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The New Orleans States-Item is an afternoon newspaper. It prints the news impartially. It supports what it believes to be right. It opposes what it believes to be wrong, without regard to party politics.

Grand Jury Hits City on Bad Bars

What has the city done lately in contending with the problem of bar-rooms which are the focus of illegalities ranging from sex and dope to gambling and homicide?

Not much, judging from the report of the Orleans Parish Grand Jury which retired this week.

Labeling the matter an "important laxity of law enforcement," the jury refers to "the apparent indifferent attitude in the issuance of licenses by the city of New Orleans to sell alcoholic beverages and the disposition of violations of alcoholic beverage outlets by the council and the city of New Orleans."

Police bring in their reports about bad bars and submit them, with background information, to the city attorney's office. Those which clear that office go to the City Council.

But the Grand Jury finds that for the 17-month period ending May 31, of 122 police reports on liquor outlets submitted to the city attorney, just 40 reached the council. And of the 40, not a single license was revoked.

Although 16 licenses were suspended by the council, the average period of wrist-tapping was 2.69 days, says the jury. Of the other 24, no hearing date was set for six, 16 were continued with date and two were dismissed.

During the same 17 months, 26 Criminal Court convictions were referred to the city attorney's office which took no action on 16 and sent 10 on to the council. Not one license

was picked up and the easy treatment for eight was an average 2.13-day suspension. Two cases were continued without date, the jury says.

Involved in the convictions were various crimes, including gambling, selling alcoholic beverages to juveniles and obscenity.

"It appears to this jury that this is indeed a very poor record for the number of violations encountered, and the city attorney's office and the City Council should make a great effort to enforce the laws governing these violations," declares the jury report.

It absolves the Police Department and the parish prosecutor's office of blame, for arrests were made in the cases.

Councilmen dispute Grand Jury figures and offer their own which give no overpowering contrast.

New Orleans statistically is one of the nation's worst crime spots. Not all of the blame can be fobbed off on the Police Department's scarcity of men, equipment and money.

It would not cost the city one red cent more to make better use of information gathered and presented by police relating to notorious bar-rooms. For certain, it would better the morale of the Police Department.

Not a single saloon license revoked in 17 months? Only 24 licenses suspended with a powder-puff tap averaging about two days? As the Orleans Parish Grand Jury says, there's something wrong here.