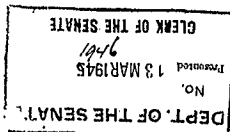


1946



THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

NINTH REPORT .

of the

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON BROADCASTING

relating to

THE QUESTION OF BROADCAST TALKS ON VENEREAL DISEASE AND OTHER SEX MATTERS

Canberra. 11th. March. 1946

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE

ON BROADCASTING.

(Seventeenth Parliament)

Chairman Senator Stanley Kerin Amour (a)
Vice Chairman The Honourable Josiah Francis, M.P. (b)

Senate.

Senator the Honourable
Herbert Hays (c)
Senator Richard Harry
Nash (c)

House of Representatives.

George James Bowden, M.C., M.P. (b)
William George Bryson, M.P. (b)
Cyril Chambers, M.P. (b)
The Honourable James Allan Guy, M.P. (b)
David Oliver Watkins, M.P. (b)

(a) Appointed 30th September, 1943. (b) Appointed 14th October, 1943

(c) Appointed 14th September, 1944.

NOTE:- The late Senator Richard Darcey ceased to be a member of the Committee when his term as Senator expired on 30th June, 1944. Senator the Honourable Allan Nicholl MacDonald resigned from the Committee on 20th July, 1944. They were succeeded by Senators Hays and Nash.

THE QUESTION OF BROADCAST TALKS ON VENEREAL DISEASE AND OTHER
SEX MATTERS

In accordance with section 85 of the Australian Broadcasting Act, we submit this report to Parliament on the question, referred to us by the Postmaster-General, "whether talks relating to venereal disease should be included in programmes transmitted from national and/or commercial broadcasting stations", and on the further question, also referred to us by the Minister (as the result of subsequent representations from certain organisations) "whether talks relating to sex matters should be broadcast from national and commercial stations".

2. We have carefully considered voluminous evidence, oral and written, from a large number of sources, including religious, health, medical, educational and broadcasting authorities, as well as many representative women's and other organisations.

3. There is general recognition that questions of high policy are involved. This has been especially noticeable among witnesses whose submissions reveal more than ordinary insight and perspective and testify to painstaking research and profound study of world-wide experience before the formulation of their views. As one of these has said, "the stakes at issue are of tremendous importance, and the decisions arrived at may have serious and far-reaching consequences on millions of our people".

4. In association with the influence of that appraisal of what is involved, we have been mindful of the enormous power of radio for benefit or harm to the community - a power aptly described by one of the Governors of the British Broadcasting Corporation when he declared that "broadcasting is the most potent instrument of publicity that has ever been devised; when an idea or an opinion is broadcast it at once loses its true proportion and becomes magnified a thousand times beyond life size".

5. With these considerations as the background of deliberation, we have been impressed, at the outset, with the significance of competent medical opinion, affirming that in almost all cases venereal disease is contracted through sexual intercourse with an infected person and that those in imminent danger of infection are people who indulge in promiscuous sexual intercourse. Cause and effect having thus been authoritatively diagnosed, we feel that it is appropriate, on the principle of first things first, to devote the first portion of this report to the question whether there should be broadcast talks on sex matters.

Sex Matters

6. According to the evidence, there are three groups of thought behind what has been described as a move to strip the treatment of sex of its traditional reticence and to make it a subject of frank and formal lectures.

7. The first group envisages public discussion of sex matters as a means of inciting sexual promiscuity and of advocating a general attitude to sex which is in conflict with the Christian moral code.

8. The second group suggests that if young people were thoroughly instructed in the anatomy and physiology of sex, that is all that would be necessary to ensure that they would not indulge in immoral conduct.

9. The third group maintains that knowledge alone is not a safeguard against improper behaviour, that moral training is essential, that mass instruction would do more harm than good, that the imparting of knowledge and guidance is a parental responsibility and should be personal and individual, and that broadcasting is not a suitable method to assist parents to discharge their obligation.

10. The First Group. Speaking of the first group, a distinguished witness, who takes a leading part in mothercraft work, has tendered evidence to the following effect, which is typical of the views expressed by many others :-

The attitude of mind advocated by these people is not in the best interests of the community. It makes for a degenerate outlook and the breakup of the family, which is at the very basis of our birth rate and national life. There is complete lack of spiritual or moral uplift in the teachings of such people. They are very active, and considerable literature in support of their demoralising influence is circulated indiscriminately. Any scheme to give broadcast talks on sex relations would attract their keen interest; they would be anxious to get their ideas put over the air; they would be the people who would want to talk about the subject, making excuses for themselves for actions which are not in the best interest of our social and moral codes.

11. Another well-informed witness, deploring the morally subversive teaching of the same group of people, refers to the danger of adolescents being influenced by "a sex lecturer who admits to no moral objection to abortion or masturbation, who has publicly demonstrated by diagram his own method of contraception to an audience containing adolescents, who has given instruction in methods of sexually exciting the opposite sex and who has suggested companionate 'marriage' as a prelude to formal marriage".

12. Needless to say, we have refrained from hearing evidence from any spokesman of this group, in order to avoid the scandal inherent in the publicity which might have been given to its already known views, as disclosed in documentary records. We share the indignation of the witnesses who have been public-spirited enough to expose and denounce its activities. With patriotic and long-range vision, these witnesses foresee a calamitous repetition of history in the fate which would eventually overtake Australia if the degenerate tenets of these advocates of public instruction on sex matters were accepted and practised in this country.

13. There is overwhelming evidence that on social and national grounds alone, it would be unthinkable to provide facilities for the broadcasting of advice from this group. Above all other considerations, however - as pointed out, for example, in the Gibson Committee's report on broadcasting - Australia is a Christian country. Consequently, there would be corruption of its ideals as such if encouragement were given to the dissemination of teaching designed to undermine Christian standards of sex morality - an activity all the more reprehensible when it is pursued for commercial gain.

14. Lest this attitude might be misconstrued as a negation of democratic freedom, it is necessary to emphasise the universally accepted fact that there is a vast difference between liberty and licence. Just as there are laws restricting liberty in material affairs in the interests of the common good, there are laws restricting liberty in moral affairs. Under the Post and Telegraph Act, for example, it is a punishable offence to mail indecent matter; and power is conferred to withhold postal facilities from a person who engages in an indecent or immoral undertaking for gain; in the Customs law there is power to prohibit the importation of certain literature into this country; and under the Broadcasting Act itself similar restrictions are imposed.

15. It has been subtly suggested in certain quarters that opportunities should be provided for public discussion to advocate abolition of these laws. But it is impossible to imagine that any responsible authority would agree to public facilities being made available for the purpose of advocating abolition of, say, the pure food laws or the laws relating to illicit drug traffic, in order to satisfy a fallacious theory of unrestrained liberty in the interests of people who,

for commercial gain, would thereby seek to undermine the physical health of the community. Much less should a public utility such as broadcasting be allowed to be used for advocacy of immoral practices in the interests of people who, for commercial gain or selfish, irresponsible pleasure, would thereby seek to undermine the moral health of the community. That sort of liberty, as witnesses have pointed out, would tend to destroy the basic unit of civilised society - the family - on which the welfare of the individual and the future of Australia so much depend. In the words of His Majesty, the late King George V, "the greatness of the nation rests on the sweet, clean life of the family".

16. Unfortunately, there is evidence of an inclination in some quarters to contend that broadcasts of subversive moral teaching would be counteracted by equal opportunities to refute it. But the sophistry of that plea will be evident from the reflection that it would be just as logical to argue that a person should be allowed to broadcast incitement to murder so long as provision was made for some one else to broadcast denunciation of it.

17. In a published statement jointly signed by religious leaders of different denominations in 1943, concerning the necessity to rebuild society on Christian lines, the advice was tendered that "family life should be protected against disintegrating influences such as prevalence of divorce, traffic in contraceptives and all subversive teaching directed to any of these ends". That statement was publicly commended by Commonwealth political leaders and the daily press, whose commentary affirmed the paramount importance of spiritual factors. As one of the political leaders observed: "The joint statement is a timely warning that the world must be reconstructed on a spiritual and religious basis".

19. In short, from the evidence before us, the conclusion is inescapable that to allow the group in question to broadcast their degenerate philosophy of life would be tantamount to encouraging defiance of restraint inherent in the Divine Command: "Thou shalt not commit adultery", and no God-fearing community could sanction such a state of affairs without, at least, having cause to fear what the future would have in store. Hence, we have no hesitation in accepting the view that a sufficient answer to the question whether broadcasting facilities should be provided for the teachings of this group is to direct attention to the Creator's command and all that it implies. It is one thing for individuals of their own volition knowingly to disobey that command and suffer the consequences to themselves; it would be quite another thing for responsible authority to place public facilities at their disposal, so that they might invade the very homes of the people in their campaign to induce others to follow their evil example in seduction and exploitation of abuse of the productive function.

20. The obligation of the State to intervene in the protection of the public from such evil influences is well expressed by an eminent witness in these words :-

"The State has the right and the duty to safeguard the moral well-being of the community. No single person or interest or small groups of interests can be allowed to do as they like if, in so doing, the common good suffers. There is a difference between liberty and licence. We, as a community, have certain ethical principles which not only develop the best in the individual, but which give stability to the community as a whole. But we would be blind Utopians if we were to shut our eyes to the fact that, throughout history, man has a tendency to fall away from these standards, which very often demand some sacrifice on his part. And, unfortunately, there has always been a small element which, for reasons anti-social or monetary, has been ready to provide man with easy and attractive means of disregarding these principles. Since that is the case, the State,

very rightly, has to assume the responsibility of preventing such lapses. Such power it already has in the cases of literature and the cinema, for instance, and it is only logical that it would have similar powers in a medium that is as powerful if not more powerful than the written word. In this regard, too, it must always be remembered that the radio is, so to speak, another member of the family. Radio is entertainment in the home, and families have the right to demand of the State that it sees to it that the work of rearing and training a family is not undermined in such a way. The perusal of a book unsuitable for some members of a family can be controlled within the family itself, and, to a certain extent, so can their seeing an unsuitable film, but the family has no control over what is broadcast, for unsuitable or offensive broadcast material is already heard before it can be switched off".

21. The Second Group. The second group of advocates of public instruction on sex matters is genuinely distressed by the prevalence of sexual promiscuity and its concomitants - venereal disease, depravity and delinquency. The principal points in the evidence of witnesses who may be classified in this group are :-

- (1) The adolescent child has the right to be told the truth about the laws of life.
- (2) Many parents have shirked the task of giving their children a right knowledge of sex, mainly because they have not been told clearly of their duty or because they have lacked mastery of the right phrases to explain such delicate matters.
- (3) The children of parents who fail to discharge their duty are exposed to danger through ignorance or through a shoddy wisdom acquired haphazard from some disturbing encounter, from secret conversations, through information from over-sophisticated companions, or from clandestine reading - the more dangerous and pernicious because secrecy inflames the imagination and disturbs the senses.
- (4) Some parents do not make close friends and companions of their children and thereby erect an additional barrier when they come to face the problem of instructing them.
- (5) Broadcast talk should be given when pre-adolescent children are not likely to be listening.
- (6) Sex hygiene should be taught in schools.

22. In the opinion of experienced and well-informed authorities, public instruction for young people on this subject is nearly always dangerous, and there is evidence of strong opposition to the idea of making sex education a part of the school curriculum. The opinion is expressed that the study of sex as a mere department of animal biology will fail to include a constructive human approach to the delicate psychological aspects or to the Christian motives for purity and modesty.

23. It has been pointed out that there is an error of judgment in the suggestion that thorough instruction in the anatomy and physiology of sex ensures proper standards of behaviour and prevents indulgence in improper conduct. It is held that this suggestion repeats an old fallacy that knowledge is virtue - an idea which became popular in certain countries, including Germany, forty years ago - but the experience of a long trial discredited it. To quote the words of the Director of the Education Department in one of the States :-

"The mistake that many people make ... is that they assume that

if the children have a knowledge about sex matters they are likely to behave themselves and that if they are ignorant the contrary happens. That is fallacious reasoning... The point which we emphasise with the parents (at lectures to them exclusively at various centres under the auspices of the Education Department) is that the general moral training of children to build up character, including self-control, is what is wanted".

24. The same principle is expressed more fully by a religious leader as follows:-

"Moral evil is not cured by information. Education of itself is not a panacea for all moral or social evil. Spiritual aid is required to counteract the dangers to which teen-aged youth is exposed. It would be erroneous to substitute information for moral training. Genuine moral training is possible only against a religious background. Not all teachers have the outlook to guarantee the right kind of reaction and influence on pupils. Group instruction is apt to make pupils sex conscious, sex curious, sex-minded... There is danger that such instruction will break down the sense of reserve and modesty, which are safeguards against improper conduct... The task is one for parents, especially mothers, who should be made aware of their responsibility. Those responsible for the training of youth should be inspired to rise above the material and physical conception of life to a realisation of the priceless value of the soul and its beauty when adorned by virtue".

25. Argument on the same lines against acceptance of the theory that knowledge in itself is a sufficient safeguard against improper conduct, has been elaborated by other witnesses, one of whom avers that "generally speaking, to instruct the intellect without any reference to the will or morals is just as calculated to produce clever criminals as reputable citizens".

26. In countries where arrangements were made for general instruction on sex in classes at schools and colleges, in the belief that knowledge alone would be sufficient, there is testimony that immorality among students became prevalent, so much so that in one country a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the situation. Its finding was that sex education should come from the parents and that diversion of the youthful mind from sexual subjects is eminently to be preferred to the teaching of sex hygiene in schools. This conclusion was a complete reversal of the policy advocated by some educational authorities at the beginning of the twentieth century.

27. In another country, where a number of public schools had experimented with a course of class talks in sex education, the authorities have recently found it wise to forbid such talks in future.

28. These experiences, as well as similar conclusions reached by educational and other authorities in Australia, have been submitted to us as evidence that if it be unwise to make sex instruction a topic of a course given indiscriminately to a class at school, it is not less foolish to give such instruction indiscriminately by means of broadcast talks.

29. Even among the witnesses who favour broadcast talks on sex for worthy motives, there is almost unanimous agreement that the matter is essentially a parental responsibility; it is only because of the failure of many parents to fulfil their duty in this respect that these witnesses advocate, reluctantly, the use of broadcasting.

30. The Third Group. The main points traversed in the evidence of witnesses opposed to broadcast talks on sex are summarised as follows :-

- (1) The chief task of sex education is not to draw attention to sex matters but to distract it from them. No more knowledge should be imparted than is necessary to overcome current difficulties. Since children develop at different rates, mass instruction would be harmful. It is the parents, who are able to watch their children's development from day to day, who can observe this principle properly. Parents should themselves understand that sex is a beautiful thing, and it is they who should give gradual instruction to their children, individually, at the times and age levels which they are in the best position to determine.
- (2) Mere instruction is no panacea; it is likely to provoke unwholesome comment and disturbing fancies. Moral training is of slow growth, varying according to individual precocity, environment and susceptibility. This training cannot be given by wireless.
- (3) Proper control of the sex impulse will be achieved, not by filling the minds of the young with sex images, but by training the will to control thought processes and by reducing incitements in literature, films and plays, also by avoiding excessive indulgence in alcohol, as these contribute to the decline in moral standards which leads to promiscuity.
- (4) Public descriptions of the intimacies of sexual relationships offend that delicacy of feeling which is instinctive in our nature. Broadcast talks cannot be confined to selected audiences. No matter which times might be chosen, it would be impossible to ensure that pre-adolescent children would not be listening.
- (5) It would be embarrassing to listen to sex instruction by radio in the family circle. Youth has instinctively rooted in its makeup a sound protection in a sense of shame, which should be guarded and not destroyed by mass instruction.
- (6) Of its nature, sex is not a subject to be studied like geography, history or mathematics, because of its impact on the emotions as well as the mind and its arousing of impulses which it would be better to leave unstirred.
- (7) To busy the mind with thoughts on sex in the education of the young and to bring such thoughts indiscriminately to external expression is mental indecent exposure which in the physical sphere would be punished as an offence in the courts of law. The cure for ignorance or prudery is not indecent exposure, mental or physical. In continental countries where prudery is least evident sex excesses are most evident.
- (8) The primal right in the development of the child belongs to the parents. Any attempt by the State to supersede the parents in this delicate matter would be an invasion of natural rights and is but one step removed from totalitarianism.
- (9) Assistance is being given to parents by religious and public bodies such as the Parents and Citizens' Association, the Mothercraft Association and the Parents' Education Movement attached to the kindergartens, and also through the agency of suitable literature.
- (10) Broadcast talks might be of some value as a means of urging parents to fulfil their obligation to instruct their children, but parents in need of assistance are not likely to memorise detailed methods of approach conveyed by radio; what they require is a suitable pamphlet to which they can refer from time to time to assist

their vocabulary for children at different age levels, supplemented, where necessary, by attendance at lectures arranged exclusively for parents under approved auspices.

- (11) Certain types of talks which would be intended for parents only would be most objectionable as broadcasting material. The use of pamphlets is preferable, particularly as the printed word in a matter of this kind is more conducive to study and reflection.

31. A representative committee of enquiry regarding sexual offences in Queensland made the following comment in its report to the Government of that State in October, 1944 :-

"With regard to specific instruction in sex matters, the evidence of witnesses who had great experience in controlling numbers of adolescents was that such knowledge should be given by parents to children individually and that it should be given progressively as the child develops mentally and physically, but that in no circumstances should it be treated as a subject of mass or class instruction. If the parents were unable or unwilling to give it, it should only be given by persons qualified in character and personality as well as by training - and then only to children individually or in very small groups.

"The variation in sexual maturity and knowledge of different children in a school class and the emotional aspect of the matter made it quite unsuitable for treatment as a class subject in schools".

32. To sum up, the weight of evidence is to the effect that sex education should be personal and individual and is a parental responsibility; that, consequently, broadcast talks on the subject, no matter how well-intentioned, are likely to do more harm than good; that many parents neglect their task for one reason or another; and that the most satisfactory remedy for this situation lies in the efforts which religious and public organisations are making to persuade such parents to discharge their obligation, assisting them with information, especially in the form of suitable literature, so that they may fulfil their duty competently and reverently. Where necessary, and with the parents' consent, consideration could be given to the instruction of children individually, at the proper time, by qualified clergymen, suitable doctors, directors of reputable youth organisations and (in the case of boarding schools) headmasters and headmistresses.

33. In reference to suitable literature, an experienced doctor has advised that the authors of some pamphlets, designed to impart essential knowledge, go too far; it is not wise to be too meticulous or detailed.

34. On the question specifically referred to us, we recommend that talks relating to sex matters should not be broadcast from national or commercial stations.

Venereal Disease

35. As in the case of sex matters generally, it may be said that there are three groups of thought on the question of broadcast talks on venereal disease.

36. The first group, according to the evidence of a highly placed health official of very wide experience, is only concerned in methods to avoid the risks of promiscuity from the point of view of conception and disease. Its objective, in the words of another eminent witness, is "to make the nation safe for fornication".

37. The second group is actuated, not only by anxiety to prevent the spread of the disease, but also by a desire to reduce promiscuity as much as possible from the point of view of general morality for the benefit of the individual, for the common good, and in the national interests.

38. The third group is actuated by the same desire as the second group, but considers that broadcasting is not a suitable medium for the objective and that there are more effective and less potentially harmful means of pursuing it.

39. The First Group. It is not necessary to recapitulate the reasons why broadcasting facilities should be out of the question for the dissemination of propaganda to influence acceptance of the views of the first group. It is sufficient to invite reference to the earlier submissions in this report concerning the degenerate outlook of the corresponding group of advocates of public instruction on sex matters generally.

40. The Second Group. Witnesses classified in the second group are of the opinion that a good deal of the disease is attributable to ignorance of the physical risks of promiscuity, due to failure on the part of parents to warn their adolescent children. They differ, however, in regard to the ground which they consider should be covered in broadcast talks. Some think that the broadcasts should describe the symptoms of the disease in minute detail; they believe that otherwise the talks would be unintelligible and valueless. Others would prefer the talks to be restricted to suggestions regarding the availability of suitable literature.

41. There is also conflict among them on the question of reference to the moral issue. Some hold that in the talks which they advocate, the moral aspect should be divorced from the physical consequences of promiscuity. Others consider that talks on the disease cannot omit reference to sex because "after all, venereal disease is developed from sex relationship"; they suggest that the moral aspect should be stressed, and draw attention to the judgment of a Royal Commission on venereal disease that "instruction should be based on moral principles and spiritual considerations and should by no means be concentrated on the physical consequences of immoral conduct". This viewpoint has been traversed in evidence to the following effect:-

"The sex act is ordained by God to bring new life into being. Its use is restricted to husband and wife in lawful marriage. Deliberately to abuse the sex faculty or to indulge in sexual intercourse outside of marriage is a serious violation of the order established by God and is a grave sin. God's plan for the right use of the power of procreation would have to be a starting point for any talks on sex morality; otherwise the talks would be meaningless and dangerous. A natural and biological approach to sex is inadequate to safeguard either health or virtue. Religion offers the strongest motives and the most powerful aids for the control of the passions".

42. Another disputed issue among witnesses of the second group is the wisdom or otherwise of giving special publicity to the efficacy of certain drugs in quickly curing at least one type of the disease. Some witnesses contend that emphasis on this aspect might induce infected persons to seek medical attention at an early stage of the disease and thereby minimise the risk of their spreading infection. Others are of the opinion that undue stressing of rapidity of cure would diminish the value of fear of disease as a deterrent to promiscuity and thereby encourage a low moral tone in the community.

43. There is almost unanimous agreement, however, among witnesses in this group that any broadcast talks on the disease should be subject to certain safeguards as to time of delivery, choice of speakers, inclusion with other health talks, and final censorship by a committee. There is some difference of opinion as to the personnel of such a committee, but the idea most generally favoured is a committee comprising education, health, medical and broadcasting authorities, as well as representatives of the three church groups (the Church of England, the Catholic Church and the Council of Churches), the proposed function of the church representatives being to take care of any contemplated references to the moral aspect.

44. Adoption of this censorship suggestion would necessitate an amendment of section 94 of the Broadcasting Act, which makes the Director-General of Health the final arbiter of broadcasts of medical talks, subject to the right of appeal to the Minister.

45. A witness of considerable repute has expressed opposition to the idea of references to the moral aspect being subject to the approval of church representatives, and has placed some emphasis on the talks being prepared by men of science. From the tenor of other submissions, however, it is evident that such an attitude would not be favoured by the majority of witnesses in this group, on the ground that science is morally neutral and the Church is the logical exponent of what is proper in the sphere of morality, just as a doctor, and not a clergyman, is the proper consultant in the sphere of medicine.

46. The general trend of evidence from a considerable number of witnesses in this group appears to be one of guarded acquiescence in the featuring of venereal disease in talks over the air. It is evident that the views of some have been influenced by an impression that the disease is rampant in Australia. Others, under cross-examination, have given indications of an inclination to modify their views on being made aware of the advice of medical authorities (who would themselves probably be either authors or editors of the talks) that the broadcasts would be valueless unless they made certain intimate physical references that would be contrary to modesty, especially in the audiences of mixed age and sex which radio is powerless to segregate. As in the case of evidence from the corresponding group of witnesses on the subject of sex matters generally, there is an inference that the majority would prefer to see parents adequately informed so that they might impart advice to their children individually at the proper time; it is only because of the failure of many parents to undertake the task, either through ignorance, diffidence or neglect, that most of the witnesses in the second group advocate, reluctantly, the use of broadcasting.

47. The Third Group. The principal features of the evidence of witnesses in the third group are condensed as follows:-

- (1) The National Health and Medical Research Council (comprising representatives of Commonwealth and State Health authorities) considers that there is a limit to the utility of publicity on the subject, which has to be handled with particular care, as it affects delicate personal and social relationships and should be treated with reserve, even among adults.
- (2) The incidence of the disease is not nearly so bad as it is made out to be. At one time in one of the leading hospitals there would be two or three operations a week for complications arising from the disease, but now months elapse without one case of the kind. Medical men who have specialised in treatment of the disease are now finding their practice dying out.
- (3) It would be a very bad thing for Australia to broadcast much about the disease. Australia's name would be injured. Broadcasting would create a wrong impression that the disease is rampant in this country. Any idea that the problem has reached alarming proportions should be dispelled. The disease is no longer the problem that it was in 1942/43. The actual rate is only half what it was in 1914/18. The public are infinitely better informed now than they were in the past. There are far more serious health problems to tackle; the first is tuberculosis.
- (4) Venereal disease cannot be publicised in the same way as other physical ailments without a coarsening effect on the community and an aggravation of the problem. The combating of the disease involves the arresting of the decline of moral standards generally. Knowledge alone is not a safeguard against infection, especially if there has been diminution of control of the will over the emotions through excessive indulgence in alcohol.

- (5) No matter which times were selected for the broadcasts, it would be impossible to ensure that pre-adolescent children would not be listening. Owing to the limited facilities in the average home, the segregation of children would be very difficult.
- (6) If the talks were given in the morning, say, between 10 and 11 o'clock, the listeners for the most part would be housewives, of whom 99% would not need instruction. The husbands and elder children, who might need advice, would not be home. If the talks were given in the evening, say, after 9 p.m., it is doubtful whether many families could guarantee that the younger children would be in bed by that hour. The majority of people for whom the talks would mainly be intended are not likely to be listening during the morning or evening sessions which have been suggested; they would be out shopping or at pictures or elsewhere.
- (7) As a rule, people who listen to educational radio items are not the type likely to leave themselves open to venereal disease infection.
- (8) The expenditure involved in broadcast talks (the commercial stations would require payment for them) could be devoted to better advantage in extension of facilities for the treatment of patients and in the provision of hostels for delinquents who have no home.
- (9) If it were possible to select parents only as the audience, broadcast talks might help to educate those in need of advice in method of instructing their children. As this selectivity is not possible, and in view of the objections to indiscriminate instruction, it would be preferable to rely on the circulation of suitable literature to such parents.
- (10) Section 91 of the Broadcasting Act makes it an offence to broadcast indecent matter. That section would have to be amended before authority could be given for the use of expressions of the kind which a well-known and highly respected medical authority considers essential to make the talks intelligible.
- (11) A broadcast talk of any value could not be so watered down as not to arouse prurient curiosity in young people for whom it would not be intended. Censorship would tend to make the talks platitudinous and of no benefit to listeners. In the effort to meet objections from various people, the talks would probably be reduced to colourless and valueless mediocrities.
- (12) A campaign against venereal disease on purely secular and medical lines will fail because it will not be based on the foundation of the problem. Bearing in mind that the disease is contracted by sexual promiscuity and that this in turn is due to a decline in moral standards, the proper course is to promote control of the sex impulse. This can be achieved by training the will to take charge of thought processes and by reducing the incitements which provoke sex excitation as portrayed in certain types of lectures, magazines, newspapers, screen and stage plays, including semi-nude and other vulgar silhouette and intimate sex presentations in published photographs, drawings, and advertisements, all of which propagate an unhealthy attitude to sex. The strongest motive for right behaviour is the supernatural one. Therefore, the teaching of religion should be associated with the educational system, which for many years has been largely based on the philosophy of "economic man", with its emphasis on materialistic aim.
- (13) It is difficult to separate talks on venereal disease from talks on sex, because the former is associated with the breakdown of moral standards. The two types of talks are so related to each other that talks on venereal disease necessitate talks on sex in order to be intelligible. Consequently, the reasons which make it unwise to give broadcasts on sex make it equally unwise to use the radio for talks on the disease.

48. According to information we have received through official sources, authorities in America have decided to abandon support of a publicity campaign in connection with venereal disease, as the proposal had aroused a nation-wide storm of protest. It was described in America as "indecent and repulsive". Its critics in that country, in deploring "the substitution of high pressure publicity and an offensive frankness, for moral training", declared it publicly to be -

"an affront to many millions of God-fearing Americans who avoid this filthy disease...because they keep the laws of God... It will not curtail immorality but increase it by promising to make promiscuity safe. It will bring out a loathsome disease for open discussion in any company whenever assembled, whether it be at the family dinner table, in the drawing room or at any social meeting... It will inflict sordid printed and spoken material upon 96 per cent of the people, for the purpose of arousing a small minority to a realisation of the dangers confronting them in casting aside self-restraint".

49. In Australia, according to official figures, it is estimated that the trend of incidence of the disease is now only about 120 people per 100,000 of the population; that is to say, if the criticism, in America, of the American publicity proposal were applied to a similar publicity proposal in Australia, the protests would have stronger justification in this country from the standpoint of incidence of the disease, because in America it has been publicly indicated that about forty people per 1,000 are affected, in contrast with only about one per 1,000 in Australia.

50. In its report to the Queensland Government in October, 1944, a representative committee of enquiry regarding sexual offences in that State reached the conclusion that the fundamental cause of venereal disease is "the deterioration of moral standards and the rejection by a large portion of the community of any moral basis for conduct and of any duty of self-control or self-discipline in sexual relations".

51. The weight of evidence is against the use of broadcast talks as a means of endeavouring to rectify this state of affairs, because positive and systematic training in moral standards cannot be developed by the mass method of approach inseparable from the use of radio, and any attempt to do so would only aggravate the problem, there being always ground for the fear of creating a morbid interest in the subject on the part of those who have not had the necessary background to enable them to derive benefit only from such talks. Far-seeing witnesses believe that the remedy lies in another direction. Their views are epitomised in the words of the President of the Queensland Council of Churches that "any frontal attack upon this problem is not likely to be successful...; there must be an educational policy aimed at creating a new reverence for human life". In this connection it is relevant to invite reference to the observations of the Standing Committee of the previous Parliament, in paragraph 6 of its First Report, dated 2nd February, 1943:-

"It is undeniable that in Australia and other Allied Countries, the world conflagration has awakened a wider recognition of the need for more extensive education in spiritual values, and there is increasing support for the view that true education must have a spiritual basis and objective if stability of character and all those other qualities which make for good citizenship are to develop in a nation which aspires to be truly great".

52. In view of the strong objections to broadcasting on this subject, we agree with the evidence that it would be preferable to adopt the alternative of circulating suitable literature to parents in need of advice to assist them in instructing their adolescent children at the varying ages which they alone are in the best position to determine as appropriate. Where necessary (as in the case of advice on sex matters generally), consideration could be given to the instruction of children individually at the proper time (with the parents' consent) by qualified clergymen, suitable doctors, directors of reputable youth organisations and (at boarding schools) headmasters and headmistresses.

53. Our recommendation on the question specifically referred to us is that talks relating to venereal disease should not be broadcast from national or commercial stations.

54. This report would be incomplete without reference to certain issues arising out of the evidence tendered on this subject, for, in addition to persuading all parents to combine instruction with a sound moral training of their children, action in other directions has been urged, in view of the fact that sex has been elbowed into a prominence injurious to youth by means of many commercialised incitements to conduct which involves immediate risk of venereal disease infection.

55. The testimony of many witnesses is to the effect that the principal handicap to which youth is subjected is the contradiction in values of what is taught in the home and what is experienced elsewhere, because promiscuity before marriage and infidelity after it are condoned or incited by much of what youth sees, reads and hears; conventional safeguards in behaviour established by the wisdom of experience have been torn down; and a bombardment of sex stimuli is levelled at youth from all sides.

56. After hearing evidence from many quarters deploring this state of affairs, we are deeply impressed with the earnestness and sincerity of witnesses who hold that it is the obligation of Government to induce reduction of the many incitements to sexual adventure, to promote means of early marriage, and to facilitate the implementing of a long-range policy for the reconstruction of society "on a spiritual and religious basis" (to quote again the words of a Commonwealth political leader).

57. It may be contended that these are matters for educational and other authorities and do not come within the province of broadcasting administration. That is true so far as direct attention to these matters is concerned. But broadcasting, in the opinion of competent observers, is capable of exercising a powerful influence for good or evil in many subtle ways not readily discernible. Hence, with controllers inspired by enthusiasm for the maintenance of high ideals, broadcasting can assist, or at least not retard, the moulding of public opinion to a stage that will lead to effective action by the authorities concerned, not only to induce abandonment of incitements to degeneracy, but also to provide adequate means of ensuring, as far as possible, that Australian youth shall have all the opportunities necessary to receive and enjoy its rightful inheritance of the Christian way of life, with all that it implies in personal and national aspirations.

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11th March, 1946.