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Title:

Broadcast - ALP re mental health facilities (Typescript)

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Good Evening, In 1955 the Chief Clinical Officer of the Victorian Mental Hygiene Department, Dr. Stoller made a report to the Commonwealth Minister of Health on the mental health facilities of the States of Australia and suggestions as to needs. As nearly four years have now elapsed since this report, I think it would be a good idea tonight to deal with its comments and recommendations concerning South Australia and see how far they have been met to date.

There are three main institutions in South Australia for the treatment of mental illness. They are at Enfield, Northfield and Parkside. The hospital for acute admission, early treatment and general reception is at Enfield.

Dr. Stoller recommended in respect of this hospital that it should be developed as a training centre for community workers in the specialised field of mental health organised in South Australia. A group of voluntary workers at Northfield Hospital have not received encouragement from the Department of Health, although encouraged by the staff of the hospital. Dr. Stoller also recommended more accommodation for physical and social therapy at Enfield and for out-patient activities; although the present activity at Enfield includes some physical and social therapy, no provision whatever has been made for outpatient activity. The provision of an outpatients department is an essential part of mental health provision - this is not only the view of the doctors but of patients themselves. If outpatients' treatment was available to sufferers from mental illness, many of the cases which now require hospitalisation would almost certainly never require it as they could gain assistance in the early stages of their complaints. That this need is keenly felt, may be evident from the fact that I have in my possession now, a petition seeking the establishment of an outpatients' clinic at Enfield signed by a hundred past and present patients. These ~~patients~~ patients have written me.

That they are only a few of the people concerned must be

obvious, since the most recent surveys of mental disease in comparable countries has shown the incidence of it at the moment to be about one in twenty people, and the last report of the Director-General of Medical Services for South Australia on Mental hospitals shows that 8.4 people in every 10,000 were admitted to mental hospitals in that year - more than two and a half times the number admitted in 1943. So far then, the government has taken no steps to make provision for this vital treatment.

In respect of Parkside Mental Hospital, Dr. Stoller recommended that it was of prime importance to cut down overcrowding and step up the levels of psychiatric treatment including social therapy and group psycho. therapy. It is true that building has gone on since at Parkside and conditions are not as bad as they were, however, the staffing of this and other mental hospitals is ~~unsufficient~~ insufficient to provide treatment of the standard contemplated by the Stoller report. Overcrowding continues, and social therapy and group psycho therapy perforce remain at a minimum. Dr. Stoller added, "An outpatient clinic is a vital necessity." This, as in the case of Enfield, is a dream.

Dr. Stoller commented that Northfield had no clearly defined role but might develop as a centre of treatment for the Northern Suburbs. He pointed out that apart from the clinics at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and Children's Hospital, there were no outpatient clinics. There still are none. Little effort had been made to train community workers in the field of mental health. No real effort is made even now. He pointed out the need for an increase in trained professional workers. These remain totally inadequate in numbers for the task which faces us.

Let me turn to another matter raised by the report and by the report of the Superintendent of Mental Hospitals - the problem of alcoholism.

Alcoholism is today recognised as a disease - it is a very real scourge to many families. Day after day anyone who wishes can see the melancholy procession of drunks, through the police court - men

with literally hundreds of convictions for drunkenness. If they get drunk when out of work or before they have paid previous fines they are sent to gaol. There there is no treatment for them - and when they come out they more often than not are soon back in Court for drunkenness again. Now it is true that treatment is available for those who voluntarily will undertake it. At Northfield Mental Hospital a patient may enter as a voluntary patient for treatment for alcoholism and at the Archway Point at Port Adelaide the Rev. Johnson is doing magnificent work. But many of these men need the assistance of compulsory treatment. We have an Inebriates Act in the Statutes under which a Court can commit people to an inebriates institution for compulsory treatment where they have become habitual drunkards. But there is no such institution. For six years now I have regularly raised this matter in the house, but to date the government has done nothing about it. Dr. Stoller commented in 1955 that he was informed that new legislation was to be sought to deal with inebriates. To date none has appeared.

Now it is unfair of anyone to expect of Governments that everything which ought to be done will be accomplished immediately if not sooner. It is, however, fair to expect that where needs are forcibly brought to their attention, they should be dealt with within a reasonable period. Unfortunately, in South Australia in the field of social services reasonable speed in dealing with obvious problems is commentably lacking. It is not for lack of money- the Grants Commission has reported that regularly for years past, we have spent less on health and hospitals per head of population than any other State in the Commonwealth.

I very much fear that we are not going to see the necessary developments in our social services position until a change of administration takes place. But in the meantime it behoves us all to keep prodding about these things - will you help?

. Good Night.