

prison thirty-eight times in the last ten years, and immediately on discharge on the last occasion had committed another obviously stupid offence. The barrister who defended him recognized his mental state and put up a plea of irresponsibility, but on the medical evidence—non-expert—the jury were not able to find him mentally disordered or defective. He was found guilty and the Judge gave him the indeterminate sentence. Tested both on the Binet and on the Porteous systems, his mental age was between four and five years. This unfortunate fellow could not give very much account of himself, but I think he was giving a true history when he said that he did not remember being out of gaol more than a few days since he was a boy.

I will only trouble you with one other figure, and that is in the year referred to above, out of 1,640 admissions to Mental Hospitals in the Union, 13.5% were admitted solely on account of mental defectiveness and another 8% on account of epilepsy. Some of the 484 admitted with Dementia Praecox were also suffering from congenital mental defect. I think it is perfectly fair to say that if feeble-mindedness could be eliminated, the number of persons requiring care in our Mental Hospitals could be very largely reduced.

As I have indicated, it is the policy of the Government in South Africa to permanently supervise the feeble-minded who drift into such institutions as prisons, reformatories and industrial schools, rescue homes and so forth, but it is clearly understood that this policy alone would only be one of locking the stable door when the horse had been stolen. It is recognized by the Government that if real and permanent good is to be done, it can only be by discovering the feeble-minded at school, giving them special training and throughout life keeping them under such type of permanent care, supervision and control as may be necessary to prevent them from getting into trouble or becoming in any way a nuisance or danger to themselves or the community.

In September, 1918, advantage was taken by the Minister of the Interior at a Conference of the Administrators of the various Provinces of the Union to discuss this important subject with them. The following proposals were considered:—

1. That the Union Government should be responsible for the maintenance and care of idiots and imbeciles of school age, i.e., those falling under Classes 3 and 4 of Section 3 of the Mental Disorders Act, 1916.
2. That the Provincial Authorities should be responsible for the care and training of feeble-minded children of school age, i.e., those falling under Class V. of the same section of the Act.