

"The problem of the mental defective is perhaps on the whole the greatest problem which this Board is called upon to supervise. When all is said and done, the care of those having physical handicaps, while meriting the tenderest solicitude on the part of the State, is by far of much less significance to the future economic welfare of the body politic than is the detection, elimination, segregation, and care of the potential or actual mental defective or defective delinquent.

"Conduct may be broadly considered as indicating the sum total of a patient's efficiency as a self-supporting unit of society. On the whole, we may feel rather sure that when any individual who by reason of his conduct comes before the notice of this Board, as a potential or actual patient or inmate of one of its institutions, he is by that mere fact alone to be considered as having already exhibited certain signs pointing to definite wastage. This should cause us to be on the alert and to see that such an individual is adequately examined in the mental, physical and economic sense, in order that the State may be protected from the consequences which will inevitably result should he be allowed to proceed with life's activities without proper investigation, treatment, and subsequent supervision.

"We know now not only in an academic way but in a very practical way that all individuals who show more or less mental defect present specific problems to the State which must receive adequate and scientific solution.

"If conduct is to be considered in a broad way as the final resultant of mental reactions carried out through our physical agencies, then we begin to understand how an individual showing anti-social trends as the result of inadequate reactions to mental conflicts becomes delinquent. By the fact of odd conduct alone, he indicates that he is suffering, in a modern sociological sense, from either a mental or physical malady, and it is the eminent right and high duty of the State to ascertain just what this abnormal condition may be. It is possible that the disorder is something essentially acquired in the connotation of 'disease,' and may, therefore, be removed under proper treatment. On the other hand, it is highly probable that many of the deviations in conduct observed are due to deep underlying forces leading back not only from ancestors, but to pre and post-natal environment, whereby the individual, through defect or deviations in personal make-up, has been unable to make adequate adjustment to the problems of life as he has in his 'personality' found them, and through a faulty mechanism of adjustment to the situation at hand has developed the odd or anti-social conduct which brought him to the attention of the State.

"Of all those individuals who through mental defect or delinquency need care on the part of the State, and who, therefore, specifically come into the field of the State Board of Charities, it is obvious that there will always be considerable practical difficulty in ascertaining the exact number who require legal commitment and indefinite custody and care on account of mental defect alone. The determination of such individuals, particularly the border-line cases, cannot be made by any one test nor at times even by a series of tests, but can be adequately made only after prolonged and thorough investigation of the whole family and personal history. The latter must take into consideration both mental and physical development defects which preclude proper advancement in scholastic work and place the limits of the individual's economic capacity largely within the manual field.

"After all, the question resolves itself largely into one concerned with genetics and sociological results. *In a sense the State is not particularly interested in the individual, even though he may seem mentally deficient, provided his affective reactions are stable and his conduct exemplifies constructive economic efficiency.*