

WORK FOR WOMEN AS SANITARY INSPECTORS

BY ETHEL HURLBATT, M.A.,

ROYAL VICTORIA COLLEGE, MONTREAL.

The Canadian Public Health Association is an organization designed to meet the needs of to-day and to prepare to meet those of tomorrow.

A country passes through three well defined stages. There is, first, the stage when voluntary effort is alone in the field combating evils caused by lack of sanitary and hygienic regulations. There is, secondly, the stage when voluntary association for health purposes are recognized and aided by public authorities, when, to use a phrase of Mr. Sidney Webb's, we find voluntary work in a State or Municipal setting. Then there is the third stage, when the central government recognizes its full responsibility and occupies the field, leaving voluntary effort free for new conquests; for there is always a new horizon disclosing new opportunities for further initiative.

It is the object of this Association to promote activities of three kinds, namely, to stimulate voluntary effort; to obtain increasing recognition and support for work so initiated, and to carry the health movement to the final stage when a public health department or bureau shall be an essential and important part of government organization, Federal and Provincial.

The existing laws of Canada provide for certain activities of Federal, Provincial and Municipal authorities in the matter of public health. What is now needed is favorable public opinion, which means readiness to pay for a greater extension of activity; and the speeches at the inaugural meeting indicated what might be undertaken by the Governments of the Dominion and of the Province of Quebec if sufficient pressure were applied.

Canada has more than begun to realize the truth of the statement that "What a man does with the waste on his farm, the condition of the place from which he gets his drinking water, the number of lodgers he takes into his house are no longer questions which concern the individual only, but that the health and well-being of the

unit affects the whole, and that no man is free to be a source of danger or infection to his neighbour." And what has been true of other countries has been true here. The development in population and the growth of modern industry, causing men and women to congregate as workers in great cities is becoming evident, and in their train will come the unskilled and the incompetent, who, together form the ill-educated and the ill-paid workers whose presence in a community involves overcrowding and insanitary housing conditions. And, at the same time, is coming a vast growth in the number of men and women laboring in factory and workshop.

It is these two tendencies of modern life, crowding and factory labor that will call for a great extension of industrial and sanitary legislation and for the employment of an ever-increasing number of factory and sanitary inspectors.

Since the dangers of insanitary conditions are overtaking the home, and since women in large numbers resort to factory and workshop to earn a living, there arises here, as has been the case elsewhere, the need for the presence of the woman sanitary inspector.

There are still many people in whose minds sanitation is associated with drains, or, at most, with drains, water supply and smoky chimneys — three most important matters, for were they thoroughly controlled and their evils minimized the health of most communities would be materially improved; were they attended to in Montreal, the canopy of smoke in which the city is rapidly being enshrouded and which must soon become a menace to human and to plant life down here below the mountain, and which must assuredly creep up and threaten even the mountain itself, unless means are taken to avert it—this canopy might be lifted from the city. It is to be hoped that the Canadian Public Health Association will not neglect to make an attack upon the smoke nuisance.