

Treating Spots to Cure Measles

I noted with some concern the report in The Globe and Mail referring to the deliberations of the Legislature's select committee on reform institutions dealing with the problem of illegitimacy.

The Salvation Army is a movement concerned with the moral and spiritual well-being of the community, and also is a voluntary agency with extensive services for unmarried mothers in the Province of Ontario, as well as right across Canada. In Ontario, the Salvation Army has maternity homes for unmarried mothers at Ottawa, Kingston, Hamilton, London, Windsor and Toronto. Our Toronto home, Vida Lodge, accommodates 42 girls and 20 babies. Up to date since January 1, 1953, we have cared for 122 girls and 88 babies in this home. Each mother is helped in terms of all her needs, physical, mental and spiritual. Many other girls not admitted received help and counselling in other ways.

The members of the select committee have discussed making adultery a crime. Should adultery be regarded as a crime? Is it not rather to be considered as the outcome of moral illness caused by the sum total of experiences in the life of the individuals concerned. There are the social and environmental factors like those of poor housing, broken homes, drink and lack of wholesome recreational facilities; but also there are the spiritual and moral weaknesses within the individual himself. To use the punitive approach to the problem of illegitimacy is to ignore the cause of the problem—it is like treating the spots to cure the measles.

While I will not undertake to write you upon the ethical and spiritual aspects of sterilization which is recommended by Rev. A. W. Downer as a solution to the financial burden of this problem, I would stress that sterilization does not change the behavior pattern of the individual but rather makes him a wide-open victim for further and more promiscuous sexual behavior.

Just as I stress a broad and understanding approach to the problem of adultery as far as the woman is concerned, I also point out that a punitive approach to the man concerned is equally ineffective and undesirable. He, too, is a person with feelings. If the woman

is maladjusted spiritually and socially, so is the man! Where services to both the man and woman are adequate it is possible to work effectively with both parties to the problem, and the wide and extensive experience of the Salvation Army with this particular social problem causes me to stress this approach as economically sound as well as effective in the rehabilitation of the persons in trouble of this kind.

Therefore I suggest that the increasing costs to municipalities as a result of this problem might cause those in administrative authority to consider whether expenditures are not more wisely placed in the area of prevention rather than cure, and some of the social ills contributing to our problem might be remedied.

I note there are eight unmarried mothers now in the Mercer Reformatory. May I point out that without doubt these are girls unable to respond to the existing services in the community because they are emotionally disturbed. More truly they are committed to the penal institution for reasons other than their illegitimate pregnancy. That is incidental to a total problem of delinquent behavior.

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