

REPORT OF SUB-COMMITTEE ON LAWS FOR THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

Your Sub-Committee begs to report that Sub-Committees have been formed in connection with nearly every Local Council to examine into this subject, and to consider the facts and suggestions laid before the Executive at the last Annual Meeting by Inspector Archibald.

Your Sub-Committee wishes to state that there has been some difference of opinion as to the age which is now considered the age of consent in Canada, some believing it to be fourteen and some to be sixteen.

Your Committee have consulted eminent legal authorities on this matter, who have no doubt that the present age of consent is sixteen—the same as it is in Great Britain.

Your Sub-Committee, having considered the various suggestions and recommendations made by the Local Councils, decided to recommend that the following three requests be made to the Government for amendment to the Criminal Code, as being those on which the Local Councils are most unanimous, and also as being those most likely to be carried

By approval of the National Council of Women of Canada, as expressed on the occasion of the presentation of the above Report at the Third Annual Conference in Montreal, the following note has been added to this Report:—

“ That, in the opinion of Mrs. Drummond and of the Montreal Local Council, the opinion given by certain eminent legal authorities, and quoted in the above report, that the Age of Consent in Canada is 16, the same as in England, may be misleading unless certain qualifications of the statement are clearly set down and understood, viz.: that while it is undoubtedly the case that the Laws of Great Britain and of Canada respectively do contain a law touching ‘ Age of Consent,’ which affords a certain protection to a girl from defilement up to the age of 16 years, yet there is this difference between those laws—that the protection afforded by the law of Great Britain is absolute and unconditional, whereas in Canada the protection is wholly contingent upon the character of the girl, ‘ a previously chaste character’ being an essential of the offence. That this qualification does not to a great extent abrogate the ostensible protection afforded by our law to girls of 14 or 15 years must be apparent to all who seriously consider the circumstances of *any* girl, and especially of a girl in the class of life in which such offences are most frequent, against whom, as a condonation or justification of his offence, the man may lay a charge of ‘ previously chaste character.’

“ And Mrs. Drummond would urge upon this Council, that while it hails with thankfulness every improvement, however small, it do not rest content till the age of absolute protection in Canada be raised to 16 years.”