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Social Science Research Council
Committee on a Study of
Sources of Information on the
Operation of the Eighteenth Amendment

- Inventory -

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Apr, 1981

Social Science Research Council

Committee on a Study of Sources of Information on the Operation of the Eighteenth Amendment

- Introduction -

The Social Science Research Council was founded in 1923 by a consortium of national associations in the field of the social sciences (including the American Economic Association, the American Sociological Society, and the American Political Science Association) with the objective of promoting scientific research into social problems especially those involving multi-disciplinary approaches and solutions. In October of 1925 the Council authorized the formation of a committee for the conducting of a national survey of the kinds of records available in public and private agencies and institutions that would be of value to a study of the social consequences of the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which was adopted in 1920 and which prohibited the manufacture, transportation, and sale of intoxicating beverages. The working title of the committee was: Committee on a Study of Sources of Information on the Operation of the Eighteenth Amendment. Initially, the word "Preliminary" preceded the word "Study" in the title, but it was later deleted. Prof. George E.G. Catlin of Cornell was appointed its Director of Research, and Prof. John L. Gillin of Wisconsin, its Chairman. Other members included: Haven Emerson, Irving Fisher, Edgar Sydenstricker, John A. Fairlie, and Walter Thompson.

The purpose of the Committee was to organize and conduct a survey of primary sources of a kind that would shed light upon the social, economic, public health, and criminal effects of prohibition and to suggest lines of future research. Secondary sources were not to be included. Strict objectivity was to be maintained in evaluating sources, and no conclusions were to be drawn with respect to the social advantages (or disadvantages) of prohibition. Given the controversial nature of the subject matter the Committee sought to avoid all publicity so that its work could be carried on with a minimum of outside criticism and interference.

The work of investigation began in April of 1926. An office was established in New York City from which form letters were sent to heads of department of sociology and political science requesting aid in identifying local sources of information. Regional Directors were appointed for the eight areas into which the country was divided (with a central investigator to cover national sources), and schedules were defined outlining the kinds of agencies to be surveyed in each field for the guidance of the field workers who were recruited from colleges and universities. The work of the Committee was carried on largely by correspondence supplemented by occasional meetings of Regional Directors with the Director of Research.

By August of 1926 the Committee had completed its work and had issued its report to the Council. The final report of the Council was published in April of 1928 in mimeograph form: Sources of Information concerning the Operation of the Eighteenth Amendment / A Report of a Special Advisory Committee of the Social Science Research Council (70 p.). This report is available in the Library's General Research & Humanities Division (classmark: *C₁BA8*).

S o c i a l S c i e n c e R e s e a r c h C o u n c i l

Committee on a Study of Sources of Information on the Operation of the Eighteenth Amendment

Scope & Content

The papers of the Committee which are contained in 6 Hollinger boxes and which fall in the period mainly April - August of 1926 are divided into three main series: Correspondence of the Director, Papers of the Director, and Field Surveys. At the end of the collection is a single folder of Miscellaneous Printed Matter. The Correspondence which is arranged alphabetically is that of Prof. George E.G. Catlin, Director of Research of the Committee and that of his executive assistant Vera Mikol. The correspondence is mainly with college and university professors in the field of the social sciences, foundation and government officials, and relates to the hiring of field workers, regional directors, developing schedules used in the survey, determining the location of records to be surveyed, and other administrative matters. Records of disbursements for salaries and expenses may be found in the John L. Gillin file and in the Edmund E. Day file, the latter having served as treasurer of the Committee. The correspondence of other Regional Directors in addition to that of Prof Gillin who served as Regional Director of Area VI (Ohio, Mich., Wis., Ia., Minn., N.D., S.D.) include: William E. Mosher (Area I, N.Y. Penna., N.J., Dela.), Hugh Carter (Area III, Md., Va., N.C., S.C., Ga., Fla.), A.F. Kuhlman (Area IV, Ill., Ind., Mo.), Walter C. Reckless (Area V, Ky, W.V., Tenn., Miss., Ala., Ark., La.), Nels Anderson (Area VII; Neb., Kan., Colo., N.M., Okla, Tex.), and Peter H. Odegard (Area VIII, Wash., Mont., Ore., Ida., Wyo., Calif., Nev., Utah., Ariz.). There is no correspondence present for Herman Feldman (Area II, N.E.). John C. Gebhart served as central investigator for federal records. With the exception of a few letters by Jane Addams no letters by prominent persons outside the academic field are present.

Very little correspondence is present of persons critical of the methodology or operations of the Committee, exceptions being the file of correspondence with William H. Stayton (national chairman of the Association against the Prohibition Amendment) who accused the Committee of being biased in favor of prohibition, and the file of correspondence with Robert E. Park (Univ. of Chicago) who complained that no provision had been made to determine the sources that would reflect the effects of prohibition on organized crime.

Collateral to the correspondence is the series Papers of the Director, which include reports and memoranda of the Regional Directors, their budget, suggested itineraries, and instructions, monthly reports of the Director (for April & May), drafts of schedules which served as guidelines for the kinds of agencies within each field which were to be surveyed, and a file of analyses and tabulations of the raw data contained in the Field Surveys. The final report submitted to the Council by the Committee is not present. Catlin's own report to the Committee dated August 20, 1926 is present only in very incomplete form (carbon copies of "extra copies" with numerous pages missing). As noted in the Introduction the final report of the Council is available in the Library's General Research & Humanities Division.

The Field Surveys series contains the reports of the field workers who made on-site visits to public and private agencies and institutions and who conducted interviews with local officials. These reports which are both holograph and type-written are entered on printed forms and record the name/title of the person interviewed, the name of the agency or institution, the type and nature of the record

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Scope and Content (cont'd.)

available, the place and date, and a brief evaluation of the sources. Persons interviewed include police chiefs, court referees, clerks of courts, truancy officers, public health officials, nurses, mission officials, prohibition administrators, employment managers, and officials of the Anti-Saloon League. Included are numerous specimens of the forms used by the agencies and institutions surveyed. The evaluations contain many interesting comments and opinions by local officials relating to local conditions, public temperance, and crime. Only major cities were covered by the surveys.

Provenance

The records came to the Library by gift from the Social Science Research Council in 1934. The records were stored for many years in the Library's basement in the Main Building, unprocessed and uncataloged.

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- Inventory -

Box / Folder No.

Correspondence of the Director, 1926

- | | | |
|----|------|-----------------|
| 1. | f.1 | "A" |
| | f.2 | "B" |
| | f.3 | "C" |
| | f.4 | "D" |
| | f.5 | "E", "F" |
| | f.6 | Gillin, John L. |
| | f.7 | "H", "J" |
| | f.8 | "K" |
| | f.9 | Lasker, Bruno |
| | f.10 | "M" |
| | f.11 | "N" |
| | f.12 | "O" |
| | f.13 | "P" |
| | f.14 | "R" |
| | f.15 | "S", "W", "Y" |

Papers of the Director

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|----|-----|--|
| 2. | f.1 | Report ^P resented to the Committee on a Preliminary Study of Sources of Information on the Operation of the Eighteenth Amendment, by G.E.G. Catlin, Aug. 20, 1926. Incomplete carbon copies (numerous pages missing). |
| | f.2 | Analyses & Tabulations (by State) of data contained in the Field Surveys, made for the Report...on the...Eighteenth Amendment. |
| | f.3 | Regional Directors. Rpts of: Nels Anderson (Colo.); John P. Gillin (Ia, Wisc.); A.F. Kuhlman (Mo., Ind., Ill.); William E. Mosher (N.Y., N.J., Dela., Pa.); Peter H. Odegard (Calif., Wash.). |
| | f.4 | Regional Directors. Reports, memoranda, correspondence of John C. Gebhart regarding national sources. |
| | f.5 | Regional Directors. Budget, itineraries, instructions. |

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Box / Folder No.

Papers of the Director (cont'd.)

2. f.6 Monthly Reports of the Director, Apr.-May, 1926
 f.7 Miscellaneous reports & memoranda
 f.8 Schedules. Drafts of criminal/penal, economic, public health,
 social/charitable, governmental/political schedules used in the
 preparation of the Field Surveys
 f.9 Applicants for the position of executive secretary and statistical
 assistant.
 f.10 Form letters / stationary.

Field Surveys

3. f.1 Alabama
 f.2 California
 f.3 Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia
 f.4 Illinois
 f.5 Indiana, Iowa
4. f.1 Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana
 f.2 Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts
 f.3 Michigan
 f.4-5 Minnesota
 f.6 Missouri
5. f.1 Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey
 f.2 New York
 f.3 North Carolina
 f.4 Ohio
 f.5 Oklahoma, Oregon
 f.6 Pennsylvania
6. f.1 Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota
 f.2 Tennessee, Texas
 f.3 Virginia, Vermont, Washington
 f.4 Wisconsin
 f.5 Miscellaneous Printed Matter