

Police Commission Hears About New 'B-Girl' Racket

Soft Drink Parlors Now Scene of Activities as Result of Liquor Cafe Drive, Members Told

Informed that its drive against use of "B-girls" in liquor cafes in the Main St. district had driven the girls to soft drink parlors and that the latter are doing a thriving business with "spiked" drinks, the Police Commission was stunned temporarily yesterday but revived and asked if there wasn't a law somewhere which would fit the situation.

Commissioner John B. Kingsley wanted to know if the Gandier law of prohibition days wasn't still alive and if amendments couldn't be voted by the City Council which would check "B-girl" and "spiked" drinking in soft drink places.

NOT LICKED, SAYS BUCKLEY

"Unless amendments can be adopted to suppress "B-girl" activity we will have to admit we cannot solve the problem and attend to other matters," Kingsley declared.

Commissioner John R. Buckley admitted the situation looks bad but declared he would refuse to admit he is licked. He wanted to know why the commissioners have to go down to Main St. to check the activity of "B-girls."

"Can't the officers on the beat keep a check on the liquor cafes and bring in evidence? They could see them out of the corner of an eye if they wanted to," he said.

MATTER OF EVIDENCE

Chief Investigator J. A. Starritt said it was one thing to see girls in the saloons but quite another to get evidence that they were getting commissions on drinks bought.

"You can't tell whether they are 'B-girls' or 'seagulls' by glancing in doorways," Starritt said.

The commission directed Starritt to cite every liquor cafe with a show or dance permit where "B-girls" are found operating. Starritt said he had a list of several and would get more.

The discussion followed a promise to surrender dance and show permits by Tena Ness, operating a cafe at 527 S. Main St., and a willingness of William Kozman of 504 S. Main St. to have his show revoked "because he had found it no use for several months."

BOUNCER TESTIFIES

Harry Leventhal, reported to the commission last week to have supplied "B-girls" to a number of the liquor cafes, responded to a citation to appear before the board for questioning.

He admitted being employed as manager or in other capacities by different saloons at various times and freely discussed the "B-girl" situation, but contended he did not see them paid. He had lost his job as manager at 425 S. Main St. because of reports, he said, and had been made "bouncer" at the cafe.

"Did you know anything about the Central Casting Bureau, investigated by the 1934 grand jury?" asked Buckley.

'B-GIRL' RUSE TOLD

"No, I knew nothing about it," said Leventhal.

Buckley insisted on further answers regarding knowledge of the bureau.

"I wasn't in Los Angeles in 1934, pal," replied Leventhal.

Tommy Carr, formerly known as the "man with 1000 faces" because of his ability to wear disguises, made revelations about the shift of "B-girls" from saloons to near-by soft drink spots. He is a member of the vice squad.

He said that habitués of Main St., who liked the company of women would get a bottle of liquor, hide it under an arm, and enter a soft drink parlor where girls were gathered. The girls would order soft drinks on the individual, the liquor would be used to spike the drinks and a good time would be had by all.

QUEST OF CURB LAW

The Police Commission, having no jurisdiction over soft-drink places, questioned the legality of such use of hard liquor. The members "knew that it was illegal to drink on the street," but asked Deputy Prosecutor Edwin F. Shinn if the Gandier law could be used to regulate such doings inside.

Shinn declined to give an off-hand opinion, but agreed to inform the commission later, and also on what amendment might cover the situation.

There was quite a flare-up when Kingsley discovered that amendments to rules governing entertainment in liquor cafes, adopted a week ago, had been modified as finally written.

He engaged in a controversy with Bodkin and Commissioner Van M. Griffith over the wording of rules regarding sex impersonation and requiring cafes to keep their doors unlocked after the closing hour at 2 a.m.

As originally adopted on Kingsley's motion Rule 6 was amended to prohibit female impersonation, but as written it provides as follows:

"No entertainment may be conducted in which any performer impersonates, by means of costume or dress, a person of the opposite sex, except by special permit issued by the Board of

Police Commissioners."

Bodkin and Griffith explained that this had been worded to permit actors like Julian Eltinge or other legitimate impersonators to perform, that a flat denial of any impersonation would not stand up in court.

COMBATS REVISION

"But, how are you going to tell who should and who should not receive a permit?" Kingsley demanded. "Who is to decide that without favoritism?"

"By the same method we decide whether Joe Doakes should have a pool room permit," declared Griffith.

Kingsley insisted that this was a different matter and he was supported by Commissioner Buckley. The arguments grew warm and finally Bodkin declared that Chief Investigator Starritt and the department psychiatrist could decide, with assistance of the police records, who were degenerates and who would be entitled to an impersonation permit.

AGREES TO CHANGE

"All right," Kingsley declared, "if you will agree that the chief investigator and the psychiatrist shall decide who should not have impersonation permits, I will agree to the amendment as written."

The other members agreed and the argument was settled. Kingsley, however, resumed them on the amendment which, as adopted last week, would require liquor cafes to keep their doors unlocked after the closing hour for liquor sales.

As rewritten, it follows:

"No. 8. No entertainment shall be conducted in any establishment where liquor is sold which does not provide free and easy ingress and egress to law enforcement officers at all times when patrons are present in the establishment."

Kingsley's contention for unlocked doors was answered by Griffith and Starritt with the statement that patrons, as well as police, could return to a cafe after the legal closing hour.

Bodkin suggested that undercover men could enter before 2 a.m. and join the crowd, and make arrests for closing hour violations. It was finally agreed to let the amended rule stand as quoted above.