

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

WEDNESDAY, May 16, 1928.

The Standing Committee on Public Health and Inspection of Foods met this day at 10.30 a.m.

The consideration of Bill D, intituled "An Act to make Venereal Disease an Impediment to Marriage," was resumed.

Present: Hon. Mr. Béland (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Daniel, Hon. Mr. Bourque, Hon. Mr. Riley.

Dr. F. N. G. Starr, President of the Canadian Medical Association, Toronto, was called, and testified as follows:

By the Chairman:

Q. Dr. Starr, are you connected with any university?—A. Yes, the University of Toronto.

Q. In what capacity?—A. I am Professor of Clinical Surgery.

Q. You have been with that university how long?—A. Since 1891.

Q. We do not want to interfere with your well known humility, but you will permit me to say that you are considered an outstanding surgeon not only in Toronto, but in the whole Dominion of Canada. We shall not exact an answer from you in this connection.

Have you had an opportunity to glance over the Bill that has been introduced in the Senate, an Act to make venereal disease an impediment to marriage?—A. Yes.

Q. I will ask you a few questions, doctor, and then the members of the Committee will follow. Do you think that legislation is desirable in Canada to make venereal disease an impediment to marriage?—A. Certainly venereal disease should be an impediment to marriage, but whether it is wise to make laws at present, I am not so certain. May I amplify that?

Q. Yes, doctor?—A. In the early days of the war, before I had an opportunity to go over, I suggested to the then Superintendent of the General Hospital, the late Dr. Clark, that when our boys came back and the public awakened to the fact that there was a good deal of venereal disease, they would be blamed for it; and as I thought they had enough on their shoulders at the time, we began an investigation of the hospital population so far as syphilis was concerned. We had blood tests made of every patient that came in to the public wards and about 12½ per cent of the hospital population then showed a positive blood test.

Q. Regardless of whether they were soldiers or not?—A. Yes. That was before any returned men came back. That kept up until a few years ago, then it gradually began to decline, and just about 8 per cent show a positive blood test at the present time.

Q. How extensive was that investigation? Was it confined to a city or a province?—A. It was confined to the General Hospital, which receives patients from pretty well all over the province.