language made it clear that this was to include homosexuals in this ordinance and forbid them from working and gathering in bars or nightclubs.²⁵²

The fifth and sixth ordinance mandated that a copy of the liquor license application should be sent to the property owner, and those that hold the liquor license must display signs with the price of drinks in two conspicuous places inside the establishment. These last two were the only ones that were not included in the CPSD report. But the first ordinances can be justified because it would allow the landlord to know what their property is being used for.²⁵³

The editorial board of the *Times-Picayune*, like they did with the previous committees, weighed in the City Council’s proposed ordinances. The board endorsed the fingerprinting and photographing ordinance, believing the tool was needed to keep bar operators from hiring undesirables. However, they faulted the police for not doing their job in the first place. Once again, the laxity of law enforcement came into question. Regardless of this criticism, they still endorsed this particular ordinance.²⁵⁴

On January 27 and February 5, 1959, the City Council unanimously approved in some form all seven of the committee’s recommendations. Groups such as The Women’s Society of Christian Service of St. Mark’s Methodist Church and the Vieux Carré Property Owners and Associates pushed for Councilman Fred. J. Cassibry and the City Council to adopt the new bar ordinances. Even with these new ordinances in place, the

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ “Is It Needed?,” *Times-Picayune*, January 29, 1959, 16.

problems with enforcement still existed. But regardless of this predicament, the CPSD's work was accomplished.²⁵⁵

The CPSD efforts to solve the homosexual problem in the French Quarter can be seen as a success in the eyes of civic and business organizations that fought for most of the decade to make it possible. The CPSD able to conduct their investigation unimpeded, due largely because Morrison had conducted much his investigation earlier in the decade as well as from the lack of input from outside voices. Their recommendations were taken seriously and were unanimously adopted by the City Council. Based on this measure, compared to the previous committees, the CPSD can be seen as the most successful.

The most important aspect of the committee, which the City Council did not recognize in their adopted ordinances, is the police conduct toward homosexuals. This in itself is what made the CPSD so consequential. Their efforts helped to sanction the NOPD's continued actions that created a hostile environment for homosexuals throughout the 1960s. It publicly endorsed the police efforts to target, harass, arrest, and publicly shame homosexuals. These harsh actions also allowed the police to continue to ignore homosexuals being "rolled," which the police had done for most of the decade.

The most famous of these incidents occurred in September 1958, before the CPSD's report was released. It involved Mexican national Fernando Rios, who was visiting the city. After being picked by John Farrell, a Tulane student, from the gay bar Café Lafitte's, he was then beaten in an alley next to St. Louis Cathedral by Farrell and his two friends. He would later die from his injuries. The Tulane students were later

²⁵⁵ "Better Regulation of Barrooms Voted," *Times-Picayune*, January 30, 1959, 1,3.

arrested, charged, and tried for Rios' murder. However, the defense was able to portray Rios as a deviate thereby allowing the three students to be acquitted.

The CPSD was the shortest of the three committees established in the 1950s, but it managed to have the largest impact of the committees. The effects of the CPSD's work were felt by a broader segment of the population, rather than just female prostitutes, which the SCCVC and SCIC focused on. It also sanctioned harsh treatment of homosexuals, which could lead to the ruining of a person's reputation and even ending with the loss of a person's livelihood and families.

The goals of civic and business organizations were to make places the French Quarter "safer" for residents and tourists. However, the overt use of moralistic terminology did more than just help to persuade those in various committees that homosexuals needed to be policed. It framed the issue in a way that was different than the other undesirables that these groups targeted. Instead of focusing strictly on safety, which was the case with B-girls, barmaids, and prostitutes, homosexuals were seen as sinful people that needed to remain hidden, not act on their impulses, or be driven out of town.

CONCLUSION

New Orleans of the 1950s was dominated by Mayor deLesseps S. “Chep” Morrison and his politics of reform. While his politics tended to be a façade for his much larger goal of becoming governor of Louisiana, the residents of the French Quarter, and civic and business organizations took the reform movement seriously. Even though their motives were self-servicing and based on misogynistic and homophobic ideas, they managed to hold a sincere belief in the gentrification efforts of the French Quarter and make it a place safe for residents and tourists alike. However, their beliefs had harmful and oppressive effects on those they targeted, particularly women and homosexuals, who became easy scapegoats for the perceived troubles of the neighborhood. To them, these undesirables, who also resided in the Vieux Carré and whose visibility they sought to combat, posed a hindrance to their efforts. The Special Citizens Committee for the Vieux Carré, the Special Citizens’ Investigative Committee, and the Committee on the Problem of Sex Deviates were created and used by business and reform interests to further their evolving moral and profit-motivated agendas. The creation of these committees showed the power they held in the city. It also showed their limitations. The committees themselves helped advance their agenda, but without the cooperation of the city and police, their efforts would only take them so far.

The death of Robert Dunn, Jr. was the catalyst used by these civic activists to pressure city leaders and law enforcement officials into acting on their behalf. Efforts in the 1950s achieved mixed results in the short-term but proved to be more consequential in later decades. Efforts by prominent French Quarter residents, as well as civic and business organizations to clean up the neighborhood ultimately achieved the

gentrification they sought, which came with the removal of many, but not all, of the undesirables they crusaded against. The historiography regarding these efforts does not adequately portray the significance of the three committees established to combat vice and advance the gentrification of the French Quarter. Also, the connection between these committees and the harsh crackdowns of the 1960s cannot be more apparent. If not for the sustained efforts to target prostitutes, B-girls, homosexuals, and corrupt police officers, the status quo would not have been challenged.

As New Orleans entered the 1960s, French Quarter residents who tried to revitalize the neighborhood gained a new ally in their efforts. He was Orleans Parish District Attorney Jim Garrison, who was elected in 1962 and ran on the platform of cleaning up the city, especially the French Quarter. When he became District Attorney, he used the ordinances and policies drafted by these committees to conduct raids and prosecute criminals to the fullest extent of the law in an effort to shut down vice operators in the French Quarter. But, much like Morrison before him, he used the cleanup effort to try and make a name for himself, thereby faltering on his agenda. His obsession over the John F. Kennedy assassination would be one of the causes his moral reform efforts lapsed.²⁵⁶

Regardless of the outcome of Garrison's personal efforts, the three committees did manage to create a perception of success relative to their goals, even though they can also be seen as failures. The Mayor's Special Citizens Committee for the Vieux Carré's work was the most consequential based on the fact that they provided the police and Garrison the tools necessary to combat prostitution and B-drinking in the 1960s. Shutting

²⁵⁶ James Savage, *Jim Garrison's Bourbon Street Brawl: The Making of a First Amendment Milestone* (Lafayette, La: University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 2010), 9.

down notorious madam Norma Wallace's house on Conti Street in the French Quarter was one of the biggest prizes for French Quarter residents. For decades, Wallace's prostitution operation continued to function in the neighborhood and surrounding areas. She too had police protection and participated in the same catch and release raids the police conducted. But in the end, she could not keep up with the constant raids and arrests.

The SCCVC's work within the larger historiography tends to be relegated to a few paragraphs, particularly in Edward Haas' work, where he used the committee in the context of police scandals during the Morrison administration. Haas is correct to place the committee in this context, but the committee deserves more credit than it has been given. The SCCVC helped bring about lasting changes in the long run when it comes to prostitution in the French Quarter. The focus of French Quarter residents as well as civic and business organizations to target them, led to the most blatant houses to be closed down for good.

Even though the SCCVC was eventually successful in substantially reducing the presence of prostitutes and B-girls in the French Quarter temporarily, it was ultimately a failure in the long run. A nostalgia for these two groups soon followed. Both Angela R. Demovic and Christine Wiltz tell how time transformed prostitutes and B-girl into as a part of New Orleans, and specifically, the French Quarter's heritage. In 1972, Norma Wallace was interviewed for *New Orleans* magazine where a sympathetic article was published, much to the chagrin of many of its readers. However, in August 12, 1972, Wallace was invited to the Press Club to speak and was presented with a key to the city. She was treated as a celebrity, due in large part to the people who came to see her. Many

of her former clients stood in line to receive her autograph. She was even listed as a celebrity guest at the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans that was attended by Bing Crosby, Louisiana Governor Edwin Edwards, and New Orleans Mayor Moon Landrieu.²⁵⁷

Even B-girls received a rehabilitated image. Demovic describes B-girls as having gone from “malevolent knock-out-drug user in the 1950s” to “an integral part of nostalgic remembrance of the past in the 1990s and 2000s.” The B-girl became a symbol and a myth because she was seen as a part of French Quarter life in the past. Whether seen as malevolent or “voluptuous law breaker,” as Demovic describes them, they were acknowledged as a legitimate part of French Quarter history and mythology.²⁵⁸

The work conducted by the Special Citizens’ Investigating Committee in bringing police corruption to the forefront, made it the second most successful of the committees. Even though they were stymied by a lawsuit filed by the NOPD, their investigation still managed to uncover the extent of corruption in all areas of the police department. The SCIC allowed for a modest cleanup of the department, which trained new recruits to not completely fall into the same trappings as the more senior officers. But the temptation of corruption from working in the French Quarter was still there and, some may say, continues to this day.

This committee was also the most controversial. The controversy came from the police and Mayor Chep Morrison, which both tried to stop the investigations in its tracks, even though they publicly supported its efforts. For Morrison, his motivation came from his reform image. However, it is because of this reform image that Morrison also objected to the committee’s work. Any wrongdoing connected to the police department

²⁵⁷ Wiltz, *The Last Madam*, 205, 216

²⁵⁸ Demovic, “Quaint Creatures,” 346.

would certainly tarnish his carefully crafted image. The NOPD objected to the investigation because it did not wish to have its reputation tarnished by having definitive proof of the department harboring corruption documented and made public.

But the importance of the SCIC's work cannot be overlooked, especially when it came to their investigation into police ties with prostitution. With the connection unveiled, the NOPD were shamed into doing its job and closing down houses of prostitution with more conviction than with previous attempts. This caused a great reduction in prostitution, thereby almost completely eliminating the issue in the French Quarter.

The Committee on the Problem of Sex Deviates had immediate and far-reaching consequences for those the committee targeted. The CPSD sanctioned the continued use of harassment by the police, which in some cases led to extortion, not only from bars but also from individual patrons. This led to a moral ambiguity and gave reason why the police seemingly opposed any reforms that sought to challenge the status quo. The 1960s saw the rise of much harsher treatment of homosexuals by the police and the CPSD made this possible.

Even though in the short term it helped sanction harsh police raids and targeted harassment, the CPSD's work failed to push homosexuals from the French Quarter. The increased bar raids and arrests allowed the committee to be viewed as a success. Bars were put on notice that if they catered to homosexuals, they ran the risk of being shut down and humiliated in the press. The committee hoped that this threat of humiliation would drive homosexuals out of the French Quarter. The police were even willing to overlook what would now be considered hate crimes against homosexuals as a way to

show them that they would receive no protection. The most notable case concerned Fernando Rios, a Mexican national who was “rolled” by three Tulane undergrads in 1959.

But homosexuals and the establishments that catered to them persisted. In 1958 *Roy Maggio et al v. City of New Orleans* was an example that homosexuals would not go quietly back to being invisible. Even though the plaintiffs lost their case and did not openly admit to being homosexual, the case is important because it showed that homosexuals were willing to fight back against city and police efforts to reduce their visibility and usher them out of the city.

Even today, homosexuals continue to exist, thrive, and remain visible in the French Quarter. One can also argue the CPSD inadvertently shined a spotlight on homosexuals in the city thereby given them more visibility. It also showed that homosexuals existed in the city and were not going anywhere, regardless of how many raids and arrests were made. Frank Perez and Jeffrey Palmquist’s book about long-operating Café Lafitte in Exile is proof that visibility was key to eventual acceptance of homosexuals and that the efforts by the CPSD, the police, French Quarter residents, and civic and business groups were ultimately a failure.

The power and efforts of these prominent French Quarter residents as well as business and civic organizations cannot be ignored. It is because of their actions that the French Quarter has taken on a different tone than it did in the 1950s. But what made the city and the French Quarter so attractive to tourists back then, sex, can still be seen in some form today. No matter how hard these groups of people fought to change the culture of the French Quarter and make it a wholesome place for the kinds of tourists they

envisioned, they were unsuccessful in doing so. Tourists come to the city to let loose and bask in the care-free atmosphere.

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