

(K) ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

The Sub-Committee received testimony from Dr. Richard Jock, Director of the First Nations Health Commission, to the effect that FAS and FAE are major problems in some First Nations communities, an observation discussed above. One of Dr. Jock's recommendations to the Sub-Committee was for:

"... (a) high-profile action committee that would serve to stimulate and maintain interest in various sectors of the country to deal with FAS. I would also recommend that there be a special aboriginal committee set up which would focus on this because of the special and urgent nature of the problems facing aboriginal peoples."⁶⁵

The Sub-Committee agrees with Dr. Jock's suggestion and we make the following recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 18

The Sub-Committee recommends that the Minister of Health and Welfare Canada and the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, in cooperation with the Provinces and Territories, establish a Special Aboriginal Committee on Alcohol and the Foetus. The Special Committee should have representation from the various aboriginal communities in Canada and be represented on the National Advisory Committee on Alcohol and the Foetus.

Public awareness of the effects of alcohol on the foetus needs to be increased in Canada generally, particularly the possible effects of moderate amounts of alcohol in the etiology of FAE. Dr. Jock suggested that the level of awareness of FAS and FAE among aboriginal peoples was about half that in Canadian society generally.⁶⁶ Dr. Jock suggested that an "aggressive social marketing plan" is needed to make people aware of the risks of maternal alcohol consumption. Simply stating that alcohol may cause FAS or FAE would not be sufficient.

Based on Dr. Jock's comments, we make the following recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 19

The Sub-Committee recommends that the Departments of Health and Welfare and Indian and Northern Affairs, in cooperation with the Special Aboriginal Committee on Alcohol and the Foetus, design and deliver aggressive public-information campaigns to heighten awareness of the association between Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and Foetal Alcohol Effects and alcohol use among aboriginal peoples.

Finally, Dr. Jock suggested that existing programs for the learning-disabled funded and administered by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada should be examined to determine if there are "more effective and more appropriate community-based ways of dealing with learning disabilities, of which FAS is the major portion of demand."⁶⁷

A community-based approach to alcohol-induced birth defects, abusive drinking and related problems was suggested by a number of witnesses. The rationale is that the problems themselves are essentially based in the manner in which the individual relates to his/her social milieu and, therefore, the most effective solutions to the problem will derive from the community itself, rather than being imposed from outside.

⁶⁵ Proceedings, Issue 10, p. 6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.