

Healthy Citizens are a Nation's Greatest Asset

How the Manitoba Board of Health is working to conserve the greatest asset of the first Province of Western Canada

The Manitoba Provincial Board of Health was completely re-organized in 1916, the necessary legislation having been passed at the 1916 Session. "Public Service" is the motto and the principle underlying all the work of the Department.

PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING

The high rate of infant mortality from preventable causes was one of the first problems attacked by the Manitoba Provincial Board of Health under the administration of Hon. Dr. Armstrong, Municipal Commissioner, when reorganization had been completed.

A system of rural nursing was decided upon for the purpose of giving instructions in sanitation and hygiene in the home and the school.

Starting with four nurses in 1918, the work has developed so that there are now over thirty nurses whose constant duty it is to follow the welfare of the children from infancy to adult life.

The nurses give instruction on the prevention of diseases in child life, on the scientific feeding of infants, on the importance of sufficient nutrition for the growing child, the value of fresh air and sanitary conditions in the home.

Children of school age and under are examined regularly, and the parents of those suffering from minor affections of the eye, ear, nose, throat, or any other organ, are advised to consult a physician and have the disability corrected. The nurses take particular care to discover as far as they can all early symptoms of tuberculosis and recommend them for treatment. This has a double value in that it gives the patient the great advantage of early treatment and at the same time removes the possible source of infection to others of the household.

It is gratifying to be able to report that this work has had the sympathetic co-operation of the people, especially the women, and the results have been most encouraging.

Infant mortality has been reduced to less than one-third of that of 1912 and 1913.

Teachers report that the correction of minor disabilities, such as adenoids, enlarged tonsils, etc., has had quite a noticeable effect on the intellect of the pupils treated and has given them an equal chance with their associates.

Many cases of tuberculosis in the incipient stages have been discovered, and through the kindly influence of the nurses have been placed under treatment at a time when a cure may be expected.

It is the intention of the Department to extend this work until the benefits of public health nursing are available to every community in the Province of Manitoba.

CHILD WELFARE STATIONS

The effort of the Health Department in connection with the better health of our young citizens does not end with the public health nursing system. A constant general campaign of public education has been carried on. Public addresses and lectures have been given in all parts of the province. These have included regular lectures to normal students, addresses at teachers' conventions, and at many other public gatherings. In addition to this, permanent child welfare stations have been established

in three places in the province: in the City of Brandon, the Municipality of Assiniboia, and the Town of Dauphin.

Mothers are invited to bring their children to these stations where they are given every possible help by way of advice and instruction. It is the intention of the Department to enlarge this work as circumstances permit.

COMBATING VENEREAL DISEASES

A determined and organized effort has been made by the Health Department to lessen and if possible to remove altogether the ravages of venereal diseases that for centuries have been so great, although comparatively unknown, a menace to society.

It is recognized that with scarcely an exception all cases of venereal diseases seek treatment somewhere. By the requirements of an act passed by the Legislature at the 1919 session, all sufferers must now apply for treatment only to a registered physician or to the free clinic recently opened in Winnipeg, either of which have the authority under this law to control the patient until a cure is completed. The free clinic is of the most modern type, ensures complete confidence, and is at the disposal of every citizen of the province. It is located in the Boyd Building, Winnipeg.

FREE VACCINE AND ANTITOXIN

Owing to the great increase in the cost of vaccine and diphtheritic antitoxin immediately after the outbreak of the war, the Health Department adopted the policy of furnishing these free of charge to any citizen in Manitoba requiring same. Distribution is made through local health officers, to whom any practising physician in the province may apply for a supply. A constant campaign for vaccination has been carried on with excellent results, some 20,000 vaccinations having been reported in 1918. Manitoba is, therefore, well prepared for the possibility of the smallpox epidemics reported from other places spreading to this province.

MUNICIPAL HOSPITALS

Hospital accommodation is now easily available for every community in the Province of Manitoba.

The Municipal Hospital Act passed at the 1919 session of the Legislature provides the machinery whereby any area requiring an hospital, and having a population sufficiently large to finance a fifteen-bed institution, may create a hospital district. The procedure is simple and in the hands of the people themselves, with the willing co-operation of the Government and the Department of Health.

The value of this legislation is indicated by the fact that eight new hospital districts have already been created and steps towards the organization of several others are well under way. It is expected that building operations on a number of these new hospitals throughout Manitoba will start early in the spring.

Mothers' Allowances

CONSERVING FUTURE CITIZENSHIP

The Manitoba Government in 1916 enacted legislation providing for allowances to widowed or otherwise dependent mothers so that they might be enabled to care properly for their children in their own homes. It was the first legislation of its kind in Canada, and in the scale of its allowances is the most generous known on the American Continent.

The act is administered by a commission of men and women who serve without remuneration.

There are now 351 families benefitting under the act, and the expenditure for 1919 will amount to approximately \$200,000.00.

The commission is assisted by municipal committees, which receive and pass on applications for allowances in their districts.

The principle of Mothers' Allowances is not only humanitarian, but is undoubtedly founded on good business for the state. Without this aid, the dependent mother would almost invariably have to work out to earn a livelihood for her children, and this would mean either breaking up the home or the neglect of the children while the mother was at work.

The Manitoba Mothers' Allowances system amounts, therefore, to nothing more nor less than the payment by the State of a salary to the mother for the proper upbringing of her children so that they may have a fair chance to develop into useful successful citizens.