



COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE AND ADVISORY COMMISSION HOLDING A HEARING ON CONTROL OF VENEREAL DISEASE AND REGULATION OF ALCOHOL FOR PROTECTION OF THE ARMY AND NAVY.

Left to Right, Standing: Dr. Hollis Godfrey,* Dr. Irving Fisher, Dr. Milton J. Rosenau, Howard E. Coffin,* Bernard M. Baruch,* Dr. Franklin Martin, Dr. William A. Evans, Daniel Willard,* Dr. William H. Welch, Julius Rosenwald,* Samuel Gompers,* Surgeon Gen. William C. Braisted, U. S. N.; Surgeon Gen. William C. Gorgas, U. S. A.; Surgeon Gen. Rupert Blue, U. S. P. H. S.; Dr. Victor C. Vaughan, Dr. F. F. Simpson, Abraham Flexner, Colonel Jefferson R. Kean, Dr. Frederic A. Besley, Dr. Alonzo E. Taylor, Raymond B. Fosdick, Dr. Haven Emerson, Dr. William F. Snow, Dr. Theodore Janeway.

Left to Right, Sitting: Secretary of Agriculture David F. Houston, Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, Secretary of Commerce William C. Redfield, Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson; W. S. Gifford, Director of the Council of National Defense.

Secretary Daniels was the presiding officer in the absence of Secretary of War Baker. Asterisks indicate members of the Advisory Commission. Others present were the Executive Committee of the General Medical Board and persons invited to give testimony.

Barring Sex Disease from the American Army

For the First Time in History a Nation Takes Advance Steps to Avert an Evil Worse Than Battle Casualties

The United States Government is undertaking to make our army camps not only safer than camps in other wars, but actually safer for the men in them than the surroundings of their ordinary lives when they were civilians. This is being accomplished by the measures taken against the spread of venereal diseases, the first of their character ever initiated by a Government. Other Governments have sought and are seeking to check these diseases after their ravages have reached a point making preventive measures imperative; the United States Government and its helpers intend to make such a spread of disease absolutely impossible from the start.

THIS war is doing one good thing. It is making people speak out loud about a subject that before was either ignored or dealt with in whispers—the subject of the prevention of venereal disease. The problem of checking its spread among our soldiers is being taken up so openly and thoroughly that the effects of the work will be felt long after the war is over. So there is good in war, after all; a thing I never believed before.

The man who said that was William H. Zinsser, Chairman of the Sub-Committee for Civilian Co-operation in Combating Venereal Diseases of the Council of National Defense, which has an office at 105 West Fortieth Street, New York. And he emphasized his absolute belief in the truth of what he had just said by adding with equal vehemence:

"If we fail to speak out now and fight hard against such diseases among our troops, there will come a time, within a couple of years at most, when every newspaper in the country will have columns on the subject under the most glaring headlines, because venereal disease will have ravaged the United States as it has ravaged Europe since the beginning of the war; because the scourge will have got entirely beyond control, as it did in England and France and Germany; because we shall be 'up against it' as England and France and Germany are; because venereal disease will have undermined the health not only of our soldiers, but of our whole nation, as it has undermined the health of the belligerent nations of Europe.

"The United States is doing something that no other nation has done—going after the evil before its effects are felt. We should not brag too much about that, because we have been able to learn from the experience of the other na-

tions at war; nevertheless, the fact remains that we alone have taken steps to vanquish the evil before it has vanquished us.

"Germany, with all her vaunted efficiency, fell down utterly when it came to combating venereal disease. When her armies surged through Belgium they went at such a pace that there was no time for the introduction of efficacious sanitary measures in the wake of the advancing troops. As the Germans drove through Belgium most of the men of the invaded districts fell back before the advancing hordes, practically leaving only women behind. The industries of Belgium were paralyzed, the women were penniless, and their misery became so acute that some of them actually sold themselves to the invaders for half a loaf of bread. After a short time of such conditions you may imagine how disease fastened on Germans and Belgians alike.

"Conditions among the other belligerents became just as bad, or worse. One nation, during the first year and a half of war, lost the services of more men through venereal disease than through death or wounds in battle. One regiment which participated in a furious attack in Northern France was sent back of the lines to recuperate, and there joined another regiment which had been encamped behind the front for some time and had seen no actual fighting at all. Will you believe that the latter regiment, the one that had not been in action, had lost the services of more men through venereal disease during its stay behind the lines than the one back from the firing line had lost in the attack?

"Now Great Britain and France and Germany are alive to the terrors of this scourge. But much of the harm has already been done. Throughout France you will see placards in cities, towns, and villages appealing to soldiers to serve their country by keeping away from prostitutes. In England an association has been formed, including among its members some of the most prominent men and women, for the establishment of dispensaries in small towns and villages where venereal disease, since the outbreak of the war, has made such appalling ravages as to make drastic steps to combat it imperative. If you look at almost any English newspaper now, even the most conservative, which before the war blinked such subjects or thrust them into the background, you will see the names of these diseases blazoned forth in large type, and you can read discussions

of preventive measures, written with a frankness which, three years ago, would have been absolutely impossible.

"Well, let us be frank about it, too! Let us be frank before we are compelled to be. Let us be frank while frankness will prevent the evils by which our allies are scourged, instead of waiting until frankness may be merely a possible help in preventing these evils from spreading to the horrible limits which they have now reached in Europe."

Mr. Zinsser and his associates are not crying in the wilderness. He has progress of the most encouraging kind to report. Behind him and those associated with him stands, solidly and uncompromisingly, the United States Government. The Government is not winking at the evil. It is not trying half-heartedly to lessen it. The Government means to suppress it among the soldiers of the United States. How this work of suppression, partly Federal, partly due to the civilians working in co-operation with the Secretary of War, is being done, is explained by Mr. Zinsser, who has plunged into it with the utmost zeal, has every detail at his finger's tips and is convinced that the results will "make people's eyeballs stick out," when they grasp its significance to the national welfare.

"The campaign against the spread of venereal disease," said Mr. Zinsser, "may be divided into three parts: First, there is the work within the camps. Second, there is the work in the five-mile zones established by the Government around every camp. Third, there is the work beyond the five-mile limit, where the subcommittee for civilian co-operation in combating venereal diseases is especially centering its activities.

"When a drafted man reaches camp he is subjected to a careful physical examination. If he is found to be suffering from some form of venereal disease he is at once sent to a hospital destined especially to the care of such ailments, in which some of the best specialists in the country are giving their services. Thus, many men who in civil life have been going about concealing their troubles and spreading them are immediately placed under the best of medical care and started on the road to recovery. If they are suffering from the worst form of venereal disease they get an injection of Salvarsan, or '606,' which greatly lessens the chances of their spreading infection. The results of this prompt and effective combating of disease by specialists among men who before would have neglected

themselves entirely or probably have been thrown on the mercies of quacks will be felt long after peace has returned. What the presence of the thirty-two camp hospitals now in operation scattered throughout the country will mean in curbing the spread of venereal disease may be gathered when you bear in mind a fact realized by scarcely anybody—that there were in the entire United States before the creation of these camp hospitals only a few hospitals which undertook the treatment of such diseases.

"For the purpose of preventing the contraction of venereal disease during the course of training, a system of prophylaxis has been established. Every man who, while on leave or furlough, exposes himself to infection is expected to report to the prophylaxis station for treatment within six hours. If he fails to report and later develops a disease, he is court-martialed and punished by loss of his pay during the period of his confinement in the hospital and in other ways. Furthermore, the men in the training camps are being educated in the dangers of venereal infection by lectures, moving pictures, and literature designed especially for the purpose.

"So much for the camps themselves. Now come the five-mile zones around them. These are directly in charge of the Federal Government, and prostitutes and alcohol are rigorously excluded from them. The Government maintains a corps of sanitary police, who patrol these zones constantly and eject all who are not wanted there. In addition to these preventive measures the Secretary of War established a Commission on Training Camp Activities under the able leadership of Raymond B. Fosdick. This commission enlisted the services of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, which has representatives in many communities and is receiving co-operation from the largest churches, clubs, and other local groups in the work of providing recreation facilities for the men in the training camps. Also, such agencies as the Travelers' Aid Society and the Young Men's Christian Association have been enlisted in the cause. There are football, baseball, and hockey games, according to seasons; libraries, Y. M. C. A. stations, moving pictures, &c. In addition to these, there will be the 'hostess houses,' started by prominent women to provide social entertainment and a meeting place for the soldiers and their wives, sisters, and others.

"Now comes the third part of the pre-

ventive work—our special province—which will be clearer with the foregoing description of the work which is being done in the camps and in the policed zone.

"In the thirty-two districts within a radius of 40 to 50 miles around the camps lie about 800 towns. What we propose to do is to have every one of these communities co-operate with us in our work of protecting American soldiers from venereal disease. We are writing to the most prominent residents of these 800 towns. In all, we shall send out 18,000 letters—we have already sent out several thousand. We are writing to bankers, lawyers, physicians, clergymen, editors of newspapers, prominent business men—to the representative citizens in every one of these 800 communities. We tell them what we propose to do and ask their aid. The way we put it up to each one, in a nutshell, is this: 'Do you wish to help make the camp near your town as safe for the boys encamped there as you would have a camp sheltering a boy of your own?' We make it clear to the people to whom we write that a community which does not help to protect the soldiers in its midst is sticking a knife into the backs of those soldiers—no, worse than that!—for a knife cut is easy to handle, whereas the stabs from communities indifferent or hostile to our work are doubly dangerous and criminal.

"We are not going after the authorities in the towns in the zones where we are working. That would be the wrong way. If the best element in the community gets interested in our work—if the local newspapers print articles about what we are doing—we believe that co-operation will come from the authorities as a matter of course.

"As matters stand now, there may be graft among officials in some communities—some of them may even be getting a 'rake-off' from the proceeds of the disorderly houses in their districts, and may be glad to have as many soldiers as possible frequent those houses—so efforts at cleaning up the communities by appeal to the authorities might strike indifference and worse. But if the work starts at the end where we are starting it, there will be quite another story to tell.

"Answers are pouring in from leading citizens in towns all over the country, to whom we have written asking for aid." Mr. Zinsser plunged his hand into a whole sheaf of correspondence on the desk before him and selected some dozen letters at random.

"I am with you!" said one writer. "Tell me exactly what I can do to be most helpful to you and I'll do it."

"That's the right sort; we'll get results from him," commented Mr. Zinsser. He turned to another:

"Your letter received," it ran. "I have spoken to our Sheriff. He says there are no disorderly houses in our community, and that he will let me know if anything of interest in the matter develops."

"Wrong sort, that one," remarked Mr. Zinsser. "We'll have to jack that fellow up—that isn't the kind of help we want." But then he turned to another letter, and another, and still another, the writers of which all expressed enthusiastic approval

and begged to have their services applied where they would do the most good."

"We are tremendously encouraged by these responses to our appeals," he went on, replacing the letters in the pile from which he had drawn them. "All over the country the desire to clean up red-light districts and run prostitutes out of town as a measure of protection for our soldiers is daily gaining headway.

"Why, at one of the camps in a Southern State the clean-up movement has progressed with such rapidity and thoroughness that soldiers who want to go to a disorderly house have to go seventy-five miles from the camp. Think of it—seventy-five miles! A few months ago, when the first camps were started, immoral women solicited the men at the very gates of the camps.

"Instance after instance has come to our notice of how the country is cleaning up. A young college man was in here yesterday who had been detailed to wander through the streets of a number of Southern towns notorious for the prevalence of vice in their midst and learn about conditions by looking dapper and getting women to solicit him. He told me that in the course of a seven weeks' tour of towns where, a short time ago, it would have been nothing out of the ordinary if he had been solicited twenty times, he was solicited exactly once.

"As a result of the investigation and clean-up activities of the Commission on Training Camp Activities, backed by the full authority of the War Department, New Orleans, one of the greatest centres of commercialized vice in the country, is cleaning up. By Nov. 1 the red-light district there will be suppressed. In one large city on the lower Mississippi a famous row of disorderly houses—regular palaces, as big as seashore hotels—have been closed up, so that soldiers going there will find shutters down and doors bolted instead of prostitutes beckoning to them from brilliantly lighted windows. The same sort of moral wave is flooding other communities. As concrete examples of what has been accomplished, the red-light districts have been closed in many of the cities within easy reach of military camps, among which may be mentioned Fort Worth, Spartanburg, Louisville, Petersburg, and El Paso.

"A few years ago, if we talked about starting a campaign like the one we are fighting now, people would have called us long-haired visionary reformers. Now we meet co-operation on every side from sensible people, both in the Government and outside it. As for the United States

Government, there is no question of where it stands. It has a definite and comprehensive policy which has to be carried out to the letter by the commanders of all military camps.

"We are out to suppress the conditions that bring about venereal disease—get that clearly in your mind—not to segregate prostitution or introduce any other half-way measures. Segregation makes things worse. It means taking a lot of prostitutes, herding them together in one part of town, and then going out and saying to men:

"'You can't find a disorderly house, Sir, on Main Street, but there are plenty on Nineteenth Avenue or K Street.'

"That's what segregation amounts to. As for the contention that segregation combined with medical supervision is an improvement, that, too, is false; there is no way of securing proper medical supervision. The whole thing simply amounts to directing men to a lot of women who

are bound to spread infection right and left, despite all efforts.

"There is another objection raised by opponents of our work. 'If you run a lot of women out of one town,' they say, 'they will simply go somewhere else.' To that we reply: 'Your job is not necessarily to run the women out of town. In the first place, if they leave your town while still diseased they will continue to spread infection elsewhere. Therefore, it is your duty to see that each one of these women is compelled to undergo medical treatment until they are pronounced clean. It may then be possible to open their eyes to the opportunities which now exist for profitable employment in legitimate work. Never before were women's services in such demand in the industries of the country as they are now. Women driven into prostitution because their earnings before the war were too meagre will suddenly realize that there is now an unequalled chance of earning a livelihood by decent means. So our efforts are not only protecting our soldiers and our communities, but helping fallen women toward a better life.'

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Colonel F. F. Russell, in Charge, Division of Infectious Diseases.



"There is no need to look as far as Europe to realize what terrible results follow upon the toleration of prostitutes near soldiers' camps. All you have to do is to remember conditions as they were on the Mexican border when our troops were encamped there last year. There were regulations, of course, to meet the problem, but the trouble was that commanders used their discretion as to enforcing them, sometimes winking at the evils going on before their eyes, sometimes using half-way measures. The up-

shot was that venereal diseases spread at an appalling rate.

"One well-known commander of a large division, however, realized that suppression of prostitution and alcohol was the only proper means of combating venereal disease. He stationed armed sentries at the door of every disorderly house in the town where his men were quartered. Their duty was to take the name of every soldier caught leaving these places, and every man thus listed suffered severe punishment. In time the visits of soldiers to the houses of ill-repute under surveillance ceased altogether.

"The General's drastic order had another interesting effect—the sentries took down not only the names of soldiers but those of residents of the town as well, so that the latter grew extremely shy of having their names appear on the lists of visitors to disorderly houses, and gave up the habit of going there.

"It is owing largely to the success of this policy of suppression on the Texan border that the Government has decided to do likewise, now that we are faced with the same problem in an infinitely more serious form. Major Gen. Funston before he died reported that this policy of suppression, as practiced later universally on the border, had been a success.

"It is in Texas, by the way, because of what its citizens learned, that we are meeting with some of the most active co-operation in our work. Four of the leading citizens of one large city—the President of a bank, the head of a big law firm, the publisher of an important paper, and the proprietor of a leading department store—organized a committee at our suggestion, which will meet to talk over the best ways of helping us in our work.

"Here in New York, also, we are finding effective co-operation. This city sometimes harbors in one night as many as 25,000 soldiers. The New York health authorities have proved themselves pioneers by establishing dispensaries for the treatment of venereal diseases, which are doing effective work in checking their spread.

"It is evident that the response we have had all over the country is due in large part to the work which has been done in past years by the American Social Hygiene Association and similar organizations. The educational efforts they have expended, sometimes in the face of the greatest discouragements and even ridicule, are now bearing invaluable fruits.

"Ours is a tremendous work, but it must be done. People must no longer shut their eyes to the facts. People must no longer talk in whispers about one of the gravest dangers threatening us. The time has come to speak out loud. That is what we are doing. That is what more and more others are doing. We ask people all over the country to do it. In that way they will preserve the efficiency of countless soldiers and the health of the families of the communities to which they will eventually return.

"'Do your bit to keep him fit' is the slogan which we have adopted in our fight for the American soldier. We want people everywhere in the United States to help us."