

- (3) That procreation is not the only important issue: many of the feeble-minded lack self-control in other directions—commit crimes, are vagrant and thriftless, alcoholic, or socially inadequate—and they would require care in any case in asylums, workhouses, prisons, or other institutions, so that the only reason for sterilization would be met by segregation.
- (4) That sterilization and freedom would mean an increase of prostitution and consequent spread of venereal disease.
- (5) That it would lead to the release of many cases.
- (6) Humanitarian and religious reasons.

I have made a point of discussing this matter with practically every alienist and worker amongst the feeble-minded whom I have met on my tour, and I would sum up their opinions by stating that while public declarations of policy are generally against its practicality and utility, very few tenable arguments are advanced in private conversations against its inclusion *as a minor accessory part* in a general scheme.

The American National Committee on Mental Hygiene, and the British Central Association for Mental Welfare, are opposed to sterilization on the grounds stated above; but beyond segregation (which they admit cannot be done in sufficient numbers to be effective) and education of the public to a eugenic ideal (which is nebulous) they offer no practical alternatives.

To review the arguments as stated above:—

(1) It is established beyond doubt that the mating of two feeble-minded persons will produce bad stock, and also that the progeny from a defective person or “carrier” mated with a normal person will include a certain proportion of bad stock. The chief danger lies in the union of “carriers” with sound stock, and the “carriers” come from defectives. Permanent segregation of all the feeble-minded is economically impossible and not altogether desirable. Registration and prohibition of marriage will not prevent procreation, but registration plus supervision plus prohibition of marriage plus sterilization after due consideration of all the probabilities of each case by the Eugenics Board will certainly render procreation less easy than it is at present.

(2) This is no argument against the sterilization of those feeble-minded persons who are known to be the offspring of feeble-minded parents, and the majority do come from such. Many of the “normal” parents are “carriers,” and the stock should be eradicated. In any case the individual circumstances would be reviewed by a Board.

(3) This is partly true, but recent research in America has shown that only about 10 per cent. of the feeble-minded exhibit vicious and criminal tendencies necessitating segregation in institutions where such cases are now sent. On the other hand, every feeble-minded woman is a potential mother—married or single—and sterilization would enable the non-vicious woman to be cared for by her relatives without the ever-present fear that her facility and lack of intelligence may result in pregnancy and childbirth and one more addition to the ever-growing list of those dependent on the State. In the same manner many docile, fairly industrious, feeble-minded boys could be allowed to live at home and thus save the heavy cost of the only other effective method—segregation.

(4) The assumption of the Central Association for Mental Welfare and the American Committee on Mental Hygiene that sterilization and liberty would lead to prostitution is in my opinion open to considerable doubt. I do not believe that the possibility of pregnancy very often deters the actions of a man who desires irregular intercourse, and this consideration would certainly weigh less with a feeble-minded girl than with her normal sister, so that the absence of this danger is not likely to promote prostitution. In discussing this matter with me, Dr. Butler, of Sonoma, California, expressed the opinion that there was no real foundation for this fear. The Sonoma patients who have been sterilized go out on probation—nine hundred were on probation at the time of my visit—and the Superintendent informed me that while many of his cases had venereal disease on first admission, very few of these returned from probation were so affected. Dr. Butler admits that the girls can be easily seduced, but their mentality in general is such that they do not actually seek out men, and there would be no increase of prostitution because of active effort on their part. Dr. Littlejohn, of the Manor Park Home for Defectives, London, shared this view.

(5) That sterilization would lead to the release of many cases is not to be doubted, and if the mere fact of having been sterilized were to be the only deciding factor there would certainly be an ill result; but I would not have the temerity to make such a proposal. These persons would be registered, where necessary would receive training, and in all cases would remain under the supervision of a social-service worker, who would naturally report any sexual tendencies necessitating segregation. I would not recommend absolute discharge in these cases except after a long period of probation, or until the menopause in women.

(6) The humanitarian objection is largely due to ignorance as to the simple nature of the operation and to the difference between sterilization and castration. In any event, humanity will be best served by cutting off plasmic taint at its source, and thus helping to prevent at least some of the misery incidental to mental defect.

To sum up, I believe that the Eugenic Board should be entrusted with the power to order sterilization. It may be assumed that a wisely selected Board will exercise their powers in a tentative and discreet way, regarding sterilization as complementary to the other measures, and selecting for each case the resources which appear to be indicated.

(b) SEGREGATION.

To many of those who have not made a serious study of the problem the term “feeble-minded” denotes only the more gross and repulsive types of degenerates and criminals whose antisocial acts lead to sensational Court appearances and newspaper headlines. There are such cases, for whom