

advantage in substituting "retarded" and "severely retarded", as has been suggested by some social workers. Should we not do better to retain "mental deficiency" and put our energies into changing the attitude towards it?

An even more serious criticism is that the Bill is unrealistic about the degree of responsibility which can be expected from a defective. For it provides that a "subnormal" patient can only be compulsorily admitted to hospital or Guardianship if he is under 21, and must be discharged at the age of 25 unless likely to be dangerous to others or to himself. But many such patients are likely to need continued social and economic help and their discharge presumes a much higher standard of community care than exists in many areas as yet. Moreover many employers will be less likely to accept defectives as workers when the hospital no longer shares any responsibility for them, and under the Bill the period of Licence is normally only to last for 6 months. The very proper insistence on not depriving defectives of their civil liberties may result in giving them too little chance to learn to use them.

A further matter that is giving rise to some anxiety amongst social workers is that the Bill repeals Section 57(5) of the 1944 Education Act, which lays upon local education authorities the duty of reporting to the health authorities, children leaving school with a "disability of mind" which may make supervision desirable. No doubt in some areas an informal arrangement will be made to ensure that these children continue to receive some form of after-care, but there is no guarantee that this will happen, and even under present conditions, we are informed that many Head Teachers of schools for educationally sub-normal pupils "feel that the provision in their areas is ludicrously inadequate".

Finally, why must admissions for hospital treatment be requested from the Hospital Management Committee rather than from the medical superintendent? Surely the decision is a medical one!

Parliament, Press and Broadcasting

By D. McCLELLAN

(Public Information Department, National Association for Mental Health)

During the past few months a very wide variety of topics with at least some mental health aspect has been discussed in Parliament. While some have reflected controversy, others, in particular the Mental Health Bill, have been accorded a wide measure of general agreement.

In the Debate on the Queen's Speech, (*Hansard* 31.10.58), the present level of crime was subjected to a factual analysis. The Home

Secretary said that the essence of the problem was that we have a much higher level of crime than before the war, with a proportionately greater increase in crimes of violence and sexual offences and—although this may be more temporary—a much higher rate in proportion to their numbers, of crimes among young men.

A further re-capitulation of the position is contained in a White Paper, *Penal Practice in a Changing Society*—laid before Parliament in February 1959 (H.M.S.O. 2s. 6d.). Concurrently with this, the Home Secretary announced the setting up of a Standing Committee on Criminal Law Revision under the Chairmanship of Lord Justice Sellars. (3.2.59).

Commenting on the building programme the White Paper notes that the psychiatric prison hospital should be finished by the end of 1962 and that when this is ready the major psychotherapy now carried out at the three existing clinics at Wormwood Scrubs, Wakefield and Holloway, will be concentrated in one place where, in proper conditions it can be extended in scope and deepened in value.

An account is given of the Research Unit set up at the Home Office and of the readiness of Cambridge University to set up an Institute of Criminology if the necessary funds can be made available. "The Institute should be able as no existing agency is in a position to do, to survey with academic impartiality—in the light of the results of the research effort as a whole—the general problem of the criminal in society, its causes and its solution."

With regard to young offenders, the White Paper recalls that the Inglebey Committee is still taking evidence and that the Government will await its report before acting in this field.

Turning from the study of crime to the promotion of positive mental health—on 20.11.58 the Minister of Education announced the appointment of a Committee under the Chairmanship of the Countess of Albemarle, D.B.E. "To review the contribution which the Youth Service of England and Wales can make in assisting young people to play their part in the life of the community in the light of changing social and industrial conditions and of current trends in other branches of the education service; and to advise according to what priorities best value can be obtained for the money spent".

On November 26th, the House debated the Wolfenden Report (Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution).

Mr. Butler announced with regard to homosexuality that the Government were satisfied on the basis of opinions expressed so far, that they would not be justified at present in proposing legislation to carry out the recommendations of the Committee. With regard to prostitution the position was different. There was probably little disagreement on what was desirable: the question was what was possible. The day's debate ranged over all aspects of the problem.

The Street Offences Bill, foreshadowed in the Debate, was introduced before the Christmas Recess and given its second reading on 29.1.59.

An amendment, standing in the name of Mrs. Lena Jaegar and 65 other members, called on the House while recognising the need to deal effectively and justly with the problem of prostitution and other street offences, to decline to give a Second Reading to a Bill, which retained the term "common prostitute", abolished the need to prove annoyance, failed to provide for any system of caution, or to deal with the problem of soliciting by men, gave excessive powers to police officers, and which, relying exclusively on increased penalties, contained no constructive proposals for dissuasion or redemption".

Controversy eddied round the various points in the amendment: the dangers of the establishment of a "call girl" system being balanced against the desirability of clearing the streets.

In the debate on the Local Government Bill on 8.12.58 the question of the effect of the introduction of the block grant system on the provision of community care services in the mental health field, and on the implementation of the recommendations of the Piercy Report on the care of the handicapped and disabled, was discussed. Replying for the Government, the Parliamentary Secretary said that the present level of spending by Local Authorities on services for the handicapped is at a rate of about 2.34 million a year and was expected to increase by 0.27 million in 1959/60 and by 0.44 million in 1961. These figures had been taken into consideration and the general grant contained a 50% allowance towards the cost of future development. A local authority which had developed its services in the past would not derive any benefit in respect of that past expenditure. With regard to mental deficiency grants, the Parliamentary Secretary said the Government did not consider it appropriate, when most of the major specific grants are being taken into the general grant, to introduce a new specific grant in the mental health services either for revenue or capital expenditure. Current spending by local authorities on mental health services was just over £4 million a year; it was expected to rise to £5 million in 1959/60 and to £6 million in 1960/61.

"Questions in the House"

The following information has been elicited from the relevant Ministers:—

The follow up of leucotomy cases initiated by the Ministry of Health in 1956 is nearing completion (8.12.58).

Following consultations with the B.M.A. and the Magistrates' Association the Home Secretary is in consultation with the Minister

of Health and the Secretary of State for Scotland with regard to the possibility of amending the law so that suicide and attempted suicide will no longer be treated as criminal offences. (11.12.58).

From information supplied in a written answer (Hansard, 4.2.59), Mr. Kenneth Robinson stated at a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Mental Health Bill, that 93½% of the total expenditure of Local Authorities on mental health services in 1957-58, was in respect of services which were *mandatory*. The average expenditure by county councils in England and Wales worked out at about 1s. 6d. per head of the population, ranging from 2s. 4d. (Cambs.) to 2d. [in two small Welsh counties]. In the case of county boroughs, Oldham and Leeds head the list (4s. 5d. and 3s. 10d. respectively) with Rotherham and York next (3s. 4d. and 3s.), and at the bottom, Tynemouth and Barrow-in-Furness (8d. each).

Press and Broadcasting

The Press, sound radio and television and voluntary organizations show an increased awareness of mental health topics. There was a very wide press coverage on the Mental Health Bill and commentaries were introduced into both news and feature programmes by the B.B.C. and I.T.V.

Granada Television are to be congratulated on their courage in devoting a full hour at the peak viewing period (8.30-9.30 p.m.) on 28th January, to a documentary "*Insanity or Illness*". Mr. Kenneth Robinson, M.P. acted as adviser to this programme which was produced in collaboration with the National Association for Mental Health.

A new series of "*Lifeline*" programmes started on B.B.C. Television on January 1st, 1959. Corporal punishment, Christian Science views on healing, leucotomy and mental illness have been the subject of the first four programmes.

In sound radio on Network Three, a paediatrician, and a child psychiatrist are included in a panel discussing problems in the series "*Parents and Children*".

Television itself has been examined. The National Council of Social Service at its Annual General Meeting had a symposium on "*The Social Implications of Television*".

The Scientific Film Association staged a meeting on "*Presenting Medicine to the Public on Television*" at the Royal College of Surgeons on 19th November. Extracts from "*The Hurt Mind*" and "*Your Life in their Hands*" were shown and provoked lively discussion.

We hope to include this feature as a regular item in future issues.—Ed.