

They considered the operations of the Act had been more successful in bringing men under treatment than it had been in the case of women. Among the opinions expressed by the committee were the following: The Act was not equally successful in respect of private and hospital patients in regard to notification, but was equally successful in respect of securing to both more effective treatment. There has been an apparent reduction in the prevalence of venereal diseases, and the Conference were strongly of opinion that the results so far justify the continuance of these Acts in operation.

The Conference found that venereal diseases are the most potent of all causes of sterility and of infant and foetal morbidity and mortality. It recommended, among other remedial measures, that prophylactic depots, both for males and females, should be established as widely in the community as possible. Referring to the educational aspect, the Conference urged that children should be instructed in general biological facts up to the age of puberty, when more explicit information concerning facts of sexual life should be given. They urged on all parents and educational, philanthropic, and religious organizations the pressing necessity for a sustained campaign, in co-operation with the medical profession, in order to inculcate in the community higher ideals of personal hygiene and health.

Lastly, it may be mentioned that, at the instance of Lord Dawson of Penn, a highly qualified and representative committee of medical men, with Lord Trevethin as chairman, has been appointed in England to report to the Minister of Health upon "the best medical measures for preventing venereal disease in the civil community, having regard to administrative practicability, including cost." The appointment of such a committee was requested by Lord Dawson chiefly with a view to obtaining an authoritative pronouncement on the subject of medical preventive measures, and the committee's report will be awaited with much interest.

SECTION 5.—LEGISLATION IN NEW ZEALAND, PAST AND PRESENT.

(A) *Contagious Diseases Act (repealed).*

The Contagious Diseases Act was passed in 1869, and repealed in 1910. Briefly, its aim was to secure periodical examinations of prostitutes, and to detain for treatment those prostitutes found infected with venereal disease.

There appears to be, in some quarters, an apprehension that hidden beneath the movement to combat venereal diseases is an implied desire or intention to reinstate the antiquated and detested provisions of that Act. The Committee deem it necessary to say that they have not found grounds for this suspicion; that no legislation can be effective unless it deals equally and adequately with all men, women, and children sufferers from venereal diseases of all kinds; that it finds little evidence of a definite prostitute class in New Zealand, and, even if there were such, the Contagious Diseases Acts have been proved to be useless as measures towards the prevention of venereal infections; and it is the Committee's individual and collective opinion that anything involving a return to the administrative procedure of the Contagious Diseases Act should have no part whatever in any new legislation in this Dominion.

(B.) *Examples of Difficulties—Concrete Cases.*

Before proceeding to refer to present and suggested legislation, a few incidents and cases taken from the evidence may help, as concrete examples, to indicate the difficulties to be contended with:—

Case 1.—A man—young and married, a municipal employee in a city—associated sexually with a female employee in an eating-house frequented by himself and co-employees. In due time he sought the advice of the Medical Officer of Health for (what he suspected) severe syphilis. Steps were taken to obtain his speedy admission to the local hospital. The woman continued in her employment.

Case 2.—A social-hygiene worker in her evidence said: "I think the majority of cases I deal with (girls attending a hospital clinic) are caused through mental depravity, and in some instances you cannot convince them—they continue to carry on. I have tried all I know how to show them the dangers, but they just laugh at me. I think it is really in many cases just a mental condition—mental degeneration, possibly." This officer explained that even while actually attending the clinic some of these girls (affected with gonorrhœa), without any semblance of reserve or decency, would discuss arrangements for further intercourse with men, and on leaving the clinic (still in an infectious state) were even seen to go off with young men waiting for them.

Case 3.—Asked if he knew of any cases where the disease had been contracted innocently, a medical practitioner stated in evidence: "I know of a case where two girls in ——— were infected (syphilis) on the lip through a young fellow handing them a cigarette which he was smoking."

Case 4.—A medical man in private practice, and Medical Superintendent of the hospital in a small country town, states: "Although, judging from an experience of over fifteen years, this district would appear to be peculiarly free from any variety of venereal disease, I think it may be of interest to your Committee to know what happened here in the early part of 1918. At that time there came to reside with her father in ———, a township about nine miles south of ———, a woman, ———, who, shortly after her arrival consulted the late Dr. ———, and was found to be the subject of secondary syphilis. . . . In all, three cases of gonorrhœa, four of soft chancre (three of whom suffered from phagadœmic ulceration which laid them up for weeks), and six cases of purely syphilitic infection came under my care, all traceable to this same woman. As every case of gonorrhœa and soft chancre afterwards developed syphilis, ultimately I had thirteen cases of syphilis under my treatment alone. Others, I have good reason to believe, went to other towns, and doubtless some failed to seek any kind of help. . . . Having prevailed upon the woman to come to my surgery. . . . I told her that she was suffering from three varieties of venereal disease, which she was freely disseminating. I then read to her that part of the Act which deals with those who "knowingly and wilfully disseminate venereal infection." That same afternoon she left for ———, where she continued