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PUTTING IT UP TO THE BOYS



WAR used to mean waste, destruction, devastation. War, as it was waged by America, meant those things, of course, but it also meant CONSERVATION — conservation of resources, ideals, principles and human life.

It was characteristic of America's method that in going to war that she should at the outset plan and put into effect a comprehensive

program for combating venereal diseases in her army and navy—a program designed to attack from every possible angle this scourge which for three years had rivalled the actual fighting in its destruction to military and human effectiveness.

It was characteristic of America that after providing all possible medical, mechanical and social protection against this menace she should go to her soldiers and sailors and say:

“Men, the rest of this matter is up to you.”

But if America was to make it a matter of honor, pride, self-respect and patriotism to keep clean and fit to fight, it was first necessary to tell these men what they were up against: what venereal disease was, how they caused incapacitation for service, how they make life miserable not only for the infected man, but also for his comrades, his wife and his future children.

This task was assigned by the Surgeons-General of the Army and Navy to the Army and Navy Sections, two of the units of the

Social Hygiene Division of the Commission on Training Camp Activities.

Ignorance of the simplest physical and medical facts about venereal diseases and prostitution; age-old figments and sex traditions; wrong social and moral standards—all these things had to be faced on a scale never before contemplated

The materials and facilities used have consisted of pamphlets, placards, cartoons, lectures, stereopticon and stereomotorgraph slides, motion pictures and individual talks. Over three million copies of a pamphlet called "Keeping Fit to Fight" were distributed; the film "Fit to Fight" was shown in nearly all the larger camps and in many of the smaller ones; a special detachment of trained sergeants was created to carry out the educational program under close personal supervision.

Without going into statistical details, it may be said that this work has met with appreciable success. Perhaps the best proof is the fact that the American Army and Navy have from the

beginning of our belligerency shown a much smaller percentage of venereal disease than any other army and navy in the world's history. Other evidences are available to show that our men have accepted that high responsibility for personal conduct and self-control in much the same spirit as that displayed at Chateau-Thierry and Belleau Wood, and every day on our destroyers and submarine chasers.

When the story of the war is written, one of its most inspiring and vitally important chapters will be that which tells how the patriotic determination of our soldiers and sailors proved to a sceptical world that prostitution was not a necessary adjunct of military mobilization.



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