

of the Dominion, we thank you for the opportunity of presenting the policy that our organisations would like to assist the Minister to construct. The acknowledgment of the urgent need of means to combat venereal diseases has been welcomed by all those who have realised the gravity of the menace to the coming generation. Unfortunately, the Bill now before Parliament does not meet the expectations of the women's organisations. The resolution we present requesting the withdrawal of the Bill is endorsed by the women of the Dominion, who understand the danger of its provisions to their daughters. The demand for police women, women Magistrates, and Justices of the Peace is universal. Such appointments have been made in Britain, Canada, and Australia, the women's societies having been asked to nominate the candidates. Labour farms for persons who are physically and morally a menace to the community, and free clinics are approved and desired by the women whom we represent. We sincerely trust that your Cabinet will consider the desirability of acceding to the request of the women's organisations throughout the Dominion for the withdrawal of the present incomplete measure until the women's point of view has been fully represented and understood. We realise that the compulsory measures proposed would defeat their ends, and desire to draw the attention of the Minister for Health and the Cabinet to the attitude of the leading men of the day to the subject, a summary of which we are presenting with the resolutions. It is the earnest opinion of the societies which have studied this problem for years, that the Bill, as to certain points, is quite unnecessary, as the Justice Department, the police, have power under the Prisoners' Detention Act and the War Regulations of 1915, to deal with the criminal element of both sexes, and the Health Department and Hospital Boards have full facilities for dealing with all other cases.

"It is a matter for regret that the Minister omitted to consult the women's organisations before bringing down a Bill which vitally affects the safety and welfare of women and children. The points to which we take exception are: The proposal to set up special Boards with power to

conduct inquisitorial inquiries upon secret evidence; to enforce a medical examination of suspected persons under penalty of a fine or imprisonment, which would operate adversely against a poor, friendless girl, but in favour of the fashionable woman, who could pay the fine and go free; the establishment of prison hospitals or any means for the forcible detention of patients; the power being given to a Magistrate (even if a woman) to enforce detention on evidence which could not be accepted in a Court of Justice—a recent case well known to the Minister for Justice has shown the difficulty young girls encountered in meeting a slanderous accusation, which under this Bill would be more difficult; the proposal to class and treat as criminals persons who are suffering from disease. Clause 9 we shall leave uncriticised, as we have no doubt that the invitation which the Minister has given for an extended visit of six months in a prison hospital, will be accepted with pleasure by those who approve of the Bill. We take exception to the unlimited and dangerous powers which are given to the Minister under clause 19, which would put every woman and girl, body and soul, under the power of the Minister.

"We object to the public arrest of a patient released on probation, and to the opening for differentiation in favour of wealthy and influential patients at the discretion of the Minister. We recognise the sincerity of the Minister's intentions in introducing a measure for grappling with a most serious problem, but deprecate most emphatically the imputations cast upon our young soldiers. The meeting endorsed the indignation expressed by the Mayoress and myself, who know, as all social workers will agree, that it is the unfit and stay-at-home and married men who associate with undesirable women. We have pleasure in congratulating the Minister on many good points in the Bill, and hope that as, in the case of a decayed apple, the pips, if sound and planted in good soil, may grow into a flourishing tree, which will bear beautiful and delicious fruit, this attempt may, with the assistance which women freely offer, become the nucleus of a beneficial measure. We cordially welcome the long-delayed appointment of women patrols. We

endorse the principles prescribing the duty of medical practitioners in treating disease, and warning patients against marriages, and in providing for the treatment of children. We also approve the drastic restrictions against quacks and quack remedies; the granting of certificates of cure; the holding of persons liable who knowingly infect others, but recognise the impossibility of enforcing such a provision where most necessary for the protection of wives and children. We recognise the urgent need for the clause dealing with the handling of food, but consider that its application requires serious consideration. The provision for free treatment which is included in the Bill is cordially welcomed, and will provide the means for free clinics which our women's societies have been earnestly advocating for 25 years. We agree with the provision for securing damages for slander, but find that it is nullified by clause 36, which enables the slanderer to escape on the plea of good faith. We would suggest that the criminal law be amended in such cases that the ends of justice be not defeated by bankruptcy. The omission of any mention of facilities for education on these vital matters, which are universally demanded by thoughtful people, is most regrettable. We would suggest that such teaching should be available, not on medical lines, detailing the horrors of the disease, which tend to create a panic, but on lines that should emphasise the need for physical and moral preventive measures."

Lady Stout added that the idea had got abroad that the organisations represented were against the Government and the Minister for Health, but that was not so. What was desired was that the woman's point of view should be presented in regard to certain aspects of the Bill.

Mrs Donaldson also spoke in support of Lady Stout's criticism of the Bill.

Hon. G. W. Russell replied, prefacing his remarks by references to the W.C.T.U., which he said was responsible for the agitation against the Bill. The numerous telegrams he had received from different parts of the country had all been inspired at the Headquarters of the W.C.T.U., and he questioned whether the protest really represented the views of the