

Classification and, where necessary, segregation of mentally defective adolescents is recommended.

The following medical measures for preventing and combating the disease are recommended:—

The clinics should be made more available by being open continuously. Every effort should be made to secure privacy. A specially trained nurse should be in attendance at women's clinics, and women doctors should be secured where possible.

The Committee recommend that provision be made at the clinics for prompt preventive treatment of those who have exposed themselves to infection.

Lady patrols should be appointed in other centres to perform the kind of work that is being carried on in Christchurch.

The Committee, having regard to the good work especially of an educational nature which is being done by the Social Hygiene Society, Christchurch, consider voluntary effort of the same kind in other centres would be very helpful.

The Committee are entirely opposed to the Continental system of licensed brothels, or a revival of the C.D. Acts in any shape or form.

They recommend legislation be introduced providing for what is known as conditional notification of venereal disease. It will be the duty of a doctor to notify to the Health Department, by number or symbol only, each case of venereal disease he treats. If a patient, however, refuses to continue treatment until cured, and will not consult some other doctor or attend a clinic, it will then be the duty of the doctor last in attendance to notify the case to the Department by name.

If the patient continues recalcitrant and refuses to allow himself to be examined by the medical practitioner appointed by the Director-General of Health, then the latter should be empowered to apply to a Magistrate for the arrest of such person and his detention in a public hospital or other place of treatment until he is non-infective.

The Committee also recommend further provision to deal with cases in which persons suffering from venereal disease are not under medical treatment and are likely to infect others. If the Director-General of Health has reason to believe that any person is so suffering he may call on that person to produce a medical certificate, which may be procured free of charge from any hospital or venereal-disease clinic. If the person refuses to produce such a certificate he or she may be taken before a Magistrate, who may order a medical examination. Penalties, including detention in a prison hospital, should be provided for recalcitrant cases. The proceedings in all these cases are to be heard in private unless defendant desires a public hearing.

The Committee recommend that before a license to marry is issued the intending parties must sign a paper answering certain questions as to freedom from communicable disease and from mental disease, and must make a sworn statement that the answers to such questions are true.

They recommend the adoption of a provision in the Queensland Act making venereal disease a ground for annulling a marriage contracted whilst one party is suffering from such a disease in an infectious stage, provided the other party was not informed of the fact prior to marriage. Also that it should be the duty of a medical practitioner attending a case of venereal disease, if he has reason to believe that the patient intends to marry, to warn him or her against doing so, and if he or she persists it should be the duty of the doctor to notify the case by name to the Director-General of Health, whose duty it should be to inform the other party, or the parents or guardian of such other party. Such communications made in good faith either by the doctor or the Director-General of Health should be absolutely privileged.

The Committee recommend that the law prohibiting treatment of patients for venereal disease by unqualified persons shall be strengthened, and suggest that the Pharmaceutical Society might assist in preventing such practices.

SECTION 3.—CONCLUDING REMARKS.

The Committee in carrying out their task have been brought into contact with some uninviting aspects of our social life. Some of the facts disclosed are of a character to give serious concern to those lovers of their country who rightly regard it as exceptionally favoured by nature, and desire to see its people healthy and vigorous, clean in body and mind, worthy of their heritage. The late war showed that the pick of our population, physically as well as mentally, were of the finest possible type, the admiration of all who saw them; but the medical examination of the recruits disclosed that of 135,282 examined after the introduction of the Military Service Act—mostly young men in the prime of life—only 57,382, or say, 42½ per cent., could be accepted as fit for training, unmistakably proving that the nation as a whole was much below the standard of physical fitness which it ought to exhibit.

The investigations of the Committee show that already there is far too large a proportion of mental and physical defectives reproducing their kind. In the absence of accurate statistics it is impossible to say what proportion of these defectives are the direct product of venereal disease, but there is clear evidence that a tendency to lead dissolute lives is especially noticeable in the females belonging to this unfortunate class. "A feeble-minded girl," says Mr. Beck, "has not sense enough to protect herself from the perils to which women are subjected. Often amiable in disposition and physically attractive, they either marry and bring forth a new generation of defectives, or they become irresponsible sources of corruption and debauchery in the communities where they live." Obviously some method of dealing with mental defectives—by segregation or otherwise—must be found as part of the problem of dealing with venereal disease.

As regards the effect of venereal disease on the general health of the community, we have the statement of the late Sir William Osler that he regards syphilis as "third on the list of killing diseases"; while Neisser, a leading authority, says that "with the exception of measles, gonorrhœa is the most widely spread of all diseases. It is the most potent factor in the production of involuntary race suicide, and by sterilization and abortion does more to depopulate the country than does any other cause."