

THE WHITE PLAGUE IN THE LOCAL LEGISLATURE

THE combat against consumption provoked an interesting educational discussion, it nothing more, in the local Legislature on March 4, when Mr. J. P. Downey, member for South Wellington moved the second reading of his bill to prevent the spread of tuberculosis. The bill provided for the creation of county Boards of Health, whose duty, with the aid of the Provincial Board of Health, it shall be to take measures to keep in touch with persons suffering from consumption, provide them and their families with literature bearing on the disease and methods of combating it; to remove patients when necessary to sanatoria; to take steps to build and maintain such institutions, and to make notification of the disease compulsory.

Speaking to the measure, Mr. Downey regretted the general apathy on the question. He quoted figures as to the death rate from the disease in the new and the old world. Dr. Wm. Osler has given it as his opinion that in the United States to-day 1,250,000 people were afflicted with the disease. The loss on this and other continents in life and money from this disease were truly appalling. But these losses in the aggregate were often lost sight of in the deaths of the great geniuses of the world who fell victims to consumption. He gave a number of names of such men and women, and proceeding, devoted some time to an outline of the manner in which the Germans were fighting the disease. Upon this in part his own bill was based, particularly in regard to the sending out of literature for the guidance of tuberculosis sufferers and the establishment of local sanatoria.

Norway, however, stood as the model for all countries in respect to anti-tuberculosis legislation. In that case compulsory notification was provided for by law. A great deal had been done in the United States in the encouragement of establishing State sanatoria, but so far little had been done in Canada or in this Province to prevent the spread of tuberculosis. The Legislature of Ontario had taken one important step by the passing of an act in 1900, making a grant of

\$4,000 toward the establishment of municipal institutions to fight the disease. It was a matter of regret that only one municipality, Hamilton, had taken advantage of that act. In alluding to the clauses demanding compulsory notification, Mr. Downey declared that everything else that was done by way of legislation would fail unless notification was made compulsory, so that the authorities would be at once able to take the steps the case and the nature of the surroundings warranted. Mr. Downey did not offer the bill as a final solution of a question which was pressing itself upon this and every deliberative body in the world to-day.

Mr. A. G. McKay thought the weakness of the bill was that it was too local and unnecessarily expensive. In view of the nature and importance of the work the boards should be as permanent as possible, and the work should be centralized more under Government control. The disease was not so prevalent in Ontario that it might not be dealt with in three or four or five Provincial institutions established on similar lines to the new normal schools. There was considerable to be said against county boards being able to compel County Councils to build sanatoria, and the creation of such power would likely result in friction.

"It should be made a Government measure, and the whole matter dealt with from a Provincial standpoint," concluded Mr. McKay.

Hon. Mr. Hanna referred to the efforts of five central counties to secure five units of the Provincial grant, in all \$20,000 to build a sanitarium. The request appeared to be a reasonable proposition, but the idea was abandoned that one institution could serve five counties. It became a question whether a county institution was not dealing with too large an area. The patients required lots of fresh air, good food and a knowledge of hygienic conditions, and it did not require a very large investment. After all, the officers and machinery were the most important. The Board of Health of the Province had given the matter their attention. In fact, if he was not mistaken, they had already drafted something that could be readily put