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BY CONTROLLING  
FEEBLE-MINDED

Justice Hodgins Urges Proper Care of Mental Defectives

Some Recommendations — Suggests Better Provincial Machinery for Finding and Educating the Deficient.

(By C. K. CLARKE, M. D., Medical Director, Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene.)

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government is alive to the importance of the document. The commissioner has not only done his work well, but has succeeded in gathering a mass of information that in itself would be invaluable.

Comes at Opportune Time.

It comes at an opportune moment, when the world is more keenly alive than ever before to the importance of social problems of this character. It is surprising that the province of Ontario—wealthy, generally progressive, and possessing a cocksureness on many subjects that gets it a good deal of criticism from other provinces—should have fallen so far behind in regard to the care of its defectives.

The commissioner made a wide study of conditions in America and Great Britain, and not only viewed much of the literature available, but also visited the chief institutions in Canada and the United States. He also called before him everyone who might contribute to his knowledge on the subject. Quite properly he lays stress on the importance of prevention, realizing that it is along this line the success of this movement rests, and showing that by early treatment the necessity of institutional care is avoided.

In an illuminating paragraph he says: "A task lies before the province in undertaking to ascertain as well as to properly care for those who, up to the present, have failed to receive any proper attention at all, except so far as the accident of the moment has cast them in such a way as to necessitate dealing with them."

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over Canada by the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene.

Comments Present Institutions.

Commenting on the condition of existing institutions in Ontario, he comments on the condition of the Psychiatric Hospital at the University, but realizes that they are inadequate, as they have no proper method of dealing with their patients. Naturally he regrets the failure to build the Psychiatric Hospital planned in 1908, and realizes that the Reception Hospital (done away with recently) was only a makeshift.

His remarks regarding industrial refuges for females are particularly apposite at the present moment, and he insists that inmates of such institutions should come under the observation of medical practitioners who are specially trained and qualified to express opinions. In other words, the inmates should regularly come under the purview of alienists.

We shall quote freely from his "Conclusions and Recommendations": "In the province of Ontario, feeble-mindedness or mental deficiency has never been legally defined nor practically dealt with."

The province has not and never had any machinery for ascertaining mental defectives, for educating them, or to prevent their easy development into irremediable criminals.

The magnitude of the evil thus left untouched is very great. There is no more potent influence in the production of vice and crime than the unwatched mental defective.

Empty Half the Jails.

"If the cardinal fact could be assimilated that the elimination of the mental defective from the school and from the street and from the agencies engaged in reforming character would render the efforts of teachers and social workers comparatively easy and empty the jails of over half their inmates, and that these unfortunates can, if taken in time, be made comparatively happy and useful, there would be little time lost in bringing about that desired result."

The crux of the whole situation is expressed clearly in the above sentence. Then again the commissioner, while commending the effective and voluntary effort of those who are in sympathy with modern ideas, deprecates the ignorance of the public in regard to these things. His report, if scattered broadcast, will do much to enlighten the public.

His remarks on Detention Homes and Juvenile Courts are much to the point.

Recommendations Committee.

Among the recommendations are:

"The confinement of anti-social defectives."

"The formation of a departmental committee under the general control of the provincial secretary and under the chairmanship, if possible, of some energetic, well known and philanthropic citizen, and with an executive and paid secretary. Such a board should include in its personnel individuals selected for such organizations as the Children's Aid Societies, the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene, the Provincial Association for the Care of the Feeble minded, etc., etc."

"A revision of existing statutes, laws and legal procedure. This revision to be obtained by the co-operation of the judges and the legal profession."

"The erection of a properly equipped Psychopathic Hospital in Toronto, so equipped that it would afford facilities for the care of patients, clinical instruction in psychiatry, research and the training of special hospital nurses."

"The immediate erection of a reception hospital in Toronto."

Enlarge Juvenile Courts.

"The enlargement of the scheme of juvenile courts, with the laying down of a proper standard of building and equipment."

"The opening of a parent institution similar to Orillia in the northern part of the province."

"More adequate segregation for feeble minded women of child-bearing age."

"The compulsory establishment by boards of education of special training classes for mental defectives."

"Recognition of the need of skilled medical advice in regard to mental cases, and the establishment of proper clinics attached to or available for the courts administering criminal justice."

Municipal Mental Clinics.

"The establishment of mental clinics with competent physicians and social workers by municipalities in which there are hospitals."

"Provision of degenarate settlements or vicious centres."

"The making of representations to the dominion government regarding the importance of eliminating defective immigrants."

"The prevention of the marriage of mental defectives."

"Periodical inspection of all institu-

tions where mental defectives are detained by specially qualified alienists, rather than merely by police officers."

"The extension of medical education clearly and with a full knowledge of the facts to include even post-graduate courses in psychiatry."

Under the headlines outlined he deals

various points discussed, and if his recommendations, which are eminently practical, are followed, a new era will have dawned in connection with the

affairs of the feeble minded of the province. No government can withstand the pressure put upon them by the facts and figures presented.



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