

MANIFESTO FROM CHRIST- CHURCH UNION.

(Referred to in Convention Number,
page 3.)

The position of the W.C.T.U. with regard to the question of Venereal Disease being very much and very generally misunderstood, this Convention resolves that the following statement be published:—

The W.C.T.U. opposes compulsory measures, because:

1st. Long and extensive practice in the registration, compulsory periodic examination and detention for medical treatment of prostitutes has proved that no such measures can keep that class of woman free from disease, because on her release, however long her period of detention and treatment may be, she very soon becomes re-infected by intercourse with diseased men, and is just as virulent a source of infection as before her detention. These methods, involving much time, expense, and skilled treatment, while in no way effective in reducing disease, lead to nothing but the repeated compulsory treatment of women for the avowed purposes of prostitution, and tend to State regulation of vice.

2nd. The fact that prostitutes are compelled to undergo examination and detention for treatment for the avowed purpose of rendering immorality physically safe for men holds out an inducement to vice, by raising a false sense of security, such security being impossible to obtain for reasons given above.

3rd. All measures compelling notification, examination, and detention, applied to Venereal Disease, have invariably led the sufferer, whether morally innocent or guilty, to strenuously conceal his or her condition as long as possible, and as the earlier stages of these diseases are both the most infectious and most yielding to curative measures, it follows that compulsory methods can only have the effect of increasing the evil by driving it underground, and unless in the case of prostitutes, such measures cannot be enforced.

4th. Compulsory measures necessarily tend to promote the White Slave Traffic, as, for the system to continue, it is necessary to keep up the supply of prostitutes, and these must be drawn, by some means or other, from among the young girls.

The W.C.T.U. strongly condemns and opposes the practice of issuing to soldiers, going on leave, prophylactic packets of appliances and drugs intended to enable them to indulge in licentiousness without danger of infection. Even if such protection were reliable—which it is not—the practice is mischievous and indefensible. It embodies in the worst form the error of treating men as bodies only. Such protection cannot be provided, or even connived at, without conveying the impression that the authorities do not really expect self-control, however much they may talk about it. The result will inevitably be to lessen the resisting power of tempted men and to increase the number of those who yield. Where immorality is thus encouraged, habits are formed which must lead to far-reaching evil consequences, and ultimately, to increase disease.

The W.C.T.U. believe that other and saner methods could be devised for dealing with these evils, and draws attention to the following:—

Experts in these matters agree that the majority of women comprising the prostitute class drift into, or are entangled in, this manner of life while between the ages of 16 and 18, or even younger, tempted and seduced, in many cases, by men much older than themselves, and as a considerable portion are of weak intellect, and many quite young, we hold that these women are entitled to more rational and humane treatment than the infliction of fines or imprisonment upon conviction, or of repeated and indefinite detention for medical treatment, only to be liberated with no other course open to them than a return to their former method of life, a greater menace than ever to the youth of our land.

We hold that the diminution of vice and of the temptations to vice, should be our first consideration, and to that end we advocate strongly the establishment of two farm colonies, not prisons, for women, one for the older and incorrigible cases, the other for cases where reform is possible and probable, and in these should be placed the women convicted of leading immoral lives. Every effort should be directed to the restoration, as far as possible, of the moral and physical health of these women. Healthful occupation and decent surroundings would help many a young girl back to virtue, who now has no chance or

choice but continuance in her life of shame; while those mentally deficient would receive the care and guardianship that such women need and deserve at the hands of the community, instead of being left a helpless prey to the passions of vicious men. A similar institution should be established for the permanent detention of men who are sexual degenerates, such men being a greater menace to young women and children than any prostitute can be. All officials appointed to such institutions should be specially trained for their work, and their appointments should be in the hands of local bodies elected by the people.

The fact that many innocent women and children suffer from the awful effects of venereal disease is not due to female prostitutes alone. It is due also to the male prostitutes who are, or become, husbands and fathers, and for the sake of their unfortunate wives and children, we earnestly urge that free clinics be opened throughout the country, where advice and treatment can be obtained without cost or stigma for every sufferer from these diseases, whether morally innocent or guilty. This has been proved to be the most efficacious method of inducing infected persons to apply for medical aid in the earlier stages of these diseases. We urge the appointment of women police in the moral interests of young people of both sexes.

The evidence of medical experts given before the recent Royal Commission on Venereal Disease in England, testified to the large part alcohol is responsible for in the practice of immorality and the spread of disease. One doctor stated that enquiries into thousands of cases proved that 80 per cent. of men who had acquired venereal disease did so, on their own admission, while under the influence of alcohol.

We therefore ask for the total abolition of the drink traffic as the most immediate and effective means to minimise and prevent venereal disease.

Finally, we urge the careful instruction, by specially selected and qualified teachers, of girls and boys nearing womanhood and manhood, in sex hygiene, the inculcation of an equal standard of morals for men and women alike, and the education of the public generally in the nature and far-reaching effects of venereal disease.