

PROVINCIAL TRAINING SCHOOL
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
RED DEER ALBERTA

SUPERINTENDENTS REPORT for 1926

To the Honourable.

The Minister of Health.

Provincial Government Buildings.

Edmonton, Alberta.

Sir:

I have the honour of submitting to you the fifth Annual Report of the Provincial Training School for Mental Deficiency, Red Deer, Alberta.

MOVEMENT OF PATIENTS IN 1926

	Male	Female	Total.
Number actually present Dec. 31 st . 1925—	66	67	133
Admissions during the year			
Voluntary admissions	6	3	9
Court commitments	2	1	3
Re-admissions	0	1	1
Number enrolled during the year	74	72	146
Discharge etc. during the year			
Discharged	1	2	3
Deaths	1	2	3
Transfers to Ponoka	1	0	1
Paroled	0	1	1
Escaped	1	0	1
Number actually present Dec. 31 st . 1926—	70	67	137

Wards of the Province	20
Wards of Municipalities	102
Wards of the Department of Municipal Affairs	8
Private cases	7

GENERAL REMARKS

The close of the year 1926 finds us in a very satisfactory position in so far as it applies to institutional work. The routine of the various departments has been carried on in an efficient manner, and the heads of department have co-ordinated their respective duties in a satisfactory manner. The turn-over of staff has been large; In a work of this nature the movement of staff is usually active, for obvious reasons,— the hopelessness of the condition of many of the patients, the drudgery associated with the constant care of the helpless idiot child, the desire for change, inefficiency, lack of response to discipline,— All these and other factors enter into the problem and render it difficult to secure and hold a type of employee that is efficient and dependable.

The movement of patient population has been small, due in a great measure to our being filled to capacity at the beginning of the year, and to the fact that no new construction was undertaken. Vacancies created through deaths and discharges have been few. When we consider the predominantly low grade type of case now under care at the School we cannot hope for any great amount of relief to present demands through possible future discharge. We have hesitated to parole certain cases who might be considered eligible for parole, because of the unsatisfactory home and community environment to which they would be subjected, should they be released to return to their homes, or on account of the probable disaster that would overtake them should they be permitted to go out without good home restraint or without proper supervision. The longer I am associated with the work for the mental defective the more I am convinced of the need for colony provision for the higher grade feeble-minded boy and girl. Unable to find for themselves we invite almost certain disaster for them should we set them free from the nominal restraint of the institution to be subject only to the caprice of their own uncontrolled instincts and impulses.

The “way of the transgressor” is, I might almost say, the natural way for the feeble-minded,— deficient as they are in that finer moral and ethical sense which we associate with the normal individual. Inherently they are not more vicious than their more fortunate brother, but not having his power of inhibition, his wisdom and his adaptability,— requirements absolutely essential to successfully meet the complex problems of modern life,— they drift with the tide to meet the ultimate fate of all drifters,— dependency upon others of stronger mental and moral fibre than themselves. If then this is the ultimate goal, would it not be more to our mutual interests if some provision be made that these potential public charges be given an opportunity to maintain themselves, free from those problems of life which will inevitably prove their undoing? Certainly from the humanitarian point of view it is the least we can do, and I am satisfied that from the utilitarian point of view as well, it is the logical thing to do. Colonize and provide suitable work for this class and you diminish to that extent the inadequates, the misfits and the recidivists who people our slums and our jails,— Allow them their freedom and you but add to the problems with which our courts and welfare associations are already over-burdened.

As I have previously stated we cannot hope to institutionalize all of our feeble-minded, but I do maintain that it is in the public interest that we care for those who have already proven themselves inadequate, as well as those who by the very nature of their defect must sooner or later fall by the way. If they are hopeless as citizens we should not permit them the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship. We should treat them as children making use of all the restraints and supervision essential to the child life. The whole problem then is one that demands serious study on the part of those in whose hands the mental health of the Province rests. We need not be unduly concerned over the low-grade custodial type of defective. Eugenically they do not constitute a serious problem; The high grade defective, on the other hand is first and foremost a eugenic problem, as the procreation of his kind but accentuates the already established vicious circle. By selective eugenical sterilization of the high-grade hereditary type of feeble-minded we would eliminate to that extent this aspect of the problem. There are however many aspects of the situation that will require attention where we can make a law dealing with eugenical sterilization really effective. And after sterilization what then?

As one writer has put it, “sterilization will prevent these persons propagating it,— but it will not make a mental defective competent, a pauper independent, a criminal moral,— in the great majority segregation will still be called for, on account of personality traits” (see article by the writer,— “Is sterilization of the mental defective practicable as a preventive measure”)

I am in favour of selective eugenical sterilization and a law covering such procedure is indicated, but we must not forget that it will be easier to get a registration of the poor man's child, for economic reasons, if for no other, than it will be of the rich man's child, though each may be equally dangerous eugenically, and it is just possible it would be easier to convince the responsible humble parent of the desirability and necessity for sterilization. These and other difficulties incident to the effective carrying out of such a law should be given due thought, else it will prove as other radical legislation has proven, ineffective and impotent and unless as a means of eradicating hereditary mental defect. A sterilization law then is desirable, and under favourable conditions should prove an effective means in any effort leading to the eradication of hereditary mental defect, still, the fact remains, that no matter how complete the law, or how thorough its enforcement our present generation of feebleminded will continue feebleminded. They will continue dependent, and many will remain potentially criminal the majority of them will require external support either within the institution, or which is less desirable outside of the institution, in the homes and the communities in which they are found; This being so, I would urge that steps be taken not only to put into effect a law for eugenical sterilization but also a sane, conservative institutional policy for selected cases of all grades and for those of the moron and borderline type especially. Such policy to take the form of colonies for both sexes where vocational work suited to the mental capacity of the individual may be carried out and where they may wholly or in part maintain themselves with a minimum of cost to the Province. This course is progressive and predictable and in line with what is being done in other countries and states.

Three children were discharged,— one paroled (a girl of 17, to her parents) and there was one elopement, this was a boy, a high grade defective delinquent, 15 years of age chronologically, who had been in the School almost two years. He was thoroughly bad, a constant source of worry and as he eloped to his own home, I advised the father to

try and keep him there, warning him that should he have to be re-committed it would be a correctional institution. The boy who was returned to the institution from parole the fall of 1925 was finally sent to the Mental Hospital, Ponoka; as a psychotic (D.P.) He escaped from there and from last reports is on a dairy farm in Oklahoma. The other boy is still on parole and has done indifferently well. His future is not hopeful as he is of the drifter type, this was the only case transferred during the year.

General Health

The health of the children continues remarkable good. Preventative medicine is out watchword,—good nourishing food, regular habits, daily exercise outside of doors if at all possible, combined with routine checking up of minor illnesses, have resulted in a minimum of sickness and a very low mortality rate.

There were three deaths, one a low grade idiot child, one of higher grade but a cerebral paralytic, due to chronic endocarditis, and one an imbecile girl, due to status epilepticus.

The Matron Miss Conroy and her attendants are to be complimented on the efficient way in which they have worked for the general physical well being of all classes of patients. All of our population have had the wasserman test, have been vaccinated, and immunized for diphtheria, The Superintendent is considering the feasibility of immunization against scarlatina this year.