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POLICE SCIENCE



CALVIN GODDARD [Ed.]

ORGANIZED PROTECTION AGAINST ORGANIZED PREDATORY CRIMES¹

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V. WHITE SLAVE TRAFFIC

1. The White Slave Traffic Act was passed by Congress on June 23, 1910, in response to many demands of an international character, seeking to attack the problem of vice in modern civilization. The situation had been the subject of a conference at Geneva, Switzerland, in which representatives of various countries had participated, and the traffic in women and girls, known as the white slave traffic, had been reported as increasing, and as constituting an ever-developing menace. By this law, an effort was made to curtail commercialized vice by requiring the Federal Government to punish the transportation in interstate and foreign commerce of women and girls for this purpose. What was theretofore a matter for consideration only by local authorities in each of the various State jurisdictions in the United States thus became the concern of the United States Government. As a purely police matter could not by legislation be made the duty of the United States Government, the law depends for its Constitutionality on the sections of the Constitution giving the Federal Congress authority to pass legislation respecting interstate and foreign commerce. Proponents of the measure pointed out that there was need for interference by the United States in this,

¹Former articles in the series dealt with: I Bank Problems; II Automobile Thefts; III Bankruptcy Frauds; IV Freight-Car Robberies.

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a police matter, because the laws of one State restricting commercialized vice were being rendered difficult of execution because of the laxity of adjoining States, so that only by prohibiting the transporting of such women could this traffic be controlled and eliminated in such localities as desired this change.

A discussion regarding the White Slave Traffic Act does not, of course, include a discussion of commercialized vice in general, since the so-called white slave traffic is only one phase or subdivision of this more extended subject. This article concerns itself, therefore, only with the more limited aspects of vice as they concern the transportation in interstate and foreign commerce of women and girls for purposes of commercial prostitution.

The enforcement of the White Slave Traffic Act immediately created a large volume of cases requiring investigation, and this duty devolved upon the United States Bureau of Investigation. This Bureau immediately undertook to enforce the Act. These investigations resulted in the finding of a serious situation, for in the report of the Attorney General which covers the fiscal year ending June 30, 1912, the statement is made that because of the tremendous increase in the number of violations of this law coming to the attention of the Department and the appalling conditions thereby revealed, in the latter part of April there was appointed a Special Commissioner for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic, who was to head a special organization within the Bureau of what were called White Slave Officers. The extent of the violations of this new law can only be gauged from available statistics by comparing the number of convictions. In the two and one-third years included within the period since the passage of the Act, June 25, 1910, to October 31, 1912, which is shown in the report of the Attorney General, the number of convictions is given as 337 and the sentences as 607 years, 6 months and 21 days. Presumably, in this period the largest number of cases would have been handled, as it immediately followed the passage of the Act, and prosecutions were intended to remedy conditions.

The Bureau at that time was treating this crime as a special problem with a more or less independent organization to which were allotted certain of the funds for detection and prosecution of crimes. Notwithstanding this fact, it appears from the records that in the one year period ending June 30, 1932, the convictions in White Slave cases were 431 and the sentences 517 years, 11 months and 21 days actually served, 207 years and 10 months probation, and 52 years.

2 months and 1 day suspended. This appears to more than double the figures (annual) of the earlier period. At present the investigation of these crimes is not relegated within the Bureau to a separate organization, but is handled in the usual course of business with all of the other crimes which receive the attention of the Special Agents. It is believed that one should not conclude from this that conditions are worse today than they were in 1912. It may be possible that modern investigative methods may have resulted in the successful consummation of more extensive prosecutions. For instance, it appears that the average number of special agents has actually decreased since 1925 from 398 in 1925 to 362 in 1932, while the total figures (of all cases of violations investigated by the Bureau) indicate that convictions increased from 3,041 in 1926 to 4,795 in 1932, and the sentences likewise have been more than doubled in the same period.

2. There are several distinct divisions included within the White Slave Traffic Act. The principal section prohibits the transportation or causing of the transportation in interstate commerce or in any territory or the District of Columbia of a woman or girl for an immoral purpose or to become a prostitute. This section carries a penalty of 5 years and \$5,000. There is an additional section punishing the persuading of a woman to be so transported, which carries a like penalty and a special provision which increases the penalty to 10 years and \$10,000 if the girl is under the age of 18 years. The wording of the statute is broad and does not limit violations to cases in which commercial prostitution is the object of the transportation.

In the litigation which immediately followed the passage of the Act, there was considerable controversy as to the facts which might be included within its wording. In the famous case of *Caminetti et al.*, versus the United States, the Supreme Court held that the transportation of a woman in interstate commerce for the purpose of becoming the concubine or mistress of the transporter is a violation of the Act. The possibility that the reaction to this decision would amount to a nullification of the law through attempts to punish in Federal Courts matters of a purely local police character, was eliminated by the adoption of policies within the Department of Justice, defining elements of aggravation which were considered sufficient to warrant investigations and prosecutions. These were outlined in circular instructions to the United States attorneys and other court officials, which were later incorporated in the printed volume of these instructions. They include the transportation of girls under eighteen,

the transportation of women for commercial prostitution and those cases in which the woman or the man, although of age, has deserted minor children who are thus likely to be made destitute. Particular attention was invited to the likelihood that complaints would be made in an effort to blackmail and also for the purpose of attempting to secure evidence for use in divorce proceedings. By following these policies, the police court cases of escapades which in State Courts would be considered of more or less gravity, as indicated by the laws of the different jurisdictions, and those wherein attempts have been made to utilize the Federal criminal laws for fraudulent purposes, have been avoided.

The intention behind this legislation of preventing and punishing the introduction of women to a life of commercial debauchery has been maintained.

During the period since the passage of the White Slave Traffic Act and the settling of these legal questions, a large volume of cases has been investigated. The impression of the public that any interstate transportation of a woman by a man is punishable under the law has led to the filing of complaints which do not warrant either investigation or prosecution. Also, complainants many times make allegations which investigations prove to be untrue. The proportion of cases received and investigated to those prosecuted has been very large. The United States Bureau of Investigation continually strives to limit the work necessary to be performed on cases of no merit or in which the United States attorneys will not authorize prosecution, and increase the thoroughness with which information of aggravated violations is sought. This policy has proved very successful. It has been found that, unlike many other types of crime, aggravated and sometimes organized activities in violation of this law may be carried on without resulting in complaints. It is therefore necessary to make a positive effort to obtain the initial information from which the investigation may be made. To this end, and as a part of its crime prevention work, the Bureau maintains contacts and sources of information from which there is gleaned in each district data as to activities of a related character, such as the operation of disorderly houses, so-called vice rings, and panderers. State police and civic organizations are sometimes of considerable assistance in this regard. One of the accomplishments in this direction has been the fingerprinting of prostitutes when they are arrested and the sending of these prints to the Identification Division of the Bureau at Washington in the same manner as is done with

other arrests. Strange as it may seem, it has been the practice at times of some police departments to send fingerprints in all arrests except those of prostitutes. This is undoubtedly because of the fact that in many jurisdictions, these arrests are not for engaging in prostitution, but on some charge such as disorderly conduct or investigation or merely vagrancy. Without the fingerprints, it is at times exceedingly difficult to trace the whereabouts of these women for the reason that they frequently change their names. When the fingerprints are received, if a particular woman has been arrested in another state within a short period, this fact is immediately apparent and available to the special agents.

Although the law is designed to decrease the number of commercial prostitutes and therefore in a sense is for the benefit of unhappily situated women who might fall prey to this system of business, it is found in practice that many of these women, after becoming hardened to this life, adopt the unwritten law of the underworld requiring that no information be given to law enforcement officers. This is so even though the average prostitute may have no personal use for panders who are the means by which women are introduced to this life and who are particularly amenable to the provisions of the White Slave Traffic Act.

Just as the system of maintaining fingerprints of criminals in a central clearing house has proven extremely valuable to all law enforcement, the extension of its use to vice cases is of extreme importance. The fact that more than 40% of the fingerprints received by the United States Bureau of Investigation are identified with previous arrests is indicative of the extent of the assistance of fingerprints in law enforcement generally and the possibilities of their complete use in vice work. With more than three and one-half million fingerprints on file and the international exchange of fingerprints, the use of aliases or the failure to cooperate through disclosing information, is more than offset.

3. There is considerable misconception by the public of the extent of the so-called vice rings and so-called syndicates or organizations of criminals engaging in violations of this kind. The reason for this is the fact that a case in which the operation of a ring is proven immediately receives exaggerated publicity through the press and tabloid type magazines. The fact that such an organization is occasionally discovered, investigated and prosecuted, is, of course, no indication that such organizations are prevalent. Sometimes cases under investigation by the Bureau have indicated that there exists

within the borders of a state or municipality a vice organization. It is only when the activities of such an organization extend across state borders that the Federal Government may step in. Of course, through the system outlined, information as to these activities is maintained so that prompt action may be taken when the state borders are disregarded.

In the past 10 years, over 36,500 new files have been initiated in these cases, averaging more than 10 new files per day. In each case there are involved from two to hundreds of individuals. The average case concerns usually one man and one woman or two men and two women. In others, however, there have at times been investigated what are known as clearing houses or employment agencies for prostitutes which operate in an organized way. An example of a case of this kind will be referred to later.

Since 1924 some 4,263 convictions have been secured in White Slave Traffic Act cases handled by the Bureau and sentences exceeding 5,000 years, or more than one year each actually to be served, have been imposed. There were imposed approximately \$200,000 in fines, and at the same time more than 1,000 fugitives whose apprehension was desired for violation of the White Slave Traffic Act were located. It is apparent that newer investigative methods which demand the use of intelligence and experienced training, have been successful in the procurement of evidence in situations where the older type of methods has heretofore failed. Cases are now developed without any cooperation whatsoever from the woman or other persons concerned. Each case is considered to offer a potential lead as to the existence of an organized ring, and the special agents are alert to such possibilities. It is considered of more importance to prosecute one so-called "higher-up" than any number of individuals who are merely operating under orders. Through this, it has been possible to suppress or cause the discontinuance of such organizations and all of the individual cases which otherwise would have flowed from their activities.

An example of a case of the organized type is one recently investigated in the Chicago district. Information had been received in Detroit which caused an investigation to be made in Chicago, simultaneously with continued investigation in Michigan. This lead indicated that some arrangements had been made through a certain beauty parlor for the placing of the woman in a house of prostitution in Detroit. Chicago police and special agents, when they visited the beauty parlor, found a card index system, recording the names

and addresses of some 700 prostitutes and a large number of houses of prostitution in cities in the Middle West area surrounding Chicago. While prosecution of the operator of the beauty parlor was instituted, the investigation was at the same time carried further, resulting in additional prosecution of a so-called "higher-up" who was protecting and making the business possible. This prosecution was not without its difficulties, the so-called "higher-up" attempting in the office of the United States Marshal, to prevent witnesses from testifying by threats of physical punishment.

A similar clearing house or employment agency for prostitutes was prosecuted in what was known as the Orville Mogle case at Birmingham, Alabama. In this case there was found a list of names of prostitutes available in the Southeast, extending as far north as Ohio.

Another case which illustrates a recent type of organization of panderers arose in the vicinity of Washington, D. C. In one of the small suburban communities, a shooting occurred which brought to light the fact that the place was a house of prostitution. At the same time, it became clear that some of the women occupants had been transported from the District of Columbia and from Pennsylvania. One woman and a man were injured, and another man was killed, in the affray, which occurred at what was known as the Old Colonial Tea House at Bladensburg, Maryland. The investigation by special agents of the United States Bureau of Investigation resulted in evidence that a gang of panderers from Pennsylvania had come into Maryland for the purpose of extending its zone of operations in the control of chains of bawdy houses. These panderers would secure a woman whom they would place in a house. Once a week, they would call for her and transfer her to another house. These women would use different names at the different houses and would travel from place to place, so that few of them knew the names of any other women who were working for the benefit of their panderer or the real names of any of the women with whom they were working. In fact, several stated that they never saw a familiar face in their travels from house to house. Fifty per cent of the money earned by these women was paid to the landlady. The panderers then secured from the prostitutes fifty per cent or more of what was left. At the same time, they procured their fifty per cent from the landlady. Several clashes occurred among the gang and operators of houses or local panderers in Maryland, but it remained for the particular gun battle in which the killing occurred, to bring