

11 PP (VICE 6) VICE, PROSTITUTION, VENEREAL DISEASE 7/5 SPRAGUE

# WAR DEPARTMENT

HEADQUARTERS WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY  
PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL

December 18, 1941.

Honorable Charles A. Sprague  
Governor of The State of Oregon,  
State Capitol Building,  
Salem, Oregon.

My dear Governor:

I am addressing the Governors of the States of California, Oregon and Washington to call attention to the serious dangers to the defense of the West Coast which will result unless prompt and effective measures are taken to control vice resorts.

The concentration of large numbers of troops in the coastal areas of these three States, necessitated by the present emergency, will, unless rigid control is exercised by the State and Municipal authorities, inevitably result in there being established in these areas vice resorts of all kinds designed to attract the patronage of military personnel. Such resorts now existing in the cities and towns in and near which troops are concentrated are also danger spots. Many establishments where liquor is sold are also fronts for houses of prostitution.

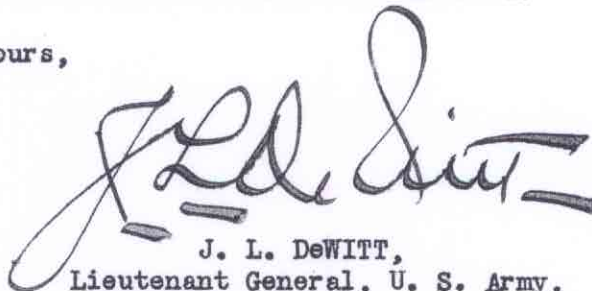
In addition to the usual impairment of military efficiency which the presence of such resorts create, there is the constant danger that these places may be employed as agencies of subversive and disloyal elements in our midst.

It is my desire that the head of each State take such definite and direct steps as lie within his power to bring this situation to the attention of all county and municipal governments, particularly those in which and near which troops are stationed. In the event that the general responsibility for law enforcement is vested in a State official other than the Governor, I request that the contents of this letter be communicated to such officer.

A copy of this letter is being sent to the commanders of all defense sectors on the Pacific Coast who will be directed to bring this urgent matter to the attention of municipal authorities within their sectors. The sector commanders will be instructed to assist the civilian police in all matters pertaining to the local and State laws with which military personnel are concerned.

I shall appreciate the cooperation of the civil authorities in this matter which so directly and vitally concerns the defense of this area.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "J. L. DeWitt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

J. L. DeWITT,  
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.

*Defense*  
*Morale*

December 27, 1941

Lt. General J. L. DeWitt  
Commanding General, Fourth Army  
Presidio of San Francisco  
California

My dear General DeWitt:

I acknowledge receipt of your letter of December 18, requesting that I bring to the attention of all county and municipal governments, particularly those in which and near which troops are stationed, the necessity of cleaning up vice resorts designed to attract the patronage of military personnel.

I am sending a copy of your communication to all county sheriffs and to mayors and chiefs of police in cities of 5000 population and over and to smaller communities frequented by military personnel. I am also urging that all police authorities take the necessary steps to do away with such resorts and requesting them also to cooperate with the military authorities in command of troops stationed in their jurisdictions.

Sincerely yours,

Governor

CAS:W



STATE OF OREGON

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

SALEM

CHARLES A. SPRAGUE  
GOVERNOR

December 29, 1941

To all County Sheriffs, Mayors and Chiefs of Police:

Attached is a copy of a letter which I have received from Lieutenant General J. L. DeWitt, commanding the Fourth Army.

In transmitting this letter to you I wish to emphasize the necessity of proper action to eliminate vice resorts in the area under your jurisdiction. Attention should be given to those establishments where liquor is sold which may be fronts for houses of prostitution. Your authority under the law is ample to put these places out of business, and I urge that you take all necessary steps to meet the request of the army commander, which is necessary for the protection of the health of the military personnel.

I also request that you cooperate with the army commander who may be stationed in your area.

I talked recently with Mr. David Robinson, an attorney at law in Portland, who served in the War Department in the law enforcement division relating to training camps during the first world war. From his experience in that position he is convinced that the only safe way and the only practical way of proceeding is that of direct suppression. Others who have studied the problem of venereal diseases have likewise advised me that this is the proper policy to pursue if we want to stop the spread of venereal diseases among army personnel.

I therefore recommend most strongly that the policy you adopt be one of strict closure of all houses of prostitution in your area.

Yours sincerely,

*Charles A. Sprague*  
Governor

CAS:W  
encl.

January 22, 1942.

*W4*  
*1/22*

Mr. Alan Croft Blanchard  
Division of Social Protection  
785 Market Street  
San Francisco, California

My dear Mr. Blanchard:

Just after I had a talk with you in Portland, Acting Mayor Bowes came to see me to discuss the problem relating to houses of prostitution in Portland. He was in some quandry in view of the absence of the Mayor and finally decided, I think, to hold the matter as it stood until the Mayor's return.

Mayor Riley is back in the city now and I think I should see him before giving any letter of instruction to the District Attorney.

Commissioner Bowes related that he had attended your conference with Mayor Riley and reported that your concern seemed to be to close up the existing houses without regard to whether the inmates go into other districts and renew their trade or not.

It seems to me that if the policy is one of suppression, it would not end merely with the closing or padlocking of existing houses, but would extend to enforcement, in every way possible.

I shall try to have a conference with Mayor Riley and District Attorney Bain at an early date so we can go into this problem further. I feel we must have the full cooperation of the Police Department in this matter, otherwise the gain that might come from abatement would be only of temporary value.

Yours very truly,

CAS:B

Governor.



FEDERAL SECURITY AGENCY

COORDINATOR OF  
HEALTH, WELFARE, AND RELATED DEFENSE ACTIVITIES

10th Floor, 785 Market Street  
San Francisco, California  
January 28, 1942

OFFICE OF THE  
REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Hon. Charles A. Sprague,  
Governor, State of Oregon,  
Executive Department,  
Salem, Oregon

*File*

My dear Governor Sprague:

Your letter of January 22 has come to my attention today on my return from an extended field trip. I appreciate your advising me of your conference with Commissioner Bowes. I regret that Commissioner Bowes apparently misunderstood the policy and wishes of our agency regarding the repression of prostitution. Perhaps this arose because he was not present during the entire conference I had on the matter with Mayor Riley and Commissioner Peterson.

The policy of the Federal Government is one of repression of all phases of commercialized prostitution. To achieve this policy, the cooperative action of many different branches of Federal, State and Municipal Governments is called for. The reason we suggested that abatement proceedings instituted through the District Attorneys should back up the action taken by police was that we believed such action would serve to deter prostitutes from going to other districts and renewing their trade. It is true that property owners first notified would be the owners of the places with which we are now concerned. However, as word spread that abatement proceedings were contemplated in any future violations property owners who might otherwise knowingly rent property to prostitutes would hesitate to do so, and other owners would seek to determine more clearly the business of their tenants.

The experience reported from Vancouver, British Columbia, was that intensive police activity failed to completely prevent houses of prostitution from reopening or springing up in new locations but that when abatement proceedings were successfully instituted in one case, property owners concerned themselves with the problem which has since been materially lessened.

As I reported to you on the evening of January 7, I had discussed this matter, during the preceding two days, with Mayor Riley and Commissioner Peterson, with Deputy City Attorney Brown and with District Attorney Bain. The following day, Thursday, January 8, following a conference held with Dr. Harrison, the U. S. Public Health Service Liaison Officer attached to the Ninth Corps Area, Police Chief Niles sent out orders that police activity be so intensified that any operation of houses of prostitution would be prevented. Reports indicate that this

Hon. Charles A. Sprague,  
Governor, State of Oregon - 1/28/42

police effort brought prostitution activity to a minimum. I conferred again with Commissioner Peterson, with District Attorney Bain and Police Chief Niles on the 14th and 15th of January, and I believe there was perfect understanding in all quarters. It was my understanding that Mr. Bain conferred with Chief Niles and intended to notify property owners whenever such a procedure seemed advisable. This is something that the city and county officials can best work out together. I thought in bringing it to your attention that you might stimulate cooperative action between city and county officials. In the past, however, District Attorneys and Sheriffs have generally left the matter of prostitution regulation and control entirely in the hands of city officials. State laws, however, give certain powers to District Attorneys and Sheriffs which can be most helpful in making the present national policy of repression of prostitution thoroughly effective.

On January 15, accompanied by Dr. E. C. Drescher, who is now acting as Director of the State Venereal Disease Control, I called upon the Administrator and other department heads of the State Liquor Control Board to outline this general program. I believe I discussed with you briefly our interest in securing the cooperation of Liquor Control Boards relative to the control of that phase of prostitution associated with pick-ups in bars and taverns. The State officials were most interested and cooperative, and it is our hope that their assistance can be integrated in the program wherever conditions make their help necessary.

In regard to repression of prostitution in Portland, I would like to here state, as we have on other occasions, that the officials of this city have been exceptionally cooperative and, in fact, initiated a program of repression when no formal request had been made by military or other Federal authorities. We are confident that if police action is supported wherever necessary by action of the District Attorney or Liquor Control officers, all phases of prostitution can be cut to a minimum in Portland.

I expect to be in the Portland region during the second week of February participating in the Northwestern Social Hygiene Day Conference and conferring with local officials. I shall report to you any new developments. I asked Dr. Drescher to report to you the action taken in Klamath Falls by the city and county officials. On receipt of your letter, notice was sent on January 13 by the police to the houses of prostitution that continued operation would not be tolerated. On the 23rd, I met with the city and county officials, and was assured that this earlier action would be followed up by strong police action and abatement proceedings, if necessary, in order that the houses of prostitution would be completely closed.

The Division of Social Protection deeply appreciates your valuable cooperation through recent letters to city officials which have proved



Hon. Charles A. Sprague,  
Governor, State of Oregon - 1/28/42

so effective in the cases of Pendleton, Astoria and Klamath Falls.

Very sincerely yours,

*Alan Croft Blanchard*

Alan Croft Blanchard,  
Associate Field Representative,  
Division of Social Protection



WAR DEPARTMENT  
WASHINGTON

March 25, 1942.

Honorable Charles A. Sprague,  
Governor of Oregon,  
Salem, Oregon.

Dear Governor Sprague:

I am addressing you and the governors of all other states to call your attention to the serious dangers to the success of our war effort which will result unless prompt and effective measures are taken to suppress venereal disease.

My concern arises because I am charged with primary responsibility for military efficiency; because I must rely upon industry and industrial workers to supply our munitions, tanks, airplanes, and other equipment to a greater degree than in any prior war; and because I am responsible to the parents of these splendid young men in our army for seeing to it that they are not surrounded by a vicious and demoralizing environment.

I hardly need remind you that among these healthy young men of our army, venereal disease produces more disability than any other single cause, and that among industrial workers it is one of the most serious causes of disability and inefficiency, especially in the boom towns of war industry. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated, beyond question by any intelligent person, that vice resorts are centers for the rapid spread of these epidemic infections because three out of four of their inmates are themselves infected. Equally serious dangers arise because these vice resorts may well be employed as agencies of subversive and disloyal elements in our midst. These dangers can be destroyed by adequate health programs, by intelligent police work, and by vigorous educational campaigns.

Specifically, I request you to assume responsibility for stimulating adequate state and local law enforcement not only in cities but in rural areas, using the state police if they exist and have jurisdiction. This means closing segregated districts and ending the farce of periodic examinations of prostitutes, as well as intelligent police follow-up that keeps out the profiteers on vice.

I further request you to stimulate the state and local health programs for control of venereal disease, and to organize or give support to a vigorous program of public education.

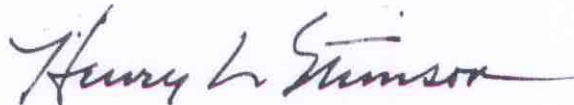
Several governors to whom similar special requests already have been made have found it possible to render outstanding service.

A copy of this letter is being sent to the corps area commanders who will be directed to bring this urgent matter to the attention of municipal authorities within their areas. Local commanding officers, medical officers, and military police will be instructed to assist local officers in all their business with which military personnel are concerned.

The following army posts are located within your state: Pendleton Field and Portland Air Base, besides other military establishments of varying magnitude, all of which are contributing to our war effort. Major General Jay L. Benedict is the commanding general of the corps area of which your state is a part. I am instructing him to communicate with you on this subject.

In giving this program leadership within your state you will be discharging a responsibility of the war effort, for which the United States Government will be deeply grateful.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Henry L. Stimson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Secretary of War.

HEADQUARTERS NINTH CORPS AREA  
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL  
FORT DOUGLAS, UTAH

April 28, 1942

Honorable Charles A. Sprague,  
Governor of Oregon,  
Salem, Oregon.

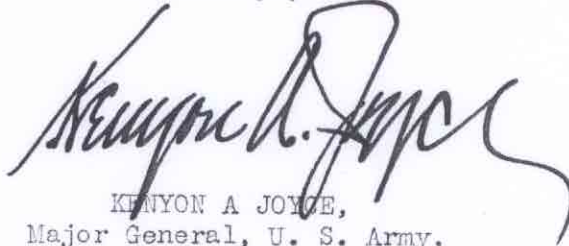
Dear Governor Sprague:

Upon assuming command of the Ninth Corps Area, copies of letters written by the Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, to the governors of the states in this Corps Area, relative to venereal disease control were brought to my attention. I have been informed that your response to Mr. Stimson's request has been splendid.

However the problem is of such importance to the nation that complete understanding and vigilant cooperation on the part of both the civil and military authorities must be maintained. Hence, may I ask that you continue to give your personal attention to the elimination of vice conditions in the vicinity of military reservations through the use of the law enforcement agencies available to your office.

As the concentration of military personnel within your commonwealth increases, our alertness and that of the adjacent municipal and county authorities should be proportionally greater. Therefore, if such has not already been done, may I request that the purport of Secretary Stimson's message be transmitted to all subordinate officials concerned.

Sincerely yours,

  
KENYON A. JOYCE,  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.