

WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN SOCIAL HYGIENE

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The Section on Women's Work of the Social Hygiene Division of the Commission on Training Camp Activities was created because of the recognition of the fact that no problem which involves a setting of moral standards can ever be solved without the coöperation of both halves of the community which is concerned. For generations, women have thought that however unpalatable it might be, a double standard of morals, so far as sex relationships are concerned, was inevitable. They have been taught to believe that sexual indulgence was necessary to preserve the health of men; that a young man is more or less expected to sow his wild oats, be forgiven, marry a "pure" girl and settle down to a family life.

With women it was different. They have always been expected to be chaste up to the time of their marriage. If by any chance a woman slipped and it were known, she lost, as a rule, social position, the regard of her friends and, not infrequently, was disowned by her family. It was believed that a woman should not know anything of vice or disease, much less discuss them. Her ignorance, which was confounded with innocence, was her charm.

On the other hand, the setting aside of a certain class of women known as prostitutes, whose reason for existence was the gratification of the appetites of men, was an outcome of this state of affairs. It has been said that the profession of prostitution is the oldest in the world for women, that it has always existed and cannot be done away with. In a vague way, many women knew that the so-called "social" diseases existed; more infrequently they knew of them as venereal diseases, but almost never by name. Physicians who have known the true facts concerning the complaints with which their women patients were afflicted have observed a conspiracy of silence. We have talked about "female weaknesses," "female diseases," "the complaints of women," when, as a matter of fact, women have been infected with one or the other of the venereal diseases.

Another common belief, shared alike by men and women, was that soldiers and sailors were, among the men, the class most given to lack of restraint and that among them we would expect to find

the highest percentage of venereal disease. The war has brought a rude awakening. For the first time, accurate statistics have shown us something of the percentages of the young men in a cross-section of society who suffered from syphilis or gonorrhea. It has been more or less a matter of general information since the outbreak of the great war that more men in the armies of our Allies have been in the hospitals, and therefore unable to fight, as a result of these diseases than there were in the hospitals as a result of the bullets of the enemy.

Luckily for the American people, when our country entered the war those in authority at Washington had had opportunity to observe and learn conditions at the front. They very speedily made up their minds that such conditions were intolerable and that the government of the United States must by every means in its power prevent the incapacitating of so vast a number of its soldiers and sailors for their military duties.

The Selective Draft Act carried with it authority under which the President of the United States and the Secretaries of War and Navy could undertake to control vice and disease not only in the camps but in the regions adjacent to the camps and could prohibit in these extra-cantonment zones the sale of alcohol. The close relationship of alcohol to lack of self-control and to prostitution is axiomatic.

The story of the organization of communities to take care of the leisure hours of the soldiers in their midst is told elsewhere. It soon became apparent that not only must healthful recreation be provided in and out of camp for the soldiers' and sailors' hours of leisure, but also there must be constructive educational work done among them. For this reason, the Army and Navy Section of the Social Hygiene Division, in charge of Lieutenant Clarke, was created. Lieutenant Clarke's story of the activities of his section will be an important part of the history of this war when it comes to be written. But more remained to be done.

It was evident, if the soldier in our great cantonments found temptation in the civilian communities in which he spent his leave, a certain percentage would inevitably yield to temptation. It was necessary to have clean communities. Moreover, the selective draft is a continuous process. The men are coming from the civilian communities and the effect on the medical records of the camps of

each influx of civilians was astonishing. The increase in the venereal rate was overwhelming proof that the dangers of disease in the civilian community were far in excess of what had heretofore been recognized. Education was obviously necessary before the men entered the army.

Yet another phase of the matter presented itself. The success of the war is quite as dependent upon production as upon our fighting men. The army gets nowhere if it is not adequately provided with guns, munitions, clothing, food. Our armies would not now be making the show which they are in France had we not been able to ship all the materials necessary for constructing the great railroad lines which are crossing France at different points. It is just as vital to success that our industrial army be fit as that our army in the field should be ready to fight. A diseased man is an inefficient man, anywhere you put him. We must bring to our industrial armies some knowledge of the menace of disease;—hence the creation of a section on educational work for civilian men.

Both the sections on army and navy work and on work for civilian men had been in existence for some months before the fact dawned that this was a problem for both men and women. There can be no sexual irregularities of any sort which do not ordinarily involve both men and women. It is thinkable that if every woman in the country, old and young, could be brought to see the menace to society which is involved in these anti-social relationships, if she should refuse absolutely to yield to temptation, the problem would be solved. Unfortunately it is not as simple as that. Women, however, are unquestionably able to create at least half of public opinion. Not only this, in many states at the present time they have an active voice in the selection of the men who make the local ordinances or state laws or in the choice of those who are to enforce them. Where they have this power they are much more likely to be listened to with respect.

It is, however, of the utmost importance that public opinion and community action should be based on accurate knowledge. If the women of the country are to render a real assistance to the government in this important direction, they must know, first, exactly what the situation is; the menace of venereal disease; how it is to be combated most effectively; of the standards of conduct the young women of the country should recognize, particularly in their

dealings with the thousands of soldiers in their midst in these times of stress and temptation; that mothers, as never before, should realize their responsibility in directing their daughters; that before community action of any kind is taken, the women should acquaint themselves in their respective communities with the ordinances upon the statute books for the control of vice and the stamping out of disease; that they should find out to what extent these laws are being enforced. They should know what provisions are made for the care of those who are diseased and the protection of the public from the spread of infection. They should know the kind of provision that is made, particularly for the women who are convicted of sex offenses. They should know whether for the same offense there is provision for the men who are partners with the women in conduct not only in violation of our legal standards, but of our moral law as well.

Women must recognize their responsibility for existing conditions and that a very great part of this responsibility is the promotion of education in these matters. Knowing all this, a section on women's work was created. It is endeavoring, in the first place, to work with all the great organized groups of women in the United States in spreading accurate information to their members. The Social Morality Committee of the War Work Council of the National Board of the Young Women's Christian Association, immediately on the creation of our section, put at the disposal of the government all its resources. The Social Morality Committee has for the last half dozen years carried on very quietly and unassumingly an educational work in social hygiene, largely in normal schools and other institutions which trained women to be teachers. On our entrance into the war, realizing the importance of accurate knowledge among women, they had of their own account greatly increased their work. On account of their experience, the Lecture Bureau of the Social Morality Committee was made the official lecture bureau of the Commission on Training Camp Activities.

An Advisory Committee has been formed, consisting of women who are affiliated with large national bodies of women, in order that by their advice and practical coöperation they may assist in extending our program. It consists of:

First, the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense, whose Washington representative, Miss Hannah J. Patterson, is actively coöperating through its state organizations.

Second, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, through the coöperation of the chairman of its Public Health Division, Mrs. Elmer Blair.

Third, the War Work Council of the National Board of the Young Women's Christian Association, through the chairman of its Social Morality Committee, Dr. Anna L. Brown.

Fourth, the Association of Collegiate Alumnae, through its secretary, Mrs. Gertrude S. Martin.

Fifth, the National Council of Jewish Women, through Mrs. Alexander Kohut.

Sixth, the National Women's Trade Union League, through Mrs. Raymond Robins.

Two representatives of the Catholic War Work Council and the National Education Association are still to be appointed.

The section on Women's Work is carrying on its activities through lectures, the distribution of literature, magazine and newspaper publicity, the publication of a weekly bulletin, exhibits and a moving picture film. The lecture work is growing by leaps and bounds. Already we have been obliged to open a branch office in Boston and one in Chicago, in addition to the offices in Washington and New York. The lectures are given before all kinds of groups of women—club women, mothers' meetings, church organizations, girls in industrial plants and manufacturing establishments; in schools from the seventh and eighth grades up through the colleges; at all kinds of meetings of state and national women's organizations; to girls' clubs—in short, wherever women are gathered together.

These lectures are given for the most part by women physicians, selected with special reference to their knowledge of these matters and their ability to present them to audiences of various kinds. For example, one physician will be specially successful in presenting the subject to a group of mothers; another is at her best with an audience of college girls; while still another is especially able to get hold of the girl who earns her own living. Some of our speakers are devoting their entire time to the work; others, perhaps engaged in private practice, can give a week at a time, or possibly only a few lectures in their immediate locality. To save time, energy and money, we are learning that it is wise, so far as possible, to concentrate on intensive campaigns in special localities. We are therefore sending an organizer into the community in which an intensive piece of work is to be done, who meets the representative women of all groups, so far as possible, and forms a temporary local committee. This committee assists in the planning of the schedule, secures permission for speakers in industrial plants and sees to the

advertising and other local publicity. When the schedules are all arranged, one or more—sometimes as many as five or six—of our speakers go to the locality and spend a week or longer giving talks to the previously arranged groups.

Our great appeal is the patriotic service which is to be rendered by the women of the country. Following each lecture are conferences in which women or girls present are able to ask privately of the physicians questions which may have arisen. It is largely on account of the character of the questions which we find are asked that it is desirable to have trained physicians as speakers. The lecture work is followed up or, in some cases, preceded by the distribution of specially prepared literature.

For example, we have placards which we are asking to have posted in lavatories, rest-rooms, restaurants or wherever women congregate. The two which are in use at the time of writing are as follows:

THE WAR DEPARTMENT COMMISSION ON TRAINING CAMP ACTIVITIES ASKS THE
AID OF WOMEN IN CONTROLLING VENEREAL DISEASES FOR THE
SAKE OF OUR ARMY AND OF OUR COUNTRY

WOMEN HAVE NOT KNOWN

the truth about venereal diseases and how they occur.

We must know now in order to do our share
in saving our country from a grave menace.

We have gained control over tuberculosis.

We must gain control over venereal diseases.

SOME FACTS ABOUT
VENEREAL DISEASES

GONORRHEA

The most prevalent of all dangerous infectious diseases. It is a germ disease that causes:

Chronic ill health

Many childless marriages

Serious operations on the vital organs of women

Diseases of the joints, bladder and generative organs

Much blindness among babies.

SYPHILIS

More prevalent than all other dangerous infectious diseases combined. It is a germ disease that causes:

Insanity

Paresis or softening of brain

Locomotor ataxia

Paralysis in early life

Imbecile and crippled children

Diseases of heart, blood vessels, etc.

Both these diseases can be cured, but they are often *not* cured, even after all signs disappear under treatment. A real cure is a matter of months and sometimes years. One act of sexual intercourse may produce the infection.

INFECTION

Infection results chiefly from promiscuous sexual intercourse.

Also it may occur accidentally: a drinking-cup which has been used by an infected person may infect the mouth of the next user.

PREVENTION

The only *sure* prevention is to avoid promiscuous sexual relations. Sexual intercourse is *not* necessary to health.

If you know someone who is anxious over this matter, advise consulting the plant doctor. Don't go to doctors who advertise "sure cures."

A NATIONAL SERVICE

Remember These Facts—Tell Your Friends!

FOR FREE INFORMATION, write to
COMMISSION ON TRAINING CAMP ACTIVITIES
Social Hygiene Division
105 West 40th Street, New York.

WHEN THE BOYS COME HOME
WILL THEY BE DISAPPOINTED

in their towns?
in their friends?

THE ARMY TEACHES OUR SOLDIERS

- (1) That immorality is dangerous;
- (2) That immorality isn't necessary;
- (3) That immorality doesn't pay.

THE GOVERNMENT ASKS US

- (1) To raise our moral standards;
- (2) To repress prostitution;
- (3) To control venereal diseases.

It has been found that 90 per cent of the venereal disease cases in camps were infected before the men left civilian life. They were infected in their home *towns*. This is the result of ignorance; of indifference; of wrong traditions.

WILL YOU FACE THE FACTS?

Will you help to make your home town safer and cleaner for the boys when they come home?

If so, let us tell you how.

Free information may be had at

THE WAR DEPARTMENT
COMMISSION ON TRAINING CAMP ACTIVITIES
Social Hygiene Division
105 West 40th Street, New York City.

Two special talks to women have been prepared, one entitled "The Nation's Call to Young Women," for girls from eighteen up; and another called "Your Country Needs You," for girls in the teen age. These can be placed directly in the hands of the girls where it seems desirable. Other literature is prepared for older women. "Women's Share in a National Service," "What is the Government Doing for Your Boy—A Suggested Program for Women's Clubs," "The Soldier, Uncle Sam and You," "Do Your Bit to Keep Him Fit," in a form revised to include women's share in the community program, are some of the titles which are used.

Up to the time of writing, our literature has been addressed only to the English-speaking community, but plans have been completed whereby it is to be translated into Yiddish for the great groups of girls in the garment trades in our large cities, and next into Italian and Polish, or other languages of special groups. Necessarily our subject matter must be so modified as to be presented in the form most likely to win the attention of the special group.

Our exhibition material as yet consists chiefly of wall placards and stereomotorgraph slides. In certain localities where there is some public sentiment among both men and women against presenting the bald facts of social hygiene we are holding what we call public health weeks where social hygiene is presented as one part of a general public health program, including in our exhibit material illustrating the fight against tuberculosis, for example, and showing the wonderful work being done under the Children's Bureau for what is known as Children's Year. Here different organizations representing all phases of public health activity are cooperating in furnishing exhibit material and in providing speakers. While this method is somewhat more difficult of operation, on account of the number of cooperating agencies required, it is, we think, a useful one.

Through the General Federation of Women's Clubs, women of the country who are members of the affiliated organizations are being asked to devote at least two days of their program during the coming year—whether the club has been formed to discuss art, music or the drama—to a consideration of the question of social hygiene. We feel that two days in these critical times is little enough to ask of them. We suggest that on one day they arrange for a representative of the Social Hygiene Division—either men's,

women's or army section, it is immaterial which—to present the whole plan of the government's activities, including the work of the Surgeons General of the Army and Navy, the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service, of the State Public Health Service and the work of the Social Hygiene Division of the Commission on Training Camp Activities—in short, all that is being done by the government along these lines. On the second day we ask that the members of the club, after having given time to the study of the question, discuss through papers or round table the conditions in the community affected by the war: (a) the present equipment to meet them; (b) is it adequate and effective? A list of alternative topics for discussion is suggested, such as:

1. What a mother should tell her daughter.
2. Protective officers and their functions.
3. Supervision of public parks and playgrounds.
4. Movies in our town.
5. Qualities of leadership for girls' clubs.
6. When and where is the Curfew Law effective?
7. Does segregation solve the problem of prostitution?
8. School teachers' influence in establishing social standards in a community.

Bibliographies are furnished which can be the basis for private reading and study of the individual members.

Organizations such as the Daughters of Rebekah, Daughters of America, Companions of the Forest of America, Women's Relief Corps, Degree of Pocahontas, Pythian Sisters and the Women's Benefit Association of the Maccabees are being asked to coöperate by sending letters to all members who have sons in the service asking that the mothers in writing to their sons stimulate the innate chivalry in their boys by calling upon them to respect the womanhood in the countries to which they are going as they would wish their sisters to be respected were the enemy upon our own soil.

Our weekly bulletin began as a multigraphed letter to our staff of lecturers and others directly connected with us, keeping them informed of activities in the field in our own and other affiliated divisions, culling out the gist of the latest in periodical literature concerning our cause or such other material as we might wish to get before them. In less than three months the demand has become such that by the time this article appears in print we expect to have a printed bulletin going out each week and carrying authentic in-

formation to those cooperating with us. Our division has on its staff several women who are devoting themselves to the work of preparing and presenting to the magazines and press of our country authentic information or articles setting forth our work.

Before this goes to print we shall have ready a moving picture film prepared for the purpose of doing for the girls of the community what the film, "Fit to Fight," is so successfully doing for the young men in the army and navy. It is called "The End of the Road" and, as its title implies, is an effort to make girls see that every action in life is followed by its consequence; that in the spiritual as well as in the physical world, the law of cause and effect prevails. It attempts to emphasize the responsibilities of motherhood in the preparation of the daughters for life and brings home the sorrow and suffering which follow self-indulgence and thoughtlessness. It is to be used in connection with our lectures and with the film, "How Life Begins," which can be shown as a preliminary.

Our whole campaign can be summed up in the words of one of our little leaflets:

Women have believed

That: Sexual indulgence was a necessity for young men.

With women it was different.

They should know little of sex matters—and never discuss them.

A young man's "wild oats" should be forgiven; a woman's, never.

Women know today

That: There is no such necessity for either men or women.

There is danger to themselves and to their children in irregular sexual relations because of the possibility—even probability—of infection with a venereal disease.

They are responsible for their acts not only to themselves, but to their community, their country and their future; and that "desire" is a fatal excuse.

Social and industrial inefficiency result from the selfish indulgence of an appetite. We scorn the glutton; we are beginning to exercise social control over the alcoholic; we must now control venereal diseases.

Syphilis and gonorrhea are highly infectious, but controllable by proper measures; they are being controlled in military centers and must be controlled in civilian life.

Women's duty is

- To: Refuse to be ignorant; face the facts and the consequences.
Believe that men and boys with whom they associate *can* and *will* lead clean lives.
Insist that men be morally and physically clean if they are to be accepted as associates; to cease from indifference and thereby keep other women from suffering.
Help their communities to close evil resorts and to provide wholesome recreation.
Do this personally, when possible; to show their convictions in letters and stimulate other women to do likewise; to organize to help stamp out disease and delinquency and so help the government make its men, women and its communities clean.
Study the causes of disease and delinquency in order to aid intelligently in preventing them.

We *can* stamp out syphilis and gonorrhoea as the plague and yellow fever and smallpox have been stamped out. We *can* destroy the old institution of prostitution. We *can* do this when men and women have faith to believe that it can be done and when they unite in teaching the boys and girls of this country while they are little the laws of health, the sacredness of sex relationship and the possibility of self-control.

We call for the coöperation of all the women of the country. The resources of our section are at their disposal and we are at all times glad to be called upon to work out plans of coöperation where-by the government's program can be brought before ever-increasing numbers of patriotic women.