

New York Paper Sees Ketchikan as Little Inferno of Gamblers, Liquor Dealers and Red Lights

Speaks of it as the Wickedest City Under the Stars and Stripes; Government is Landlord to Recognized Lawbreakers

The Hearst newspapers do not always keep their offensive remarks for Canada or Great Britain. A recent number of the New York Sunday American has an article on Ketchikan in which that city is branded as the wickedest city under the flag, where vice and crime conditions cannot be matched elsewhere on the continent. The article, which is based on revelations said to have been made recently in the House of Representatives at Washington, follows:

A startling revelation was made in the House of Representatives in Washington recently, that the United States government is acting as landlord and permitting the sale of liquor and dope and the trade of dissolute women and crime of all varieties on its property at Ketchikan in Alaska. It was charged that Uncle Sam, while posing as a moralist, is encouraging and in effect maintaining in Ketchikan and Bristol Bay, Alaska, conditions of vice and crime such as cannot be matched elsewhere on this continent.

Prosperous City
Ketchikan is a city of five thousand inhabitants, a seaport in extreme southeastern Alaska, a marvellous region of island archipelagoes and sounds, with a delightful climate. It is a great fishing centre, made extraordinarily prosperous by the wealth which the ocean yields.

Part of it, called Indian Town, belongs in fee to the United States government, which has set it apart for the occupancy of native Indians, who are civilized and decent folks.

A disreputable and criminal

element has invaded and occupied Indian Town, establishing there a red light district with two hundred or more bad women, and making it a colony of bootleggers, dope-sellers, gunmen and low-class Japanese, Chinese, Mexicans, and Filipinos, who are crowding out the gentle and inoffensive Indians.

Indian Town
Indian Town, title to which is vested in the federal government is today the bootleggers' first landing place when bringing liquor and narcotics from across the Canadian border, which is only eighty miles distant. It is the headquarters and their property rights are submerged by a flood of vice.

Vice is not merely defiant in Ketchikan; it is arrogant. At a public meeting the mayor of the city is reported as saying that he had always drunk liquor and meant to go on drinking it; that it was his privilege to visit any house he chose, respectable or otherwise; and that he himself could not tell the difference between virtuous women and dissolute women, inasmuch as "they dressed alike and painted alike."

This man has been repeatedly elected mayor of Ketchikan, and still holds that office. Why? How is it that the respectable people of the city, who are a large majority, do not suppress the mischiefs described, and drive out the bootleggers, the dope-sellers, and the rest of the disreputable element? For what reason does Ketchikan continue to be perhaps the worst pest hole in America?

Three Reasons
There are three reasons. One is the failure of federal officials to enforce the laws. Another is the indifference of the department of justice at Washington, which has been too lazy to interfere. The third is the willingness of commercial interests in Ketchikan to allow things to run along as they are. Plenty of vice stimulates business. The bad women buy expensive clothes and jewelry; and so with other things.

The real responsibility, however, lies with the department of justice, which, while refusing to interest itself seriously, has approved the appointment of officials said to be notoriously unfit. It should be understood that, as regards enforcement of law, Hawaii's situation is unique. Hawaii and Porto Rico have their own enforcement systems, but the people of our Arctic province possess no more than police power. If in any of its towns business interests choose to combine with a disreputable element to protect vice and crime, nobody except the department of justice can interfere.

Grand Jury's Pronouncement
An Alaskan grand jury's recent pronouncement was:

"We find that the city council of Ketchikan is responsible for the appointment of the police force. We find that the police force is grossly inefficient if not corrupt."

The bootleggers and other disorderlies laughed at that. What difference did it make if the grand jury said what every one already knew? Nobody could be punished.

A while ago an assistant district attorney named Miller undertook to clean out Indian Town, and was making a pretty fair success of the job. He had the vice-purveyors on the run. But some powerful influence blocked his efforts, and today red lights, the booze-sellers and the dope dealers are established there more securely and more arrogantly than ever.

The Women's Council of Ketchikan recently issued a formal protest setting forth "the state of depravity into which federal officials have permitted the city to sink by their system of compromising with the criminal element," and adding, "We, who are the mothers of the Ketchikan of tomorrow, protest against conditions which are giving Ketchi-

kan the reputation of being the most wicked city in the West."

Indian Protest
This was supplemented by an address of the native Indian mothers to the mayor and city council, which said:

"Disreputable dives, bootlegging, and gambling have been allowed to centre in the section where our homes are located. Our boys and girls are constantly exposed to these evil surroundings, and our children have no place to play but in the midst of vice and disease. We plead with you to change conditions for us, so that our young people may have a chance to grow up to be useful citizens."

It would be a mistake to liken Ketchikan to frontier towns of fifty years or more ago in respect to its wide-open disreputableness. In those towns the saloon was an institution by itself, though commonly supplemented by a dance hall.

But prohibition has closed the saloons, and hence it comes about that in Ketchikan the disorderly houses do the liquor-selling. Bad women are the bartenders. The brothel is a gimmill, with dope-selling as a side line. Liquor, narcotics, and wild women together form one big industry.

City is Rich
As already said, Ketchikan is a great fishing centre; it is also an important call for sea traffic, all ships going north or south stop there. The town is rich, with quantities of money flowing through the hands of business men, many of whom, for the sake of the direct and indirect revenue they derive from vice, are satisfied with existing conditions. Every vessel that stops at Ketchikan finds on the wharves bootleggers and other solicitors of trade in illicit wares.

The plentifulness of money is largely accountable for the mischief. Fishermen make big pay. It is not unusual for a vessel to come in from a ten days' trip loaded with halibut or other fish that sell for enough to allow \$500 or \$600 for each of the ten or a dozen men composing her crew. The men get the cash when the fish are unloaded; then, their pockets bulging with dollars, they go ashore for a spree.

Much Gambling
The money does not last them long. They spend it quickly in the brothels and gambling places. There is, needless to say, much gambling, in which, as a rule, the chances are in favor of the "houses" are increased to certainty by card sharpening and crooked apparatus. But there are other ways. An organized robbery, with knock-out drops to help on suitable occasions, cleans out the victim who cannot be persuaded by easier means to part with his cash.

It might be said that such conditions have existed in seaport towns all over the world since time immemorial. True enough; but, generally speaking, these towns have been cleaned up. At all events vice and crime no longer flourish in them openly and unashamed. San Francisco had the notorious Barbary Coast, but its infamies have been suppressed by enforcement of law.

The conditions here described exist at Ketchikan and in some



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other parts of Alaska, notably the Bristol Bay district, because the federal government has not taken the trouble to end them. Recently the department of justice approved the reappointment of officials who are declared by the Alaskan delegate to Congress, Dan Sutherland, to be notoriously unfit. The accused officials deny this.

Formal Protest
Mr. Sutherland has lodged with the Senate judicial committee a formal protest against their re-appointment. The department of justice will be called on to explain why these officials should be continued in office.

The Bristol Bay district is in southwestern Alaska, and is a great cannery centre. The waters thereabout, the many rivers and the wide seas, are a vast fishery. The packing plants are of huge size, employing many thousands of workers, most of whom are Chinamen. In that region at the present time conditions as regards vice and crime are described as appalling.

The narcotic drug evil is particularly bad. Dope addicts are numerous in the canneries, for which labor is usually furnished by Chinese bosses who contract to supply it at a stated price per worker. As a side line, the bosses supply opium to Chinamen who act as selling agents for the staff. In many instances foremen in the packing plants act as agents, distributing the dope, not only opium, but morphine, cocaine and a Mexican narcotic called "marihuana."

This bad situation, which affects in no small degree the whites, including those engaged in the fisheries, gives rise to homicides and all varieties of crime. There is also a vast deal of immorality and bootlegging of liquor, with a widespread prevalence of disease. Not a few of the workers in the canneries, actually employed in putting up of food, are diseased in a horrible degree.

Every now and then a dope-seller is arrested, but the influence of the all-powerful packing interests is exerted in behalf of the offender. It is not that they approve of dope, but they do not want any interference with their business. A packing plant has been reported to have bought a dollar's worth of opium daily for an exceptionally efficient Chinaman who refused to work without it.

A dope-seller, on being arrested, is taken before a United States commissioner, who often fixes a very low bond. Of course, under such circumstances, the accused persons nearly always disappear.

Law is Joke

In cases where they are actually brought to trial they always plead guilty. That is an easy way out. They are usually let off with a small fine or a brief jail term. Mr. Sutherland asserts:

The influence of the packing interests makes the anti-narcotic law almost a joke in the fish-

ing and cannery districts of Alaska, the Alaskan delegate says, and as a result, there prevails a spirit of compromise.

Outside of Ketchikan and Bristol Bay where large cannery operations are carried on the laws in Alaska are very well observed.

The problem has at last been put fairly and squarely up to the department of justice, which is undeniably responsible for the situation. Are bootleggers, dope-sellers, red light women, professional criminals, and other disreputables to be allowed to maintain the colony which they have established on that land, which is government property?

THE MAN IN THE MOON says:

ADAM tried to hide behind his wife's skirts but the fig leaf was not big enough. Today men often try to hide behind a woman's skirt but he is usually discovered. How could it be otherwise?

I HAVE discovered I am much like a number of other great men. I smoke the same brand of cigarettes.

THERE was a pessimist in to see me the other day. I reminded him that he should be happy because summer was coming. He growled something about mosquitoes, lawn mowers, weeding the garden, wedding presents, ice cream sickness, perpetual thirst, no more poker games, and nothing put picnic parties.

BREVITY is the soul of wit, murmured Jake as he looked at the credit entries in his bank book.

I KNOW a man, a Tory, Who likes to criticize, Declares what all the Liberals say Is just a pack of lies.

And I also know a Liberal, Sees no good in anything Unless it has the authority Of Bill Mackenzie King.

And then there's my old friend the Duke Who shrugs his shoulders, winks,

And says he'll vote for any guy Who's ready to stand the drinks.

SOME of the most noted pests are radios, cats on the back fence, people practicing musical instruments, loud talkers, and people who stop you on the streets to tell you pointless stories.

IT is reported that all the Scotchmen in town are holding back their letters to take advantage of the lower postage rates.

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