University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

Wisconsin Vice Committee:
Tales of Prostitution and Commercialized Vice (Wisconsin: 1913-1915)

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Abstract

The Wisconsin Vice Committee was established to inspect the moral situation of the state of Wisconsin. It is the methods they used to gather their information, the content of the hearings they held, the recommendations they made, and other related issues such as law enforcement and legal age that will be discussed in the following article.

Overview of the Progressive Era/I Issues

The Progressive Era in American history was a period of about twenty years between the mid-1890’s and the beginning of World War I. This constituted a time of rapid industrialization, rising urban populations, and various attempts at reform. Progressive reform was concerned with social criticism, popular protest, restructuring of the political landscape, economic regulation, and other responses to the changes taking place in American society.¹

During the first twenty years of the twentieth century, there was at least one “red-light” district in practically every American city with a population over 100,000.² Many Americans must have considered prostitution something of a necessary evil considering its prevalence. It was just another part of social relations. Because of this attitude, prostitution in cities during the progressive era was, in many instances, “tacitly tolerated, relatively undisturbed, and often tightly woven into a web of payoffs and corruption involving municipal officials, political machines, the police, and others who filled their pockets with the profits that prostitution

It was a time in American history when these red-light districts were almost as fundamental a part of social life as bars are today.

Although the problem of prostitution and vice in general obviously existed before the progressive movement came about, a new approach to the problem emerged in the nineteenth century, influenced by evangelical and perfectionist ideas of social reform, as well as by the growing pace of urbanization. As people moved into cities, prostitution became more noticeable because everyone lived in such a concentrated area.4 In the fifty years between 1860 and 1910, major American cities increased by almost a factor of seven. From 1880 to 1900, Chicago’s population tripled, New York’s doubled, and St. Paul’s and Minneapolis’s quadrupled. What resulted from this rapid growth, the “teeming slums, the atrocious sweatshops, the child labor, the brazen prostitution,” evinced shock and outrage in the minds of many of the progressive generation.5

By the 1890s, what has been called the “purity crusade” that emerged during the years following the Civil War had expanded to include moral education, child rearing, sex education, social hygiene, censorship, prohibition, etc.6 It was prostitution in particular that came to be seen as the biggest evil. “Prostitution came to dramatize, as few issues could, the practical necessity of responding to social problems and tracing the roots of commercial vice into the private lives and daily routines that nurtured public immorality.”7

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3 Connelly, Response to Prostitution, 3.
4 Ibid., 4.
5 Ibid., 12.
6 Ibid., 5.
There were many investigations into vice and prostitution during these years in cities all over the country. In 1900, New York organized the New York City Committee of Fifteen to investigate the magnitude and character of vice in the city, which constituted the first real attempt to study prostitution in the progressive era. It found that “at the end of the nineteenth century, prostitution was an important sexual outlet for American men in both the working and middle classes, and prostitutes were well integrated into New York’s working-class neighborhoods.”8  In 1911 the Chicago Vice Committee released a report titled The Social Evil in Chicago. Its motto was recorded as, “Constant and Persistent Repression of Prostitution the Immediate Method: Absolute Annihilation the Ultimate Ideal.” In Minneapolis, MN, a committee was assembled and charged with the tasks of assessing the size and character of the problem of social vice in the city, past attempts to handle the problem, methods used in other cities historically, as well as sources of supply, wages, and sex education.9 In the years preceding WWI, more than thirty cities launched vice investigations, and forty-four states passed laws to reduce “coercive prostitution.”10 At the federal level, Congress passed the Mann act in 1910 that made it illegal to transfer women across state lines for what could be deemed immoral purposes. The development of white slavery in the progressive era was paralleled by rapid urbanization, the rise of women in the workforce, and the changing racial composition of American cities.11

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10 Brian Donovan. White Slave Crusades, Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 1.
11 Ibid.
The Wisconsin Vice Committee studied in this paper was ambitious in that instead of tackling just one city, it attempted to assess the moral situation of the entire state. The process of questionnaires, interviews, and hearings constituted a unique approach to the investigation of vice within Wisconsin.

**Formation/Makeup of the Wisconsin Vice Committee**

The Wisconsin legislative committee to investigate what was called the “white slave traffic” was established by Senate Bill number 257, which was introduced by Senator Victor Linley and published May 29th, 1913. It passed the senate with no dissenting vote, and passed the assembly by a vote of sixty-seven to thirteen. Governor McGovern then signed it into law, and it became Chapter 339 of the Laws of 1913.

The bill was made up of ten sections. The first concerned the makeup of the committee. Three members of the senate and three members of the assembly were appointed in order to “fully investigate the causes and conditions of and remedies for the white slave traffic, prostitution, ownership of properties wherein and whereon prostitution is carried on, and the causes of the non-enforcement of law in such cases.”

The remaining sections detail the powers the committee wielded, such as the right to subpoena, authorization to print and distribute its findings, to employ clerks and assistants, and the appropriation of ten thousand dollars for the carrying out of the provisions of the act.

The Senate selected Senators Howard Teasdale of Sparta, Victor Linley of Superior, and Robert Monk of Neillsville to make up half the committee. The Assembly selected Hon. George W. Bingham of Friendship, Hon. James Dolan of Platteville, and Hon. Carl Minkley of Wisconsin.

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12 *Wisconsin Vice Committee, Report and Recommendations of the Wisconsin Vice Committee, 1914, Wisconsin Legislature Investigations Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.*
Milwaukee to serve as well. It was on August 20th, 1913, that the Committee selected Senator Howard Teasdale to be its chairman.

Chairman Teasdale turned out to be the most vocal and newsworthy member of the committee. He was born August 9, 1855, in Janerville, Wisconsin. He was the son of John Teasdale, who was born in England and immigrated to the United States in 1849. His mother came from Ireland. Teasdale settled in Sparta, Wisconsin, with his wife Carrie.

None of the members were to be compensated for their actions on the committee, with only their expenses being paid. This fact was brought up subsequently by Senator Teasdale at least once for the benefit of the papers. The Sheboygan Press quoted Teasdale as saying, “You know we have to live, and it costs me $800 to get the $500 job as state senator.”¹³

**Proceedings of the Vice Committee**

The committee realized early on that commercialized vice was a problem that involved many subordinate social and economic problems. Still, it found that “there is no more demoralizing influence in the state of Wisconsin than prostitution with its attendant evils; none causing a greater economic loss to the state; and none more difficult to eradicate and deprive of its inducements and its control of political power.”¹⁴ This powerful statement illustrates just how seriously this investigation was taken by committee members, and also hints towards a conflict between local political entities and state power.

Prostitution was believed to have been aided by what was termed the “white slave traffic.” This referred to “the practice whereby girls are kept in confinement for barter and sale,

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¹³ *Sheboygan Press*, January 10, 1914.
or whereby they are kept behind bolts and bars contrary to their will, or whereby a man has compelled an innocent girl to sell herself to another man for money for immoral purposes.”

It is important to note that the committee found almost no evidence of these forms of slavery, unless it was the last. In many cases had a man compelled a girl to sell herself for his own gain. Still, a more loosely interpreted version of “white slavery” covered every instance in which girls and women were kept, through intimidation, debt, or pure lack of personal responsibility, under the control of those who would exploit their bodies for personal gain. It was reiterated time and again that men were mostly to blame. “The man’s part in the social evil is despicable and mean enough to merit the harshest terms of reproach and disgust; the exploiter of the body and soul of women for money gain is worthy to be the lowest outcast in society, rather than the weaker ignorant or unfortunate person exploited.”

The Wisconsin vice committee soon realized that the job they were undertaking was far more ambitious than similar investigations. Studying and interviewing the whole of Wisconsin was a rather unprecedented and daunting task; similar investigations had been concerned with a single community, such as Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, or Minneapolis. To prepare for its investigation, the committee attended a meeting of the World’s Purity Congress in Minneapolis, Minnesota, as well as obtaining reports from every similar committee that had investigated conditions in other cities and states.

There were three parts to the process the committee employed to gather information. To begin their investigative process, the committee sent a letter to every mayor in the state of Wisconsin requesting the names of six or more people in each city or town “who were interested

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15 Wisconsin Vice Committee Report, 15.
In the moral betterment of the community. In this way, many of the leading social workers were identified. The committee then sent out around 1,400 questionnaires to these social workers with questions like: “Are there any reputed houses of prostitution in your county? Are girls and women permitted to frequent saloons and wine rooms? What causes assigned to a girl’s first sexual act? What percent of girls claimed their first immoral acts were primarily due to dances, drink, or deceit?” This last example in particular brought several interesting responses. Francis J. Rooney, a district attorney in Outagamie County, wrote to the committee “We have no record to enable me to answer this question, nor have I any record of what the employment of each and all of those women were, neither have I any record of their religious belief or nationality.” W.W. Albere, a social worker from Wausau Wisconsin, also wrote a letter in response as opposed to actually filling out the questionnaire. He wrote, “It seems to me that these questions must have been gotten up by either a Philadelphia lawyer or else by one of the smart statisticians at Madison and they remind me of the old saying, “A fool can ask more questions than a wise man can answer.” These records show that some considered the work of the committee to be at least slightly humorous, if not irritatingly ineffective.

There were also secret investigators sent into many of the Wisconsin communities reputed to have some form of commercialized vice (mainly prostitution). These investigators were affiliated with the Burns Detective Agency, the American Social Hygiene Association, and others. Some of the findings of these private investigators ended up being faulty. The Sheboygan Press ran an article headed “Legislative Vice Committee Stirs Up The City But Fails

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17 Wisconsin Vice Committee Report, 10.
18 D.A. Francis Rooney to Senator Howard Teasdale, 1913, Wisconsin Legislature Investigations Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.
19 W.W. Albere to Senator Howard Teasdale, 1913, Wisconsin Legislature Investigations Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.
to Find Conditions as Bad as Reported by Special Detective- Report is Denounced.” The Sheboygan community was largely German, which differentiated it from other Wisconsin cities. The only evidence brought against Sheboygan in this case was in the form of a report compiled by an investigator employed by the committee and read by Senator Teasdale. It told of a dance held in Concordia hall on Saturday, January 10, 1914, at which there was twenty-five or more girls under seventeen years of age. At first appearing scandalous, it turned out that every young girl was accompanied by their parents, as it was a tradition of the Germans to take their children with them to public dances. In no cases were the girls intoxicated, and “the best of order prevailed.”

The third and last investigative method was made up of public hearings in thirteen of the largest cities in the state. These were meant to call the attention of the public to “the evils existing in such communities.” The committee’s aim was to obtain many different points of view in order to paint a comprehensive picture. To this end it called doctors, ministers, teachers, lawyers, employers, social workers, saloon keepers, hotel owners, factory employees and many others. Over three-hundred people were interviewed. The point was to get the attitude of not only those opposed to commercialized prostitution, but of those actually involved in the business. The hearings related to Superior, Wisconsin may have provoked the largest outcry. City Attorney H. V. Gard charged Senator Teasdale with prejudice and being in league with the local political elements attempting to recall Mayor J.S. Kenkel. Gard was quoted in the Sheboygan Press as having stated, “Senator Teasdale’s attitude during the vice hearings here and his statements since that time, indicate that he is a rank fanatic. Any one that would show the

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20 *Sheboygan Press*, January 17, 1914.
21 Ibid.
prejudice that he displayed in proceeding at the inquiry would be impeached.”22 Senator Teasdale responded with the statement, “I am not prejudiced against Superior, but the testimony we heard there shows that Superior is the worst city we have found in Wisconsin.” He further backed up his position by pointing out that Superior was the only city that recognized and received revenue from the houses of prostitution, and that there were twenty-one such houses each paying between $50 and $1200 a month license to the city, with no record of receipt to be found. An article in the Milwaukee Journal stated that “clashes occurred between Chairman Teasdale and city officials” in Superior during hearings conducted there.23

Many objected to how the committee would summon working girls as witnesses, but Teasdale defended the practices employed in his hearings, saying that the girls were thoroughly protected in the evidence they gave, and no embarrassing questions were put to them. They were only asked questions concerning wages, living conditions, and “such matters of general knowledge in the locality.”24 Teasdale did use some fighting words in many of the Superior hearings, with questions like, “Do you not know that this is the only city in the state of Wisconsin that has the lack of manhood to receive money into the city treasury from the results of the use of girls’ bodies?”25 It was Teasdale’s choice of words: “lack of manhood,” that in this case and others made it seem as though he might have a somewhat inflated view of himself and the work of the committee.

22 “Superior is Sore at Teasdale Tattle,” The Daily Northwestern, January 17, 1914.
24 Ibid.
25 Superior, Wisconsin Hearings, January 9, 1914, Wisconsin Legislature Investigations Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI.
The Business of Prostitution

The business of prostitution involved several roles. The committee called them madams, protectors, procurers, pimps, and owners, all selling the services of women. The “madam” was a woman who was the keeper of a call-house or parlor-house. She was “the direct manager and sales agent for the inmates.” It was interesting to note that prostitutes are referred to in the committee’s report as “inmates” several times.

Procurers were persons who solicited for the business. They got the customers and took or directed them to the madam’s house of prostitution, and got some sort of commission. The committee found these often to be men employed otherwise as bartenders, hotel boys, and cab drivers.

The pimp was a form of procurer who solicited for a single woman or a small group of women. He lived upon her earnings, but acted as her master and protector.

Segregated vice was present in many Wisconsin cities; many open and recognized houses of prostitution existed in what Connelly calls “red-light districts.” The Vice Committee report defined a segregated, or red-light district, as “a group of immoral institutions recognized by police authorities and made to remain within a given area.” Some argued that these districts were a necessary evil, and that if they did not exist, “respectable women” would not go unmolested on the streets at night. This argument was more convincing for cities on the lakes because of huge numbers of sailors, miners, and lumbermen. Mr. Sig. Y. Josephs, the owner of the Boston Store in Superior Wisconsin, testified in the vice hearings. Senator Teasdale posed the question, “Do you favor the continuation of the segregated district?” To which Josephs

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26 Wisconsin Vice Committee Report, 26.
replied, “Personally, I do.”²⁷ He went on to say that it was beneficial to the miners, but perhaps not to the girls.

There are many terms for places of prostitution, including parlor houses, road houses, call houses, rooming/lodging houses, assignation hotels, apartment houses, palm gardens, wine rooms, immoral restaurants and cafes, saloons with bedrooms attached, and dance halls. These various establishments and their characteristics were of major interest to the committee.

In the report of the Vice Committee of Minneapolis to Mayor James C. Haynes in 1911, it is written that “while women have been generally excluded from saloons, there are several so-called cafes in the city whose operations are so flagrantly opposed to good public morals as to suggest strongly the necessity for official action. These places, ostensibly restaurants, cater almost exclusively to the “wet goods” trade.”²⁸ It was establishments such as these that the committee attempted to uncover in Wisconsin.

Senator Teasdale, as a speaker at the state convention banquet of the Wisconsin Christian Endeavor Union, was quoted as having said, “The saloon, dance hall, and palm garden are responsible for eighty-five percent of the vice in Wisconsin.”²⁹ This statement was to have been based upon information gathered through the course of the investigation of the Vice Committee.

**Causes/Results of Prostitution**

The causes of prostitution as the Wisconsin vice committee saw them were an important part of their investigation. These causes included mental defects, ignorance of sexual

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²⁷ Superior, Wisconsin Hearings, January 9, 1914, Wisconsin Legislature Investigations Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI.
²⁹ “Bar and Dance Big Vice Causes,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, June 28, 1914,
phenomena, attitude of the church and public schools, parental ignorance and neglect, double standards, economic and industrial conditions, domestics, and housing conditions. The committee seemed to place a strong emphasis on the relation between weak minds and prostitution. “The correlation between feeble-mindedness and prostitution is a feature in the problem of sexual immorality that has, during recent years, commanded much attention. The facts which have come to light in every investigation of this correlation have been so startling that students of the subject are now willing to admit that the mentally defective make up a very large portion of professional prostitutes.”

The committee went further to state that an estimated 60-70 percent of professional prostitutes could be “mentally defective.” This mental defectiveness or feeble-mindedness was attributed to any females “not keen enough to foresee the consequences of immoral acts, or too ignorant of her own body to understand the meaning of her feelings.”

No doubt Senator Teasdale was much more in tune with what a young girl’s feelings might meant to her, and was thus able to judge her “feeble-minded.”

Venereal disease was one of the factors that brought the whole question of prostitution as social evil to the forefront. Syphilis and gonorrhea had been studied recently and the terrible damage caused by them had become known. With these disturbing discoveries of the second half of the nineteenth century came the fight against venereal disease.

It is indisputable that prostitutes were “the great disseminators of gonorrhea and syphilis.” In light of this, many of the questionnaires sent out by the committee were to hospitals. Seven hospitals replied, with numerical answers to questions like, “Total number of females treated for gonorrhea during the last two fiscal years,” and “Total number of females

30 Wisconsin Vice Committee Report, 103.
31 Ibid., 104.
treated for venereal disease who were married at the time of treatment in the last two fiscal years.” Of the total of about 16,000 cases treated by these seven Wisconsin hospitals, about 5.4 percent, or 870, were treated for venereal disease. These cases were equally distributed between syphilis and gonorrhea. This dissemination of disease constituted a serious problem, and the committee’s investigation did much to highlight the issue.

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement constituted the “most effective recommendation that this committee can make to improve moral conditions.” Specifically, the formation of a State Police Department with the power to investigate immoral practices, and the establishment of a “morals court” with exclusive jurisdiction over all cases involving moral offences, were recommended. Section 4549a of the Wisconsin statutes was added in order to provide for the removal from office of any district attorney, sheriff, mayor, police officer, or constable who displayed a “willful or habitual neglect or refusal to perform the duties of his office.” This addition to the statute was deemed necessary because the methods of removing neglectful officers from their posts present before the investigations were “difficult to take advantage of, and were subject to many delays.” In this way was state power strengthened in order to give local community authorities less “discretion” regarding which laws should and should not be enforced. Other recommendations included raising the age of consent from fourteen years to eighteen years of age, and in the case of a female of a previously chaste character, to twenty-one. The issue of age of consent was a big one in Wisconsin. The Women’s Christian Temperance Union launched a

32 Wisconsin Vice Committee Report, 230.
34 Wisconsin Vice Committee Report, 231.
35 Ibid., 235.
national campaign in 1885 seeking legislation in all states to raise the age of consent.\textsuperscript{36} By 1900, the WCTU had succeeded in getting thirty-two states to raise their consent laws to age 16, but Wisconsin was not among those states.\textsuperscript{37}

The committee report stated that “officers frankly admit that they disregard their sworn duty,” and in many cases did not uphold state law. Chairman Teasdale, however, said in an address in Milwaukee, that the committee goes nowhere to “whitewash officials.” He said that if it were found that the law was being enforced properly, officials would be commended, and if not, the reasons for their disregard of the law would be uncovered.\textsuperscript{38} Hearing transcripts helped to shed some light on the proceedings.

Mr. H.F. Dowling, the Oshkosh Chief of Police, when asked if minors were permitted in pool rooms, answered yes, “I believe they are.”\textsuperscript{39} When Senator Teasdale pointed out that this was against state law, Dowling simply said, “Yes, I suppose so.” M. B. Streub, Chief of Police in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, was asked whether or not saloons were open on Sundays against city ordinance and state law. He answered, “Why, I think they are.”\textsuperscript{40} He offered no excuse, and seemed to be relying on public sentiment. This was one of the reasons the vice committee reported that police gave for not fulfilling their duty: “Because if they perform their duty, public sentiment would not sustain them, and they could not hold their position and secure reelection.”

\textsuperscript{36} Eric Boos, “Strange Brew: The Wisconsin Brewing Industry’s Opposition to Prohibition, Women’s Suffrage, and the Age of Consent Laws,” \textit{Southern California Review of Law and Women’s Studies} (September, 2002).
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{The Milwaukee Journal}, July 13, 1914.
\textsuperscript{39} Oshkosh, Wisconsin Hearings, June 30, 1914, Wisconsin Legislature Investigations Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI.
\textsuperscript{40} Rhinelander, Wisconsin Hearings, January 15, 1914, Wisconsin Legislature Investigations Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI.
A statement from the Sheriff of Sheboygan Robert J. Fisher read, “I have had information that there were three houses of prostitution running in this city. There have been no complaints, and they are not objectionable here.” The reason he gave for this attitude towards prostitution in Sheboygan was that there are a large number of single Greek, Lithuanian, and Austrian men. “I think if we did close the houses, we would have a worse state than we had before. I don’t think I could better it any by doing my duty.”\textsuperscript{41}

Henry G. Dehne, the Sheboygan Chief of Police, made similar comments in his hearing before the committee. “I am aware of minors playing pool and billiards in the pool rooms, and now that it is a violation of state law. I was thinking that while they were in there they were out of trouble, and I did not think there was any harm. I don’t enforce those laws that I think will not do harm.”\textsuperscript{42}

C.A. Budlong, the Sheriff of Marinette, Wisconsin, also displayed a lack of regard for the letter of the law. “I know the saloons are open on Sunday, and I know the people of this town want it. I don’t know whether it is a part of my duties or not, but I would recommend that you change the laws on certain things, considerably.”\textsuperscript{43}

All these indications of slight lawlessness caused the committee much consternation. “Laws are the greatest educators, but laws not enforced are the greatest enemies to the community, in breeding disrespect of law and its enforcement.”\textsuperscript{44} Even mayors displayed outwardly a slight contempt for the law as the final word. The Hon. W. Abtams, mayor of Green

\textsuperscript{41} Sheboygan, Wisconsin Hearings, January 16-17, 1914, Wisconsin Legislature Investigations Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Marinette, Wisconsin Hearings, June 11, 1914, Wisconsin Legislature Investigations Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI.
\textsuperscript{44} Wisconsin Vice Committee Report, 93.
Bay, Wisconsin, said in his hearing testimony that “the sentiment of the people is the controlling force regarding the enforcement of law.”

He also mentioned, in what might have been a rather peevish tone of voice, that, “My judgment as guardian of the morals of the city of Green Bay is better than the judgment of the legislature or the common council.”

One recommendation of the committee that was adopted without much controversy was that the age of consent be raised to eighteen years in all cases. “At neither fourteen nor sixteen years of age should a young woman be left legally a prey to the lusts of scoundrels who seek her as a victim.”

A county judge in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, corroborated these ideas, stating that “The usual difficulty is that the girl is physically developed before she is mentally developed, and that she cannot take care of herself. Most of these girls who finally go into the houses of ill fame are seduced before they are sixteen years of age.”

As a result of the Vice Committee’s investigations, several bills were passed regarding the main issues. The first gave provisions for removing from office any district or city attorney, sheriff, mayor, police officer, or marshal if shown guilty of habitual neglect or refusal to perform the duties of their station, corruption, extortion, gambling, etc. The others related to the attendance of girls and women at certain dance halls, employment agencies, and applications for licenses to sell intoxicants.

The Wisconsin Vice Committee definitely succeeded in stirring up controversy, and also in uncovering many of the problems of commercialized vice within the state of Wisconsin. The

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45 Green Bay, Wisconsin Hearings, June 10, 1914, Wisconsin Legislature Investigations Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI.
46 Wisconsin Vice Committee Report, 157.
47 Sheboygan, Wisconsin Hearings, January 16-17, 1914, Wisconsin Legislature Investigations Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI.
recommendations of the Committee related to law enforcement, saloons and other dispensers of alcohol, dance halls, hotels, women, and education, and many were adopted. The overall intention of the committee was to get everyone in the community to “look upon the problems of commercialized vice as their problems and their responsibilities.” Everyone should “maintain an active and open-minded attitude, secure solidarity of effort, and become aggressive in securing the repression of commercialized vice in every community.” Members of the Committee emphasized that to change the social order for the better, a hopeful attitude toward the whole question was necessary. Only with this optimistic view would society be willing to try new methods of controlling old problems. The Committee saw their investigation and others like it as an intelligent and scientific method of approaching social problems, and believed that the opportunities for actual accomplishment were therefore greater than ever before. “The age-old problem (of vice/prostitution) must succumb to the scientific methods and the enthusiasm of the twentieth century.”

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48 Wisconsin Vice Committee, 178.
49 Ibid., 179.
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_The Daily Northwestern_, 1913-1914.

_The Milwaukee Journal_, 1913-1914.

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Boos, Eric J. “Strange Brew: The Wisconsin Brewing Industry’s Opposition to Prohibition, Women’s Suffrage, and the Age of Consent Laws,” _Southern California Review of Law and Women’s Studies_ (September 2002).

Boos talks about national campaigns to raise the age of consent, which was an issue in the committee’s investigations and recommendations.


Clement writes about transforming sexual values, prostitution, and the emergence of America’s sex industry.


This text talks about how prostitution was tolerated, and how corruption of police and city officials played into that.


Diffee lays out how the drama of prostitution led to reform efforts.

Donovan, Brian. _White Slave Crusades, Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917_. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006.

In this useful text Donovan talks about white slavery and the intersection of race and gender as well as other subjects, such as the racial politics of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union Purity Campaign.

This text talks about social criticism, popular protest, and restructuring of the political landscape.


Emphasis placed on themes and patterns extending across the era. Transformations in social relations and intellectual life, etc.


Discusses prostitution and reform movements in Texas during the Progressive Era.


This article presents an alternative to traditional histories of the white slavery scare.


Another text that deals with prostitution as a form of commercialized vice.


This text talks about various aspects of women’s lives in my time period. Law, geography, prostitution as employment, reform of urban environments, etc.