

A recurring theme in the testimony of parents of alcohol-damaged children, particularly FAE children, was that the problems they had to deal with were the result of bad parenting, when in fact these problems were due to injuries inflicted on the foetus by alcohol. We received much testimony indicating that health-care professionals, social welfare agencies, educators, and officers of the judicial system were often unaware of the existence of FAS and FAE and, therefore, insensitive to the special needs of alcohol-damaged children and their parents. The Sub-Committee believes that provincial and territorial co-ordinators can provide resources, leadership and guidance to the various agencies and institutions of government to help resolve these problems.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 3

The Sub-Committee recommends that the Minister of Health and Welfare Canada recommend to his provincial and territorial counterparts the establishment of Provincial and Territorial FAS/FAE Co-ordinators who will focus on prevention, identification of high-risk individuals and groups, clinical services for women of child-bearing age, early identification of affected offspring, and treatment and care facilities for FAS/FAE children. Wherever possible, the provincial/territorial co-ordinator should be employed with an established health-care centre with expertise in these areas.

(D) NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FOETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME AND FOETAL ALCOHOL EFFECTS

In 1988, a conference on Alcohol and Child/Family Health was held in Vancouver, with funding support from the Government of British Columbia, the University of British Columbia and Health and Welfare Canada. The Sub-Committee believes that it would be appropriate to hold a national conference on alcohol and the foetus, preferably before the end of 1993. Not only would such a conference facilitate information exchange among professionals involved with the many facets of FAS and FAE, and stimulate research in this area, but, with effective publicity and media coverage, the conference could significantly raise public awareness of this important subject.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 4

The Sub-Committee recommends that Health and Welfare Canada, with the participation of the National Advisory Committee on Alcohol and the Foetus, organize and fund a National Conference on Foetal Alcohol Effects and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome for the purposes of information exchange, the stimulation of research and treatment activity, and to raise public awareness of this issue. The Conference should be held before the end of 1993.

(E) WARNING LABELS AND WARNING SIGNS

Perhaps the most contentious issue the Sub-Committee has dealt with during its consideration of FAS and FAE is the matter of warning labels on containers of beverage alcohol. The witnesses were sharply, but not evenly, divided on this matter. The two industry groups who offered testimony, the Brewers Association of Canada and the Association of Canadian Distillers, were opposed to the inclusion of warning labels on bottles and other containers. Virtually every other witness supported the proposal. The witnesses from Health and Welfare Canada stated that the Department was reviewing the available evidence on the effectiveness of warning labels, before making any decision. The Sub-Committee has considered carefully the testimony of all witnesses.