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MORE SPACE FOR HANDLING SOCIAL DISEASES NEEDED

Health Officer Tells Board of Commissioners 10,000 Cases Exist in County

The urgent need for a place to isolate and care for indigent Durham residents infected with venereal diseases was outlined to the board of county commissioners today by superintendent J. H. Epperson of the county health department.

Another urgent health need is a suitable place to care for the insane, the superintendent told the commissioners.

Prefacing his remark by stating that he thought it his duty to lay the situation before them, Superintendent Epperson declared that there are "eight or nine or 10 thousand persons" in Durham county afflicted with venereal diseases.

He estimated that 10 percent of the entire population is afflicted with venereal diseases and that 30 percent of all Negroes in the county are so infected.

The superintendent said he was reluctant to ask the commissioners to spend more money for health work while they were so beset with other demands for expenditures but that this matter was of such grave import that he felt they should be cognizant with the facts.

"Right now," he said by way of illustration, "there is a Negro man lying on a floor in this city, so infected with syphilis that he cannot walk, much less come to the health department for treatment. That man is dying."

He said there was no place to care for this man nor for hundreds of others also in need of care. There is no suitable place either at the county home and infirmary or in the jails for such cases.

A similar situation exists in relation to care of the insane, he said. There is no more room at the state hospital, and only rarely can new patients be admitted there.

Commissioner George Kirkland declared that he realized the urgency of the situation and felt that something should be done as soon as possible.

Mr. Kirkland said a physician of his acquaintance had estimated that there were 12,000 persons infected with venereal disease in the county and that unless something were done to curb the spread of such social scourges, within 15 years the citizens of both city and county would be faced with the payment of an "intolerable" amount in taxes.

The board took no immediate action on the matter, but indicated that it would take it in consideration when making up the 1937-38 budget.