

MENTAL HYGIENE.

181. In 1925 a Royal Commission composed of some members of the Legislative Assembly were appointed to report to the House on this subject and we cannot improve on the recommendations made by them in their preliminary report, which are as follows:—

"We therefore beg to recommend:

"1. The creation of a Provincial Board of Control, to be composed of officials already in the public service who shall serve on this Board without added remuneration to act in an advisory capacity in co-ordinating and supervising the work of Provincial mental institutions and to perform such other duties as may be entrusted to it.

"2. The establishment of a psychopathic hospital, to be operated by the Province as a unit of the mental institution system and preferably in close co-operation with a leading general hospital. Equipment to include provision for out-patient service and travelling clinics to cover other parts of the Province.

"3. Removal from the mental hospitals, as soon as other accommodation can be provided, of mental deficient (including idiots and imbeciles) now domiciled there and their establishment in other appropriate quarters. Those suited for training should be segregated under the colony system, which affords the best practical facilities for making them self-supporting; for the remainder all that is required is comfortable housing and appropriate care.

"4. Sterilization of such individuals in mental institutions as, following treatment or training, or both, might safely be recommended for parole from the institution and trial return to community life, if the danger of procreation with its attendant risk of multiplication of the evil by transmission of the disability to progeny were eliminated. Sterilization in any case to be performed only with the written consent of the following described persons: (a.) The patient, if capable of giving such consent; and (b.) the husband or wife, if the patient be married; or (c.) the parent or guardian if the patient be unmarried and said parent or guardian resident within the Province, or the Minister of the Department charged with the administration of mental institutions if the patient be without parent or guardian resident within the Province; and in every case only after recommendation by the superintendent of the institution and approval of the Board of Control.

"5. Conference with other Provinces of Canada looking to an agreement whereby the cost of maintenance of patients from other Provinces will be borne by the Province to which their support properly belongs.

"6. Representations to the Dominion Government requesting: Greater care in the examination of immigrants to ensure the total exclusion of the mentally unfit and those liable to insanity; that this Province be given notifications and full particulars of all immigrants admitted to Canada under special permit. The other Provinces should be requested to join in such representations to the Dominion Government."

182. The importance of this question can hardly be exaggerated and while it is impossible at the present time to find the money for a psychopathic hospital, we see no reason why, with this exception, the recommendations of the Commission above referred to, should not be made effective, particularly with regard to sterilization.

OLD-AGE PENSIONS.

183. In 1927 both the Dominion Parliament and the Provincial Legislature passed Acts providing for the payment of old-age pensions. The conditions of eligibility for a pension are, briefly, that the applicant must be a British subject, have attained the age of seventy years, have resided in Canada for twenty years, have resided in the Province in which the application for pension is made for the five years immediately preceding, and be not in receipt of an income in excess of \$365 per annum. The maximum pension payable is \$20 per month.

184. As at May 31st, 1932, 6,510 persons were receiving old-age pension from the Province. The Province has the right to charge against any other Province its *pro rata* share of any pension based upon the length of residence of the pensioner in such Province. Conversely other Provinces have a charge against British Columbia for pensions payable by them based upon the period of residence of the pensioner in British Columbia.

185. Until November 1st, 1931, the Dominion paid 50 per cent. of the net total amount paid by the Province for pensions. Since that date it pays 75 per cent. of such amount. The net pension bill of the Province for the current fiscal year after deducting the 75 per cent. share payable by the Dominion is estimated to be \$376,630.25.

186. Administration of old-age pensions in British Columbia is placed with the Workmen's Compensation Board and the whole cost of administration is payable by the Province. For the fiscal year ended March 31st, 1932, this amounted to \$14,839.02, or \$1.022 per \$100 of pensions paid. These expenses represent the cost of a special investigating staff and the actual disburse-

ments of the Board in administering these pensions. We approve of the administration of this work being in the hands of the Workmen's Compensation Board as its whole machinery is available for that purpose and obviates setting up a separate office.

187. We point out that the Act passed at the last session of the Legislature enabling the Province to charge part of the cost of maintenance of inmates of public institutions against the municipalities from which they came does not cover old-age pensions so that no part of old-age pensions is borne by municipalities.

188. We fear that the Province's pension bill will show a steady increase for many years to come. The average of those of seventy years or over according to the 1921 census for the five most easterly Provinces of Canada was 4.18 per cent., while the same average in British Columbia was only 1.84 per cent. We conclude from these figures, therefore, that apart from increase of population, our pension bill will rise until our percentage of those of seventy years and over equals the prevailing percentage in Eastern Canada.

189. It has, of course, been outside the scope of our inquiry to examine the details of the administration of these pensions, but it is obvious from the preceding paragraphs that a very considerable increase in the cost of pensions is in sight and that only the most careful administration can prevent the Province from being faced with an expenditure under this head which it will be almost impossible for it to meet.