Hitting the Line Hard: the Height of the Social Hygiene Movement in Oregon, 1911-1918

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THESIS APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT


Title: Hitting The Line Hard: The Height of the Social Hygiene Movement in Oregon, 1911-1918

This thesis provides the history of a grass-roots educational campaign to educate the public of the dangers of venereal disease undertaken by reformers within the Oregon Social Hygiene Society. It recounts the forces which caused prominent citizens of the state to take up the hygiene society's cause and bring the organization to national prominence for state-wide educational work. The thesis considers the inherent tensions between purity and sanitary-based reformers within the hygiene movement. It demonstrates how reformers were able to put aside conflicting views for a time and unite to pursue educational goals. The thesis provides a blueprint of a local Progressive-era reform movement that made itself known at both national and international levels through its dedicated pursuit to mold individual and societal sexual behavior.

The first chapter of this thesis recounts the social emergency declared by a group of prominent social hygienists and its organizational efforts to meet this emergency by forming an educational society to pursue venereal disease prevention work. The second chapter demonstrates the Society's efforts to win public approval for its cause by ridding the state of an illegal sex-medicine business, thereby gaining
legislative funding for its work to expand from a city to a state-wide level. Chapter three surveys the various educational campaigns undertaken by hygiene reformers in their attempts to convert men and women to health and moral sexual behavior. The fourth chapter examines the Society's efforts to extend its message to children through their parents and through public schools. The final chapter follows the Society as it rose from a little-known educational endeavor to an internationally recognized model of hygiene work. The conclusion elaborates the Society's legacy as well as its shortcomings and places the organization's work in the context of cultural and social reform in the Progressive era.
HITTING THE LINE HARD: THE HEIGHT OF THE SOCIAL HYGIENE MOVEMENT IN OREGON, 1911-1918

by

JODI HAMMOND

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
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Beginning in 1911 purity reform forces, made up primarily of anti-prostitution advocates and abolitionists, merged with medical reform activists in Portland, Oregon in an effort to educate the city about the dangers of venereal disease. This merger took the form of the Oregon Social Hygiene Society. Like a handful of other hygiene societies in the United States, the organization took up the work of Dr. Prince Morrow. Morrow, a leading genito-urinary specialist from New York, had created the American Society for Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis in 1905, a federation dedicated to educating the public about venereal diseases and their far-reaching effects on not only individuals, but on the American family. Six years later Harry H. Moore of Seattle moved to Portland to organize an affiliate of Morrow’s federation, and the Portland Social Hygiene Society was formed.

Purity forces in the Society were, to a large degree, under the influence of William T. Foster, president of Portland’s Reed College and a leading social reformer. As a progressive visionary, Foster utilized his Eastern connections to begin reform work through Reed, an institution whose funds were willed by Amanda Reed to be used for education and the greater good of Portland. A large percentage of early members in the Society were college faculty from Reed. The college’s Unitarian ties to Portland minister Thomas Lamb Eliot assured that purity forces within the social hygiene organization would be strong.\(^1\)

By merging with respected physicians such as Dr. Norman G. Pease and Dr. Calvin S. White, secretary of the Oregon State Board of Health, the Society would
strike an unstable synthesis between medical and purity proponents in its efforts to educate the city’s population. These two forces came together in the agreement that education, not control of prostitution, was the best method for preventing the spread of venereal disease. A public aware of the diseases’ dangers, reformers in the organization stressed, would most certainly avoid infection. With this tenet in mind, social hygienists pressed forward to promote any method they considered necessary for public education. From disseminating literature and pamphlets to undertaking curfew work, the Society went far afield in its campaign to change the public’s attitude toward sexual diseases and the behaviors that enforced them. These campaigns were so effective that within a period of seven years the organization had a substantial impact on public opinion and behavior in the state of Oregon and on the national level as well.

Historical accounts of the purity element in the social hygiene movement that were useful to this thesis include Charles Walter Clarke’s *Taboo: The Story of the Pioneers of Social Hygiene* (1961), while Allen M. Brandt’s *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880* (1987) offered the medical perspective on sexual hygiene reform. John Burnham’s *Paths Into American Culture: Psychology, Medicine, and Morals* (1988) provided a useful overview of the synthesis between purity and medical forces. Another valuable source for this thesis was Gloria E. Myers’ *Municipal Mother: Portland’s Lola Greene Baldwin, America’s First Policewoman* (1995), which provided valuable insight on the efforts of
professional reformers to address prostitution in Portland, a movement which co-
exists with the social hygiene cause.  

In order to provide a detailed history of the everyday workings of the Oregon
Social Hygiene Society, this thesis relied on primary documents stored at the Oregon
Historical Society that include the organization’s minutes, literature, and annual
reports. Another valuable source at the Oregon State Library was The Bulletin, the
Society’s monthly report to its members, which adds additional month-to month
details on the group’s work. The Society’s pamphlets, brochures, circulars, and other
miscellaneous materials at both of the above locations offered a comprehensive view
of the reformers’ ideologies and the message of purity and sanitation they advocated.
Minutes from the Oregon State Board of Health at the Oregon State Archives and a
copy of the consolidated Portland Vice Commission Report of 1913 from the City of
Portland Archives also provided an important basis of research for this thesis.
Newspaper stories tracing the Society’s work filled in missing details untold by the
organization itself, as well as lending opposing and sometimes unfriendly views on the
reformers’ campaigns. Material from the Reed College Archives provided additional
information on many members of the Society, particularly the reformers’ efforts
directly before World War I.

This thesis traces the establishment, growth, and public influence of the
Oregon Social Hygiene Society on sexual hygiene activity in Oregon between the
years 1911 and 1918. The work provides an insight into the sexual reform movement
through the organization’s day-to day efforts to educate the public on the dangers of
venereal disease. It also offers a glance into the tenets of Progressive thought through the literature and ideals promoted by the Society.

The foremost theme of this exploration involves the tensions inherent in the uneasy balance between the purity and medical reform forces within the social hygiene movement. This thesis traces the various campaigns undertaken by hygienists and their wavering use of both repressive measures and progressive education as remedial instruments of reform. Also considered is the Society’s appeal to individuals to control their sexual behavior and its use of government to regulate those who were not willing to conform to its standards of reformed personal conduct.

The Oregon Social Hygiene Society was formed to meet the spread of venereal disease in Portland in 1911 in response to the social emergency depicted by Foster, Moore, and other prominent citizens in the city who answered their call for help. The Society organized itself to fight this emergency through a vigorous campaign of education. Its first move was against unlicensed practitioners who were preying on men’s fears of venereal disease for profit and aiding in the spread of the malady. By removing these practitioners the Society was able to convince the Oregon legislature that funding to prevent venereal disease was as important as funding to prevent diseases such as tuberculosis or smallpox. By clearing unlicensed practitioners and other sources of erroneous information on sexual disease from Portland, hygiene reformers were able to undertake a campaign of education to reach every man, woman, and child in Oregon.
Utilizing meetings for men and women at businesses, theaters, colleges and other locations, speakers from the Society were able to efficiently spread their message of social health and hygiene. Another important task undertaken by the Society was the creation of an Advisory Department to assist without charge men infected with venereal disease or those who feared they might be. In addition, reformers worked to educate the family by initiating parents’ meetings, organizing lectures to children in the schools, and promoting both a remedial curfew campaign and a progressive “Back to the Home” movement. The latter aimed at returning children to what hygienists considered a major bulwark against social decay: the home. By pursuing these goals, and reaching statewide populations in Oregon, reformers drew regional and nationwide attention. Soon reformers had persuaded local and national opinion makers and populations that venereal disease was an emergency and that efforts to protect the public were necessary to preserve a healthy population and an American way of life.

This thesis tells the story of an elite social movement that sought to impact ordinary people on matters of social hygiene. It focuses upon both the successes and limitations which these Progressive reformers experienced. By doing so, the thesis seeks to offer a blueprint on the local level of the workings of a major American social movement.
CHAPTER I
THE MENACE OF DISEASE

According to William T. Foster, president of Reed College and a prominent progressive reformer, Portland, Oregon faced a major social emergency in 1911. A "Great Black Plague," stated Foster, was on the rise in the Rose City; a destructive menace of the greatest proportions that was spreading due to ignorance. Portland families were left destitute by the plague, economically incapable of supporting themselves due to "incapacitation of the bread winner." Affluent families were as susceptible as poor ones, for the disease was carried into the home not by domestic servants or nannies but most often by the husband. Women, unknowingly infected by their spouses, were liable to pass the terrible curse onto their children. Over half of the infants born to syphilitic mothers would die during infancy, and those who did not would suffer abnormalities such as blindness, insanity, paralysis, or bone deformities. "Hopelessly diseased men; childless, mutilated and unsexed women; blind and otherwise defective children, bear witness, often mute and unknowing, to the ravages of disease which, until recently, has been regarded as of small consequence," declared Foster.¹

The disease, Foster believed, was an epidemic with severe consequences. The State paid thousands of dollars per year in the form of medical treatment and housing for sick victims who could not always be cured. Industries throughout Oregon were losing countless workers to the malady. Over one-fifth of the sickness in Portland...
alone was thought to have originated from this "social evil." It was time, demanded Foster, to stop the wide-spread pauperism, criminality, idiocy, and physical misery resulting from the "monster in our midst" who was tainting the "blood of the body politic." The "emergency" Foster described was venereal disease.²

For ages, venereal disease had been considered primarily a man's malady, a misery inflicted by a just God as punishment for sexual immorality. Since it was commonly known that venereal disease traveled efficiently among prostitutes, it was thought to be a plague of the "vicious, intemperate, and atheistic." Cure lie in prayer for the souls of victims. Men of all classes, however, sought diversion with prostitutes in vice districts of cities such as Portland. Sexual activities were commonly accepted as necessary to men's health and could be practiced with little thought of social repercussions. The advanced age at which many men married caused a number of them to dabble with prostitutes while they awaited an opportunity to wed. Married men, realizing that "ladies" such as their wives were "far too well mannered to satisfy their husband's sexual appetites," also sought the company of prostitutes in red light districts to spare their wives from their "indelicate" tendencies. While males might have understood that they had a possibility of contracting venereal disease from visiting these districts, the chance of infection was not enough to keep them from pursuit of their baser pleasures. Disease from these encounters, therefore, flourished in nineteenth century American cities.³

Two common venereal diseases associated with prostitutes before the twentieth century were gonorrhea and syphilis. Gonorrhea, considered no worse than the
common cold, was thought to be easily curable. Many men believed that washing their member with "plenty of soap and water" or injecting it with a mild antiseptic solution after sexual contact prevented infection. Those who contracted the disease despite these measures often mistook the disappearance of discharge or burning after a period of time as a sign that the malady was in remission. Treatment for stubborn cases of venereal disease required more serious measures to relieve pain such as inserting instrumental devices into the urethra to drain off excess buildup of urine or the use of a variety of dyes and chemicals to irrigate the urogenital membrane. Nevertheless, men usually considered the relief caused by these more elaborate ministrations as cure. Syphilis, more difficult to cure, was also less common. Treatment of syphilis was symptomatic, involving calomel ointment or mercury rubbed onto the skin in an attempt to halt the disease's spread. However, the treatment's unpleasant side-effects such as diarrhea, excessive salivation, unpleasant skin eruptions, and loose teeth often made the cure for syphilis seem worse than the disease. Men suffering from these maladies were not always guaranteed to find treatment within the medical profession. Doctors, due to the stigma attached to these diseases, disassociated themselves from patients with venereal ailments. Therefore, many men suffered in silence.\(^4\)

In Portland, as elsewhere around the country, venereal disease was cloaked in public censure and shame. Foster described a "conspiracy of silence," in which "certain subjects were rarely mentioned in public, and then only in euphemistic terms." Progressive reformers like Foster likened the public's silence to an ostrich
burying its head in the sand. The fact that public discussions of venereal disease were taboo in both the medical profession and respectable society led many men to avoid their family physicians and either attempt to treat themselves or seek the advice of “men’s specialists” for alternative cures. Advertised in newspapers such as the Oregonian, or Oregon Journal at the turn of the twentieth century, these “specialists” or “quacks” were unqualified and self-proclaimed physicians who misled men by claiming to be able to treat venereal maladies for the right price. Operating in the larger cities such as Portland, their businesses drew men from all parts of the state who feared “sexual trouble.” Men from the countryside traveling to quack institutions in cities benefited by avoiding an embarrassing visit to a small town practitioner under the prying eyes of their neighbors.5

Traveling to a crowded city such as Portland was facilitated by the advent of modern methods of travel such as the train or car. By the turn of the twentieth century, life moved faster, making it easier to discover the exciting, strange, or exotic. Events such as the Alaska Yukon International Expedition held in Seattle in 1909 drew many Easterners west to see exhibits boasting gigantic cabbages, totem poles, or the largest log house ever constructed. Though turn-of-the-century historians such as Fredrick Jackson Turner had proclaimed an end to the frontier, others such as Theodore Roosevelt lauded the Pacific Northwest’s potential. In a speech for the Expedition’s groundbreaking ceremony, Roosevelt extolled the area as one of “unequalled opportunity, backed up by limitless resources and possibilities.” Words such as these drew men and women west in search of employment.6
Nothing contributed more to venereal disease than travel and movement into cities. Large numbers of displaced men, their pockets full of pay, descended upon communities such as Portland in search of leisure and relaxation, which often could be found in saloons or in the company of prostitutes. To some Portlanders, prostitution was a "necessary evil," a social valve to ward off chaos and protect the daughters of upper class families from hordes of men coming to the city. To purity reformers, however, prostitution represented a shameful and uncontrollable byproduct of industrial expansion and, most of all, disease. Venereal disease was responsible, in reformer's minds, for a loosening of social morality and breakdown of the family, problems which threatened the future of the nation. "The new social ethics," reformers declared, "call loudly on all men of good will to enlist in the warfare against these ancient evils, which to-day are more destructive than ever before, because of the prevailing industrial and social freedom, the new facilities for individual traveling, and the migration of masses of men."7

New medical knowledge based on bacteriology supported reformist arguments against prostitution and venereal disease. Microscopes that found the *S. pallida* and *gonococcus* organisms demonstrated their widespread effects not only on the individual but on the family unit. Scientists discovered that venereal disease might remain with the infected long after its symptoms had disappeared. The end result was the infected unknowingly passing the disease on to the next sexual partner; in the case of families, this often meant the husband transmitting the organism to his wife. Gonorrhea, no longer classified with the common cold, was scientifically proven to
cause inflammation of bodily tissues and major organs, as well as arthritis, meningitis and sterilization among women. Syphilis, the more serious of the two diseases, was greatly feared when it was known that the organism in syphilis responsible for insanity, heart disease, and paralysis to the infected also caused deformities to infants of syphilitic parents. More horrifying was the fact that the disappearance of symptoms did not mean a cure, and that infection might reoccur much later in life.

These new scientific facts threatened the turn-of-the-century American family and added terror to an already inflated fear of germs in the public mind. With little progress in the area of cure, many of these fears were founded in rationality. Exaggerated but commonly quoted statistics suggested that as many as 80 percent of men had been infected with gonorrhea. Though this percentage was admittedly high, inadequate reporting of these diseases made accurate estimates almost impossible. Another factor that made these diseases appear dangerous was the possibility of contracting them “innocently,” through chaste kissing, the use of contaminated articles such as common drinking cups and towels, insufficiently sterilized silverware, or even from touching door handles, chairs or walls. Uncertain percentages coupled with the apparent ease of infection aided in heightening the public’s fear of disease and the prostitutes associated with it. What was once thought to be an isolated disease had become an “intolerable menace.” Could it be possible, reformers questioned, that one out of every five persons in Portland was a carrier of venereal disease?

In August of 1911, Mayor A.G. Rushlight was ready to gather the statistics necessary to answer this question. Under pressure from vice activists, social hygiene
elements, and Governor Oswald West, Rushlight appointed citizens to a committee to study the municipality's vice problem. The fifteen-person committee included four physicians and an equal number of ministers, a third of whom adhered to social hygiene thought. Although initiated as a means to gather evidence on vice and prostitution in Portland, the committee's statistics on venereal disease could not be ignored. The fact that doctors had never been required to report sexual disease diagnoses meant that estimates for venereal diseases before the investigation had been negligible. The Vice Committee, however, after gathering responses from licensed genito-urinary specialists, surgeons, and physicians around the city, reported that a shocking 21.1 percent of all diseases in the city were venereal in nature. Even more unsettling were the statistics gathered from youth organizations such as the Boys and Girl's Aid Society, which reported that seven out of seventy-five girls in their care under the age of sixteen suffered from venereal disease. The Home of the Good Shepherd, a detention home for delinquent girls, reported similar statistics; as high as twenty-six out of 118 of their cases were infected with a sexual disease. What made the venereal crisis especially dangerous, members stated, was that it affected "the future generation," changing it from a problem of the individual to a problem of society and, "...one which instead of being ashamed of and not fearing, the public should not be ashamed of, but fear."¹⁰

Difficulties gathering data made statistics approximate at best, the committee admitted. Nevertheless, it believed the estimates of venereal disease to be conservative. Indeed, estimates had been based solely on the replies of practitioners
and did not take into account the number of infected persons who sought the advice of quacks, drug stores, and medical institutes. Statistics also did not reflect the fact that only one-third of the doctors polled had responded to the committee's investigation. Absence of reporting made it impossible to know how quickly the disease was spreading, though some authorities had estimated venereal disease to be responsible for 85 percent of total disease in the country. While Portland's rate was far less at only 21.1 percent, responding physicians believed the disease was increasing in the Portland area. For that reason, over half of the doctors polled claimed that incidents of venereal infection should be reported to boards of health, while just over a third replied they should not.¹¹

The split between physicians on the issue of reporting emphasized the ideological discrepancies in the medical profession concerning venereal disease. Many doctors preferred to uphold the "medical secret," by which physicians hid diagnosis of sexually contracted infections from their patients. Reporting the maladies, they claimed, would not only betray doctor-patient confidence, but add to the shame and stigmatization of the infected. Other reform-minded physicians endorsed breaking the conspiracy of silence to prevent the spread of disease in both individuals and in families. Knowledge about the harmful effects of the venereal diseases would cause the public to fear and avoid them, they reasoned, in the same way that other serious communicable diseases such as cholera or tuberculosis had been avoided. Failure to report sexual disease was almost criminal, reformers declared; legislation that required reporting would benefit the community.¹²
The Vice Committee pointed to a notorious absence of legislation mandating venereal reporting in Portland. "There is no law which takes cognizance in any way of this disease, which may be both contagious and infectious," the committee's report stated, "nor are such cases obliged to receive treatment, even when they are a source of danger to others." Europe had long before made syphilis and gonorrhea a matter of public health, and states such as California and the city of Seattle were taking legislative action to make venereal diseases reportable. Oregon was lagging behind deplorably in such progressive-type measures, chastised the committee. Save a small venereal ward located in the County Hospital, little was being done to stop the spread of a disease that medical science had shown to be a menace to public health.\(^{13}\)

One effort the committee commended was the educational work undertaken by local hygiene societies. The conceptualization of a social agency to educate the public concerning sexual disease was largely the inspiration of Dr. Prince Morrow, a New York physician who was one of the first to speak out in the medical community about the danger of these maladies. New scientific studies on venereal disease had proven that entire families might be at risk of contamination through the father. Morrow negated the theory that medical inspection of prostitutes, a form of prevention advocated by many physicians at the turn of the century, prevented the spread of disease. Instead education and treatment were the "most efficient means of prophylaxis," he claimed. In 1904 he proposed the creation of an organization to educate the public, a group that would be formed by medical men like himself. In addition to physicians, membership in the agency should include prominent laymen.
and leaders of public opinion, as the disease was not only medical in nature, but moral. In spite of Morrow's invitation to laymen, five out of six of the first members in his society were medical men. Morrow's appeals for the preservation of the family, however, eventually drew a growing number of purity reformers to the hygiene cause. By 1908 Portland physicians Calvin S. White, Norman Pease, and L.W. Hyde followed cities such as New York and established a society hopeful of enlightening the public through education about the moral and social conditions that caused venereal disease to spread. The society, however, had little effect on the larger vice problem and by 1911 the vice commission recommended to the mayor and city council that a more aggressive campaign of education was needed: "We, therefore, believe that the first and most necessary step for the control of venereal disease is a vigorous campaign of education which will teach the public something of the prevalence and dangers of these diseases and the necessity of reporting the same...."14

By emphasizing education, Portland's vice commission adhered to a mainstay ideology of the Progressive era which promoted prevention over remedial action. Many social hygienists believed that since treatment of venereal disease was not always effective, preventative education was the only measure that would save future generations from becoming infected. Education's power lie in its ability to promote social change. A majority of the public acted sexually irresponsibly from ignorance, reformers claimed. Teaching them the dangers of venereal diseases would supply motives for moral conduct. Only fear would make men think more carefully about submitting to baser temptations. "The policy of silence and concealment...is no
longer justifiable," said Charles Eliot, prominent social hygienist of Harvard. "The thinking public can now learn what these evils are, and by what measures they may be cured or prevented." Social hygienists with religious idealism in their purity background, however, were only comfortable with a restricted moral sex education necessary to protect children from mental contamination by vulgar sources and from disease. A campaign of "pitiless publicity," they worried, would provoke as much prurient curiosity as the suggestive literature and "impure" pornography they traditionally fought against. Many purity advocates preferred sustaining the "conspiracy of silence." Merging with medical men who spoke blatantly about sexual disease, however, necessitated the purity reformer's surrender of silence on issues pertaining to sex, a move that would not always be easy for them. They gradually agreed that to educate the public a certain amount of knowledge must be presented, though they insisted that facts should be "clothed in delicate language and surrounded by an atmosphere of sacredness." 15

Though Portland's vice commission advocated education, its report would not be filed until five months later in January of 1912. Yet statistics suggested that Portland was approaching an epidemic. Awareness of these statistics in reform circles created a demand for public action to meet the social emergency. Since something needed to be done soon, hygienists did not wish to wait on the Vice Commission's report to command action, a report which easily could be filed away after the investigation. Among the most prominent hygiene reformers was Harry H. Moore of the Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.). 16
Moore, who initially began his work as the Boy’s Work Secretary at the Y.M.C.A. in Spokane, Washington, understood perfectly the problem of men who came to the Association for help. In a theme that was common to a rapidly growing urban existence, young men were coming from the “purity” of the countryside to the anonymity of cities in the Northwest in search of high-wage work at lumber mills, logging operations, and mining camps. Suffering from loneliness, they often came into the cities during the winters with their pockets full of hard-earned cash. Before long their funds ran dry from their pursuit of leisure time activities. Working with these men when they had no place else to go, Moore provided them with “material and spiritual assistance.” Stories told by the men made him fully aware of the dangers of sexual ignorance among the male population. Following the leadership of Dr. Prince Morrow, Moore established a small social hygiene bureau in his office at the Y.M.C.A. in 1908 called the Spokane Social Hygiene Society. To advertise his bureau, Moore requested local newspaper editors to place ads in their columns, hoping to reach men and older boys with the message that his office was, unlike the “medical specialists” around Spokane, the one place in the city where they might obtain truthful information about sex and venereal disease.17

Moore’s use of the newspaper to advertise sexual information was not original. For years quacks had advertised false “cures” and nostrums in the local newspapers, using discreet references to “rare blood disease” that left little doubt in men’s minds of the nature of diseases they were claiming to cure. Moore’s advertisements for “correct” information, however, came as a surprise to newspapers reticent to publish
any matter blatantly pertaining to sexual difficulties for fear of offending and losing subscribers. "Many newspapers which do not hesitate to speak freely of prostitution," complained Morrow, "shrink from mentioning the pathological consequence of that act as something unprintable." To newspapers, advertisements for "specialists" were one thing, but phrases such as "venereal disease" or "sexual knowledge" tended to raise an eyebrow due to their alleged prurient nature.¹⁸

Moore was not to achieve success, and was disappointed at the society's inability to create support and enthusiasm for the hygiene movement in eastern Washington. However, Harry W. Stone, General Secretary of Portland's branch of the Y.M.C.A., lauded Moore's sexual education work during his monthly visits to Spokane. Three years later the two men's affiliation, along with promise of Portland's readiness to support the hygiene cause, led Moore to give up his Spokane position and move to the Rose City, intent on creating a sex education movement throughout the entire Northwest.¹⁹

News of the Vice Commission's activities was just the fuel Moore needed to begin earnest hygiene work in Portland. Neither Stone nor Moore needed to wonder whether Portland's city leaders would advocate the social hygiene movement they proposed. Vice, a primary source of venereal disease, had long been considered problematic in the public mind. Only six years earlier Mayor-elect Harry Lane of Portland had received a letter from Edgar Quackenbush, a prominent real estate investor, referring to the city as "open, flagrant, shameless and even virulent..." in the matter of vice. A headline in the Oregonian, reflecting public sentiment of the time,
read "Citizens Baffled by Vice Problem." Already having engaged in a fight to rid Portland of its North End vice district six years earlier under a sympathetic Mayor Lane, social hygienists in the city were ready to attack prostitution and its resulting diseases through education instead of repression. The influences of strengthening hygiene philosophies across the nation and in Oregon’s own state legislature, as well as the support of city leaders such as mayors Lane, Joseph Simon and Rushlight, led hygiene reformers in the Y.M.C.A. to believe that Portland was ripe for their movement. Moore and Stone, in consultation with H. M. Grilley of the Physical Department at Portland’s Y.M.C.A., appointed a special committee to cultivate interest in the hygiene movement among city leaders and other prominent men. The panel mailed influential leaders a letter stating its belief in a need for immediate action.

Positive response to their mailing encouraged the three men. In response, Moore, Stone, and Grilley, along with Dr. J.L. Hewitt, Chairman of the Y.M.C.A.'s Physical Department Committee, sent another mailing advertising a “Call to Action.” This communication invited city leaders, along with 650 prominent educators, physicians, businessmen, and religious and social workers in Portland to attend a conference on “The Great Black Plague and Kindred Evils” to be held in the downtown Y.M.C.A.'s Association Hall on September 18, 1911. On the day of the conference, 350 curious onlookers crowded the Y.M.C.A.'s headquarters. White, as Secretary of the Oregon State Board of Health, presided over the meeting as temporary chairman. The session began with a statement of the “grave problems”
surrounding the city's social evils. Portland should be one of the vanguard cities in the Northwest because of its advancements, hygiene leaders insisted. Yet rising venereal disease rates prevented fulfillment of this claim. The integrity of practically every Portland home was threatened by a disease caused by two factors. The first involved men who participated in the "double standard," a practice which allowed promiscuity for men and boys but required purity in girls. Those promiscuously sexual males then brought venereal disease into the home and infected their family. The "conspiracy of silence" was the second cause of venereal disease, a silence which led teachers and ministers to stand idly by, adhering to outdated taboos which supposedly kept the public, and children especially, in a "blessed state of innocence."

With little sexual teaching in the home, children were then liable to listen to foul sources that equated sexual reproduction with vulgarity, sources which were hardly escapable outside the home. Immoral associations, reformers feared, had already caused grave harm to children, having "stunned their spiritual natures," leading them to immorality.  

Judge W.N. Gatens of Portland's juvenile court system agreed that problems among the young were the most serious of all court cases. Almost every child, he reiterated, was subject at some time to foul sources of sexual knowledge. Work in the court system, he indicated, had given him first-hand experience with children who had gained a surprising amount of immoral knowledge at an early age, primarily through "filthy stories and foul rhymes of the schoolyard and the...shameless falsifications of the quack." Many physicians in attendance were able to substantiate Gaten's
revelations with their own. Several concurred that in their experiences they had come personally into contact with boys and girls with over-advanced sexual knowledge, some coming to them for treatment of venereal diseases at a young age.\textsuperscript{22}

This focus on the young as receptors of venereal disease and sexual knowledge was a hallmark of the nationwide Progressive hygiene movement. Adults inflicted with venereal disease were considered a terrible tragedy; “infections of the innocent” were unthinkable. While some physicians believed that children were contracting venereal disease through sexual contact, others asserted that the disease could be inflicted upon children in any number of ways. Innocent infections, they believed, could be traced to sources in schools such as water fountains, pens and pencils, or public lavatories. Reformers who saw children as representatives of a utopian future free from immorality and disease were distraught with the apparent ease with which that future was being threatened. Though they agreed that venereal disease was on the rise in children as well as adults, not everyone at the session agreed on what should be done about the problem.\textsuperscript{23}

As a consequence of the failure to achieve consensus on the issue, the meeting at the Y.M.C.A. allowed for open discussion of plans that might be instated to solve Portland’s venereal disease problem. Judge Gatens was the first to offer a suggestion. Enforcement of the curfew law, he said, was the most important action to instate, since most of the crimes that led to venereal disease were committed at night. The problem began in the home, with parents far too lenient who allowed their post-pubescent children out on the streets after dark when pitfalls for the young such as dance halls or
moving picture shows lured the innocent to immorality. Police, he suggested, should aid the city by watching these children during their leisure hours, reprimanding them on the street after curfew, taking them home to their parents, or arresting them. Many at the conference agreed that the home was to blame for sexual irresponsibility. Some reformers believed parents were also responsible for the lack of sexual information given to their children. Due to ignorance in sexual matters or misguided beliefs, such as those that led many mothers to allow sexual promiscuity in their sons, children were receiving little or false sexual instruction in the home. One doctor reported that of ninety boys under his care, only ten had been spoken to on the subject of sex by a parent. Dr. William House, a prominent physician and lecturer in Portland, contended that more than 60 percent of people in the United States adhered to the idea of sexual incontinence which falsely promoted the idea that a lack of sex might injure a boy’s health.²⁴

Reverend T.H. Walker of Portland’s Calvary Presbyterian Church disagreed with Gatens. The home, he argued, was not entirely responsible for the lack of sexual instruction in the young. The school, having cut moral teaching from its curriculum, was just as much to blame. Boys and girls of adolescent age were leaving schools and entering the public sphere unprepared for the sexual temptations that awaited them. Though teachers were not permitted to instruct in matters of sexual hygiene, they should be responsible, to some degree, for the moral training necessary to “build up a pupil’s general character.” The church did not help matters when ministers failed to impress upon people the body’s sacredness as a temple of Christ. H. Russel Albee, an
eminent insurance executive, added his opinion. The church, he stated, should not be held accountable for the lack of sexual education. Although ministers might exploit sexual topics to lure their congregation to repentance, Albee reminded those at the conference of the case of the clergyman who attempted to instruct parents on the subject of sex and was subsequently threatened with tar and feathering by his congregation. Instruction, he added, should begin in the home for children as young as six or seven years of age. Prominent urban reformer Father Edwin Vincent O’Hara of Portland’s Catholic Diocese was in agreement with Albee on the issue of educating children at a young age. Priests at Catholic Church confessionals, he stated, were hearing from children of their sexual temptations as early as seven years of age.25

Dr. Walter T. Williamson, notable sanitarium director, then took the stand. Although theories of who was to blame for the spread of venereal disease were interesting to discuss, he stated, a more pragmatic solution to the problem should be found that would guarantee results. Since it appeared that neither the school nor the home could be relied on for accurate sexual instruction, what was needed was an organization that could carry on the work of sexual hygiene education. A permanent society should be formed whose main goal would be to “...break down the barriers of false modesty and replace them with the truth.” The society could educate the public to the dangers of venereal disease in all its phases by applying the truths uncovered by medical science. A variety of subcommittees might be formed within the society to help carry out a constructive plan against social evil. The society’s first plan of action would be to study the sex-social situation and develop a careful plan of action.26
Forty-three of over 350 men at the meeting agreed to Dr. Williamson's suggestion. Six days later, the first meeting of the Portland Society Hygiene Society was held, informally modeled after Morrow's American Federation for Sex Hygiene in New York. Membership in the organization was open only to men in the early years as venereal disease was considered primarily a male problem. Membership fees were set at two dollars a year; larger amounts of money given to the Society secured members with an additional title of "donor" or "patron." The newly formed society recognized that it would be necessary to attract public support if it was going to create channels to advertise its cause. Therefore, membership in the organization included a number of distinguished physicians, businessmen, educators, and ministers. State Health Officer Calvin White was elected President in a move that represented the beginning of a symbiosis between the state health bureaucracy and the hygiene society. Reed College President William Foster was elected first vice president. Rabbi Jonah B. Wise of Portland's Temple Beth Israel was elected second vice president. Moore assumed the position of Executive Secretary of the Society while Judge Gatens headed a three-member committee appointed by the Chair to draft the new organization's constitution. Names such as these behind the Society's work would insure the hygiene society's publicity.\(^\text{27}\)

Organizing like other social hygiene societies of the time, an Executive Committee was formed utilizing fifteen men as the presiding decision-making body, whose plans were to meet weekly to conduct all business of the Society. Eleven subcommittees were then appointed with names like the Committee on Social Evil, the
Committee on the School Cooperation, and the Committee on Quacks. It was these standing committees which were delegated the different sectors of work pursued by the Society. For the Committee on Social Evil, work began by studying the problem of youth on the city streets at night, while the Committee on School Cooperation discussed plans to promote sexual instruction in the public school system. The Committee on Quacks began investigating the problems caused by “men’s specialists” and their operations in Portland. The subcommittees met at least once a week at noon to plan investigations, share observations, and study the work assigned them in order to prepare careful plans that could be presented to the Executive Committee for approval.  

The first two months of the Society were a formative time. Meetings were held in the Central Y.M.C.A. building with the primary goal of uniting members’ purposes in the same direction. Yet Portland’s new hygiene society was formed from a contradictory and, at times, uneasy alliance of purity and sanitary philosophies, one based on religion and morals and the other on science and medicine. A varied membership base including physicians, lawyers, educators, ministers, and businessmen ensured that goals brought into the formation of the Society would be necessarily diverse. Accordingly, groups proposed both preventative and remedial measures to stop the spread of venereal disease. Generally those members with a background in purity, often clergymen and social workers, tended to emphasize preventative spiritual values and sexual morality as the public’s best prevention against disease. They promoted abstinence before marriage, social justice for
prostitutes, and repressive moral campaigns to suppress suggestive literature or censorship of the open sensuality of the theater. Those from a more "materialistic" or sanitary background were primarily physicians drawn to the movement by new scientific discoveries concerning venereal diseases and their effect on the family. Sanitarians were known to endorse remedial measures such as suppression and/or inspection of prostitutes and the elimination of red light districts. Although the two groups within the Portland Social Hygiene Society managed to unify on the premise that "good morals and good medicine supplemented and strengthened each other," tension between the two approaches remained a major challenge.29

The Society realized that, to gain public interest in the hygiene cause, it must undertake a campaign of propaganda. A Publication Committee was formed, dedicated to utilizing every form of communication available to catch the public's attention. Following in the steps of social hygienists before them, the panel produced its own supply of agency publications in the form of circulars, leaflets, pamphlets, and posters. Though the committee was able to refer to the literature of other hygiene societies for some of its material, most of its pamphlets and circulars began "at scratch." Literature sought to reflect the right mixture of purity and hygienic elements for topics of "current interest." Consequently, two months passed before the first two circulars of the Society were ready for publication. "Why the World Needs Instruction in Social Hygiene," the first product, described the establishment of the hygiene society in Portland and its aim in educating each individual that venereal disease was an enemy of the public. Ignorance, the circular stated, was responsible for
many of those suffering from these sexual diseases in Oregon. The second circular, "The Four Sex Lies," warned young men of the sexual misconceptions that were common in society and of the need to do away with sexual indulgence and a double standard of morality. Both circulars advertised the organization's willingness to send additional "correct" information or advice upon request free of charge in a plain envelope to preserve the writer's confidentiality.30

Circulars produced by the Publication Committee, similar to other hygiene leaflets published at the beginning of the century, took a no-nonsense tone of parental authority as the literature was intended to replace knowledge absent in the home. Circulars were targeted to sex-specific audiences and gradated by age. For those under ten years of age the committee prepared diluted Darwinian messages on biology that introduced the hierarchy of the animal kingdom and the fact that man was at the top of it because of his ability for self control. The message sought to instill in children a reverential attitude of reproduction among lower life forms such as plants or flowers, extending this reproductive reverence to one's own mother. Adolescents ten to thirteen years of age were given messages similar to those of younger children. Where circulars such as "What Every Boy Should Know" and "What Every Girl Should Know" differed was the addition of information concerning puberty and the changes that should be expected therein. Adolescents' sexual impulses were compared to reproduction in slightly higher life forms such as insects and fish, and an attitude of reverence for reproduction again was attached to one's own mother.31
For older groups, such as the sex-segregated circulars of boys and girls ages thirteen to eighteen, the message was much more direct. Circulars for older boys described the function of their testicles, comparing them to the reproductive impulses of higher evolutionary animals such as horses, and exhorted them to maintain their virility through sexual abstinence. Circulars for girls described ovulation cycles and the necessity of being a good wife and mother. Literature for men and women was much more explicit, divided by titles such as "Vigorous Manhood" and "Womanhood" for the single, and "Engagement and Marriage" for those considering marriage. Adults were warned of the symptoms of venereal disease and the necessity of obtaining physical examinations for men before marriage to ensure that they were free from contagion. Every pamphlet contained the message that sexual impulses, if controlled, would bring individuals a step closer to the "one great purpose in the scheme of nature; reproduction of the human race." Happiness would be achieved, circulars promised, when sexual impulses were contained.  

The Society moved cautiously in the distribution of literature. Many of the leaflets initially were sent out in response to calls for information and were mailed in unmarked brown envelopes with only the requested person's name and address visible to preserve confidentiality. In an attempt to gather public opinion of their work, reformers sent questionnaires with the circular packets asking readers to respond as to which literature they believed was the most effective. Readers were also asked to respond as to whether the organization's work had helped them in any way and were invited to send in any negative comments on the Society's literature as well as
suggestions for future work. To promote its cause, the Society included in each packet a form to request additional circulars, either for oneself or for an acquaintance that might benefit from such information. Those who wrote were assured that their name would in no way be associated with literature mailed to their acquaintance.  

The Society had little reason for such precautionary measures, however. Demand for its literature increased so rapidly that six weeks after the Society’s first meeting, the Publication Committee recommended that circulars be published in conjunction with the State Board of Health. Dissemination of health information in the form of pamphlets, broadsides, and posters had been a traditional task of Oregon’s State Board of Health since its inception in 1903. Working in correlation with the Board would enable the Society to offset its costs of publication, avoid duplication of venereal disease literature, and “secure the widest possible distribution on the subject of sex hygiene.” The Board of Health, recognizing the wisdom of this move, approved the juncture and, by December of 1911, published Circulars 3 and 4 to be distributed by the Portland Social Hygiene Society. By the end of the Society’s first year, the State Board of Health would print 80,000 circulars that the Society could proudly say were not a burden on its finances.  

Bolstered by the public’s reception of its hygiene literature, the Publication Committee began distribution of its material in earnest. Literature was forwarded to libraries, bookstores, barber shops, and sexual hygiene meetings. At the State Board of Health’s recommendation, notices were posted concerning the seriousness of venereal disease, a move which the Society was wary would invite criticism of its
campaign. The Executive Committee decided that a limited number of notices would be posted in places such as men’s lavatories and train stations. Reformers would then wait for public reaction. Soon after the notices were posted letters began to pour into the Society asking for informational literature. To the Executive Committee’s relief, a general consensus of the postings seemed to be one of support.35

A number of businessmen, noticing the signs, suggested that they be put up not only in the city of Portland proper, but in other areas of the state, a “more general use of them than the Society…thought advisable,” according to reformers. With additional prompting from the State Board of Health, however, the Society agreed to frame 550 of these posters in glass and place them in a variety of locations, primarily within the city. Railway trains, hotels, shops, mills, public libraries, factories, and parks throughout the metropolitan area were chosen for the Society’s postings. Like the first round of notices, the popularity of the posters pleasantly surprised Society leaders and lessened the concerns of those who were worried that public criticism would necessitate their removal. The public endorsed the Society’s efforts with another flood of letters, not only from around the state, but from other parts of the country. On a visit to Portland, a man from the east coast noticed the posters and wrote to the organization: “I am writing to ascertain if I may secure a copy of the bulletin which I saw posted…for I feel sure it could be made the basis of some move along your line here in Maine.” The Publication Committee, more certain of the success of its publishing campaign, decided to follow the businessmen’s advice and expand postings of the notices to areas outside Portland. Another 225 posters were
framed and hung in towns such as Seaside, La Grande, Warrenton, and Rainier. Eventually work of this measure would become so time consuming that it would be necessary to employ a special officer to post these notices and arrange for the distribution of circulars in the towns to which he traveled.\textsuperscript{36}

Placards and posters were not the only visual media used by the Society. The Public Hygiene Exhibit Committee was formed to prepare an exhibit for public use that would demonstrate in visual form the message of social health the Society wished to put forward. Though health societies in Louisiana and California sent their exhibits around the state by train, Oregon’s plan was to develop an exhibit that could be dismantled to moved from place to place. The first exhibit consisted of a large number of 22x28 inch cards with diagrams, photographs, and quotations tacked onto larger posters and hung on exhibit walls. Although the success and economy of the exhibit was apparent, its use was limited because it could not withstand the dismantling and traveling that was necessary if it were to be set up at numerous locations. A more permanent and sturdier presentation was prepared on large 3x6 composite-board panels, with pictures, graphs and written information that could be combined with the society’s published handouts. The new exhibit was able to accommodate larger audiences and its portability made it useful for reaching the public at state fairs and public exhibitions, or for being taken on the road with speakers when they lectured.\textsuperscript{37}

Another form of media prepared by the Exhibit Committee was a lantern slide show. Taking advantage of the latest technology, the slide show was used in theaters
while speakers elucidated the slides shown on the theater’s screen. Though slightly more expensive and more difficult to prepare than the hygiene exhibit, the slide show’s value was that it reached a more “common” audience of “all classes and conditions,” from vagrants on the street to groups of mothers. Thirty slides were produced; ten focused on the advantages of work being done by the Society, ten slides warned against quacks, and the remaining ten described the affects of venereal disease on sexual organs. Both the exhibit and the lantern slide show were subject to much discussion and debate between purity and sanitary members of the hygiene society, who took precautions to make certain the material adhered to the organization’s standards of accuracy and moral value. Many of the physicians in the Society, due to their medical training, did not shrink from the frank discussions or blatant visual images they believed were necessary to create fear in the public mind of the damages done to the body by venereal disease. Though purity advocates agreed that the public should be warned, they disliked the physicians’ educational strategies, which they believed might too graphically “...portray to developing youth the horrors of venereal disease.” Some pictures or charts supplied by physicians were simply too suggestive for the comfort of purity-inspired members, and even Dr. House, heatedly arguing this point against another physician, said that “...much evil may result from such skin pictures as shown by Dr. Hyde.” Such material was eventually discarded in favor of purity advocates. 38

Another area of work initiated by the Portland Social Hygiene Society was preparing speakers to spread the “gospel of social health.” The first criterion of any
speaker, the Society believed, was the courage to speak out on social hygiene topics. Subjects such as the effects of gonorrhea and syphilis or the necessity for proper sexual conduct were generally considered "taboo." Even greater caution was to be exercised in this area than in the areas of publication or exhibition because, although written or visual materials could be revised or redrafted, the lecturer's words, once spoken, could not be recalled. The mixture of purity and medical knowledge, the Society believed, must be exact. Organizational leaders feared that physicians who lectured might tend to over-emphasize the venereal aspects of the Society's message, while speakers like ministers or laymen might adhere too closely to purity lines of thought. Therefore, speakers were rigorously trained; they were given public speaking classes, critiqued, and requested to revise lectures to meet the Society's rigid standards. "Here mistakes will not do; here incompetent teachers cannot be trusted..." stated Foster, because speakers' "...ill advised efforts...may aggravate the very evils we are trying to assuage...by making statements they do not know to be true." The greatest caution possible was to be exercised, he repeated, by speakers representing the Society. 39

With speakers trained, circulars printed, and exhibits prepared, the Portland Social Hygiene Society was prepared to undertake its mission to break down the conspiracy of silence, eliminate false information, halt the breakdown of the family, and return moral values to the community. Through proper education, the Society believed, it could persuade individual conduct to return to older "agrarian values" of chastity and modesty, erasing the threat of disease from society. The Society had set
for itself an ambitious goal, which illustrates the faith social hygienists placed in their ability to reform the public. Like other Progressives of the early twentieth century, they were willing to organize a “grass roots” effort to fight against the ills of society. Two types of reformers, the sanitarians and the purity reformers, though beginning their educational campaigns for different reasons, were willing to join forces and merge their values, for a time, to erase the effects of venereal disease. The public’s approval of the first circulars encouraged the Society to continue its reforms. The battle they would turn their attention to next would be a war against quacks, newspapers, and the curfew law. Their weapon would be the “vigorous campaign of education” proposed by Portland’s Vice Commission. The first step in meeting the social emergency in Portland had been to educate local leaders to the need for immediate action. The Society would not give up addressing this emergency until it had convinced the public that venereal disease was an “intolerable menace” to the American society as a whole that wrought “...terrible wrongs and destructions.”
CHAPTER II

THOSE QUACKS AND CHARLATANS: OREGON’S SEX-MEDICINE BUSINESS

The most immediate hurdle the Portland Social Hygiene Society faced after its organization turned out to be funding. The newly formed Finance Committee estimated the Society’s initial financial costs to be somewhere around three thousand dollars. Little money, however, was forthcoming. The two dollar membership fee collected from the first forty-four members of the Society in September of 1911 amounted to eighty-six dollars. Though the number of members in the organization tripled by November, membership fees totaled less than three hundred dollars. Even the three hundred members the Society would claim by the end of its first year’s work would only contribute seven hundred dollars of the estimated need. For a time sanatorium director Dr. Walter T. Williamson, a member of the Society, paid the stenographer’s salary from his own pocket while the Y.M.C.A. allowed use of its central building for office space. Additional aid came from donations such as the one thousand dollar contribution from Portland’s Commercial Club in December of 1911 to offset the organization’s most immediate expenses. Hygiene reformers realized that, though donations were helpful, they could not be counted upon as they were subject to the whims of their contributors. Clearly what was called for was a better plan for raising money.\(^1\)

By November of 1911 the Finance Committee suggested setting a budget of $2,500 for the Society’s first year of work and developing a plan to raise needed
funds. The subject was tabled at the Society’s November 17th meeting. One at a time members put forward suggestions for raising money to continue the organization’s work. Plans to increase membership fees were considered as well as plans to appeal to private organizations for contributions. The Society hoped that the public’s monetary support would grow alongside acceptance of its hygiene cause. To increase familiarity with the Society’s work the Publication Committee suggested a circular be printed publicizing the benefits of social hygiene. The committee was confident that distribution of the circular with attached membership cards would bring increased membership and contributions. Dr. Calvin S. White voiced his support of this idea. The State Board of Health, he proposed, would willingly aid the Society by publishing its first circular, equitably splitting the cost of publication between the two agencies. The proposal was immediately accepted and work on the circular, “Why the World Needs Instruction in Social Hygiene,” began.²

The Portland Social Hygiene Society was not alone in its need to raise funds. Most hygiene societies that organized themselves around the country following Prince Morrow’s lead were weakened by lack of financial support and found it difficult to raise funds for a subject considered “taboo” by a majority of the public. Portland’s hygiene society realized that gaining public support for venereal disease education would be almost impossible while vestiges of the conspiracy of silence were in place, restricting channels through which it might build public support and obtain needed funding to secure its future. The Society, therefore, proposed to break the conspiracy of silence and open channels through which it might gain funding and support.
Hygiene reformers believed that an added benefit of breaking this silence would be the destruction of an entire subculture of sexual folklore and misunderstanding that contributed to the public's ignorance. The lies propagated by sex-medicine businesses and by unlicensed physicians, or "quacks," had continued for far too long, according to reformers. As early as the 1880's Oregon's State Medical Society had complained that Portland was flooded by "druggists' clerks, botch dentists and horse torturers" who had come to the state and set up business, falsely assuming "the title of Doctor." These businesses, hygiene reformers believed, were the most powerful contributors to erroneous folk beliefs. Reformers hoped that ridding Portland of these twin evils would open channels for proper sexual education and for financial support of their Society. Dollars which had once been spent by the public on quacks or unneeded medicine would be available for contributions to their cause. Therefore executive members decided that the Society's first attack would be against Portland's quack doctors.  

Reformers blamed the medical profession, in part, for the void of accurate sexual information in which quack doctors were able to operate. Qualified physicians, social hygienists believed, were neglecting their duties by failing to warn the public of the dangers of venereal disease. Though advances in pathology alerted the medical profession to the far-reaching side effects of gonorrhea and syphilis, the conspiracy of silence and stigma attached to the diseases caused many physicians to avoid association with the infected. Some of this silence, reformers believed, was caused by the medical field's insistence that "the rule of professional secrecy...[was] absolute."
Other reformers pointed to the physician’s reluctance to be stigmatized as a “pox doctor” whose profession was connected with houses of “ill repute.” A number of doctors may have feared that by treating venereal disease they would be categorized by colleagues as a “quack.” Hygienists worried that such attitudes of silent disapproval “warned off” many individuals’ attempts to gain medical advice on the subject.⁴

A more probable reason for the physician’s reluctance to treat venereal disease was a lack of training. Medical education in the United States was extremely limited in the early twentieth century and courses in venereology were not considered necessary for most undergraduate physicians. Portland’s Medical Sentinel at the turn of the century claimed that practitioners in Oregon were even less educated than the national average because of the state’s minimal educational requirements for practicing medicine. The Sentinel even referred to Portland as a “dumping ground” for physicians unable to obtain a license in other states for lack of training. Since doctors could not (or would not) adequately treat these diseases, the public often disregarded them as a source of cure. Hospitals were no better at treating venereal diseased patients than physicians because most institutions considered their suffering to be self-inflicted. Some hospitals banned sexually-diseased patients entirely, while others offered only limited assistance. Hygiene reformers bewailed the medical profession’s attitude of censure, claiming physicians preferred to “look on tongue-tied, at the innocents playing unwarned on the edge of a hidden precipice and being drawn in appalling number over it.”⁵
Even if physicians were willing and able to treat venereal disease, those inflicted did not always wish to consult them. Men who might not otherwise be intimidated often found exposing a sexual problem to their physician a shameful experience. Compounding patients' avoidance was a general lack of faith in the medical field. An historic absence of professional licensing laws in the United States meant that almost anyone could practice medicine, creating a certain amount of disregard for physicians in the public mind. In addition, statistics promised that any patient visiting a reputable physician had less than a 50 percent chance of benefiting from the experience. Those patients with sexual problems had even less chance of benefiting since venereal disease was difficult or sometimes impossible to cure. Treatments with embarrassing side-effects, such as uncontrollable salivation or loss of hair seemed punitive. Many men who tried a reputable physician became discouraged after drawn out weeks of dubious treatment with no apparent results. Some would try "swapping horses in the middle of the stream" and seek another physician, not realizing that the typical treatment for sexual disease ran from one to several months. The public's conviction that those in the medical field were seldom helpful meant that "medical specialists" were just as lucrative as more reputable physicians, especially since they advertised "delicacy and secrecy," quick fixes without confinement, and painless, non-mercurial cures that reputable physicians could not offer.  

The physicians of the Portland Social Hygiene Society were vocal about the dangers of disease. In contrast to many common physicians who remained silent due to fears of the effect of stigmatization on their practice, most doctors joining the
Society were among the "professional elite." These practitioners were often more advanced in their medical knowledge of venereal disease than ordinary physicians, and many in the Society were professors, instructors or lecturers in their field. As members of the middle or upper class, their training usually included specialized training at prestigious medical schools or universities. Because of the economic stability accompanying their social status, the Society's physicians could afford to flout public opinion without concern for the effect this might have on their practice. Elite physicians were similar to common ones, however, in their desire to raise the medical field's professional status. Licensed physicians viewed the quack's business as detrimental to their professional prestige since the public could not always differentiate between reputable and non-reputable physicians.

The term "quack" used loosely by the Society's reformers referred more to marketing techniques than to the types of treatments offered. What set quacks apart from professional physicians was that the former widely advertised services a reputable physician would not. The "advertising specialists" were disdained by those in the Society for using men's anxiety over sexual debilities as a "steady source of income." These "extortioners," the Society criticized, would do "almost anything" to make money from their patients. A fear shared by hygiene reformers was that men visiting quacks were not being cured. Those who suffered the quacks' ministrations without relief might attempt to treat themselves with patent medicines which failed to cure. Furthermore, patients who mistakenly believed they were cured after a trip to the quack might advance their disease and heap added misery upon those to whom
they passed their infection. Many letters written to the Society warned of the damage
done by disreputable physicians, giving the medical men in the organization first-hand
knowledge of the dangers these unlicensed practitioners posed not only to their own
profession, but to the public.8

One young man writing to the Society, a self-professed “clean cut” and honest
gentleman, told of his encounter with a quack physician. Concerned with the
appearance of a large vein on his genitals, he sought advice from a “notorious medical
institute.” The charlatan who examined him, apparently recognizing a chance to add
to his coffers, advised the young man that his vein was “serious trouble.” The quack
instigated a weekly series of treatments that lasted six months and cost the man $130
dollars. When treatments did not return the vein to “normal” the man sought the help
of a more reputable medical clinic where he was told that the vein was “as harmless as
a wart on one’s back.” Another letter described the misery of a man who “fell into the
clutches of the operators.” The man was operated on for a “sexual problem” without
his consent by a quack who claimed to be a specialized surgeon visiting from Europe.
After waking to find that his clothes had been rummaged through for money, he
escaped the business’ locked room through a window. The procedure cost him $105
dollars in cash up front and a stay in one of Portland’s hospitals to recover from the
“unnecessary operation.”9

The number of men writing to the Society for advice after visits to quacks
demonstrated to reformers the prevalence of these businesses and the public’s relative
ease in accessing them. Men living alone in cities away from traditional community
associations were a "ready-made" audience for quack entreprenuers who utilized aggressive advertising to draw their business. Quack literature sent through the mail, handed to men on the streets, or circulated in newspapers guaranteed "weak men made strong," "health, strength and vigor restored," or help for those suffering from "nervous weakness, loss of strength and energy." Many were attracted to quacks through their sensationalistic and free literature such as "From Darkness to Light," "Oriental Remedies," or "Nature's Mysteries Revealed." Quacks who understood the curiosity of young men over their own sexual functioning were willing to utilize that curiosity to ply their trade.10

Such stories of public woe at the hands of false medical practitioners inspired the Portland Social Hygiene Society to instigate a campaign against the "unholy alliance" between quack interests, the sex medicine business, and the press. In September of 1911 a Committee on Quacks was formed with William T. Foster of Reed College as its chairman. To gage public opinion of its campaign, the committee instructed Society speakers to bring the cause before select interests around Portland such as teachers' groups, advertising and commercial clubs, and Portland's Mothers' Congress. With public approval of its move assured, the committee's second step required gathering evidence of fraud to use against quack practitioners. Reformers sent detectives to collect information on businesses suspected of "quackery." Medical firms which promised an absolute cure for venereal disease or included the words "Company," "Museum of Anatomy," or "Institute" in their business name were immediately suspected of fraudulent practice.11
To test the authenticity of these establishments, committee volunteers visited as decoys to inquire about fictitious ailments or gathered testimony from those who believed they had been victimized. Other agents sent letters to suspected firms pretending to ask for advice. One agent sending away for advice received a glass tube with instructions to place “evidence” of his disease into the vile and return it for medical examination. The agent returned the tube to the quack with a tuberculosis cell inside. A few days later he received a reply from the quack warning him that he suffered from “spermatorrhea,” a fictitious debilitory ailment commonly feared by many young men. Such a dangerous disease, the letter advised, required immediate treatment. Another of the committee’s agents pretended that he became tired and dizzy after overexertion during exercise. The written reply informed the agent that this symptom was a blatant sign of gonorrhea, a disease the specialist would treat after a twenty-five dollar cash deposit. Evidence gathered by the investigators confirmed the committee’s suspicions. Most of these firms were dispreputably persuading men that they were suffering from sexual diseases to make money from them.\textsuperscript{12}

In January of 1912 Foster informed the members of the Society that his committee had carefully built its case against the city’s “pernicious frauds.” Committee members were prepared to instigate the third step of their plan by undercutting the quacks’ business opportunities by attacking their fraudulent advertising in Portland’s newspapers. In 1907 the Oregon legislature had passed a bill regulating advertising for men’s sexual cures. Quacks, however, had succeeded in circumventing the law by employing lawyers who lobbied to have the specific
terminology used in the legislation generalized. Failure to comply with the law resulted in a fifty dollar fine, not much of a deterrent to publishers whose income depended, to a large degree, on quack advertisements. Oregon's newspapers had little reservation about allowing quack advertisements into their columns, as they charged "three times as much" for the "vile" material as they did legitimate business ads. Newspapers benefited not only from the charges to place ads in their papers, but from the sexual sensationalism associated with the ads that drew subscribers.\(^13\)

The press was a common source of sexual information even under the conspiracy of silence. Editors, although ambivalent about their moral agenda, found that they were able to print many articles on subjects such as "vice" if they carefully deplored them. In the same way editors allowed advertising for sexual cures if euphemistic language such as "men's troubles" or "blood poison" were used to avoid alienating more puritanical readers. Druggists also benefited from these ads as they increased sales of patent medicines such as "Vigovim," "Ukurit" or "Her-cu-lin." The Society deplored the newspaper's cupidity and the indecent suggestiveness and false claims of cure utilized by the sex medicine alliance for commercial gain. White harshly criticized such practices. "In my opinion, the sneak who reaches your house from the porch and steals your jewels is a scholar and a gentleman," he complained, "compared to those miserable quacks and charlatans who fatten off ignorance."\(^14\)

By February of 1912 the committee agreed that it had gathered enough evidence to challenge Oregon's newspapers to remove false advertising. Throughout the month Foster and his committee approached Portland's advertising industry and
the business men who utilized newspapers for their solicitations. Targetting the most influential businessmen in places such as the Commercial Club and the Ad Club, they pushed their case for removing misleading advertisements from Portland’s newspapers. Why should honest businessmen such as themselves, they posed, who paid high prices for their advertising be required to compete in the newspapers with dishonest and disreputable businessmen who abused the public’s trust in the advertising industry?\textsuperscript{15}

Reformers assured club members that allowing false advertising was simply bad business. Like other reform movements of the Progressive era, Oregon’s hygienists challenged businesses to turn their considerable influence to upholding truthfulness as an American value while legitimizing and professionalizing their own industry. Deceptive ads which allowed disease to continue unabated were unhygienic and unAmerican. Vigorous applause by club members at these speeches prompted Foster and his men to further action. Letters were sent to each member of the Retail Merchant Association inviting them to a special meeting to discuss fraudulent advertising in Portland. The businessmen’s response to this meeting was better than the Committee had hoped and resulted in pressure on Oregon’s newspapers to stop the nefarious ads. Not all newspapers accepted the hygiene cause, fearing that they would sustain heavy financial losses by eliminating quack ads. Within two weeks, however, the \textit{Oregonian} and \textit{The Portland Telegram} agreed to remove all advertisements for sexual cures from their columns.\textsuperscript{16}
Members of the Portland Social Hygiene Society lauded the quack committee for “accomplishing the impossible.” The committee, however, was not satisfied. Further investigation by reformers proved that quack business appeared to be flourishing despite cuts made to their advertising. A number of the committee’s members voiced concern the charlatans would continue to operate despite the newspapers’ lack of support. Billboards, posters, and notices placed around the city insured that these disreputable businessmen would be able to lure the unfortunate to their places of business. Foster and his committee were ready for a more aggressive solution to the problem. In a move that would become typical of the Society, a correspondence campaign was initiated in March of 1912. Committee members requested that influential members of the Society send letters to Spokane’s Chief Post Office Inspector, asking him to assign an agent to Portland for a three month period to investigate dishonest businessmen who were violating U.S. Postal Laws by their fraudulent use of the mail.¹⁷

Plans went further than the Society had anticipated. Four weeks later, instead of receiving a reply from Spokane’s inspector, word was sent that a federal inspector from Washington D.C. was coming to Oregon to review the committee’s evidence against quack advertising. The Society, hopeful of acquiring a more permanent agent to run investigations in Portland, was less than enthusiastic about the short visit of the federal authority. However, deciding to take advantage of the attention given by the federal government, it gathered resolutions from the Rotary Club, the Retail Merchants Association, the Progressive Men’s League, and the Ad Club to lobby the
government for the appointment of a special federal deputy who could remain in Oregon for several months to launch an investigation and prosecute the city’s “medical fakers.” When the Society’s men proposed their plan to the agent he announced the impossibility of complying with the request. Though disappointed by this news, the Committee on Quacks was undaunted and began to formulate a plan to employ its own attorney to prosecute illicit practitioners.¹⁸

Meanwhile the Portland Social Hygiene Society returned its attention to the quack advertising problem in Portland’s newspapers. One hygiene reformer, looking through an issue of the city’s evening paper, found seven references to sexual problems in one night. Disgusted with these “trecherous” ads, the committee discussed an alternative plan of action. In March of 1912 the head of Scripps, MacRae Press Association, received a letter from the Society’s executive secretary warning him that his Portland paper, The Daily News, was accepting illegal quack advertisements. In April another letter was sent by the committee to the head of the association reminding him that under Oregon’s law such advertisements were illegal and subject to a fifty dollar fine. A month later, still having heard nothing from Scripps, MacRae Press Association, the committee persuaded a number of Portland businessmen who advertised in The Daily News to put economic pressure on the newspaper by contacting the local manager and impressing upon him their displeasure at the continued appearance of quack ads in the very columns in which they advertised. The committee initiated similar measures against The Portland Journal by persuading a group of influential Society members and businessmen to formally reproach the
newspaper and request that their editors discontinue such “fraudulent practices.” The pressure put on the newspapers proved unsuccessful, however, as the weakness of Oregon’s advertising law allowed quack ads to continue with only minor repercussions.19

Realizing its defeat, the Committee on Quacks decided to change tactics in the fight against unlicensed practitioners. Reformers now were ready to form an alliance with the state government to take legal action against the illegitimate businesses in order to shut down their advertising “at the source.” The committee enlisted the help of other members, persuading them of the need to legally prosecute quack interests. The Society cautiously approached the members of Oregon’s state legislature with its plan. The legislature proved eager to uphold the advertising law and assured the Society it would receive “strong support” from the state in any legal proceedings it pursued. With reassurance of legislative backing, the Committee on Quacks was ready to begin its legal campaign. In June of 1912 members of the committee put together a strong lobby made up of influential business associations and prominent Portland leaders to use legal pressure on “medical specialists” to close them down. Attempts to garner public support for the lobby were successful and the committee stepped up the pace of its campaign. Over the week of August 16th alone nine suspected quacks were arrested and brought to the city courthouse to stand trial for illegal quackery practices. One such man, Truthful Travis, fled to Tacoma in an attempt to escape the committee’s campaign, although the reformers’ relentless pursuit brought him back to Portland on extradition papers. Another group of “Oriental
Quack Concerns" operating in the city’s downtown Chinese district were seized by the County Sheriff who delivered them, along with their records, to Portland’s courthouse. Five more “Chinese Quack Concerns” who had been advertising in the Daily News and Oregon Journal were arrested and brought to the courthouse along with evidence obtained by private detectives working with the committee.20

A week after the arrests the Committee on Quackery pursued legal action against these illicit practitioners. Truthful Travis, appearing before Judge McGinn, was released in exchange for his vow that he would discontinue his Portland practice. Other companies, such as Dr. Green Co. and C. Gee Wo, were brought up on charges for violation of state law. The quack committee warned these outfits of its determination to press charges unless they agreed to cease fraudulent practices in the state of Oregon. Seven of the quack companies arrested, however, were able to escape prosecution. Although they were illegally advertising to cure sexual ailments, they had not used specifically outlawed terms such as “blood poison” or “urethral inflammation.” “There is a disease,” one advertisement read. “The name is not often printed. However, everyone knows what it is.” The committee’s inability to prosecute unlicensed practitioners for these types of ads brought attention to the inherent weakness of Oregon’s 1907 quack law. “The exact terms used in the law are seldom or ever used by these newspapers,” the quack committee bewailed, “but such terms are used as to leave no doubt in the minds of men that the same ailments are intended as are specifically stated in the statute.” In response the Society’s men
lobbied for changes to be made in the specific wording of the quack advertisement law.\textsuperscript{20}

The Society’s lobbying efforts proved to be a success. At the 1913 legislative session Republican Senator T.L. Perkins introduced Senate Bill 301 drawn up by the Society. The proposal set penalties not only for “specific terms” and diseases mentioned in newspaper columns but for any inferences to sexual diseases as well. Any advertiser, newspaper owner, or local newspaper manager could be found guilty under the new law. Those found guilty were subject to a fine of up to one thousand dollars and one year’s imprisonment. This measure not only made sexual advertisements in newspapers illegal, it also prohibited distribution of any printed material advertising cure of men’s sexual ailments. Traditionally, embossed metal signs offering cure for gonorrhea or other sexual disorders were advertised in publicurinals, saloon lavatories, or pool rooms. After the strengthened advertising law went into effect, hygiene reformers oversaw the tearing down of these signs by the Multnomah County deputy sheriff and their replacement by more than two thousand of the Society’s framed posters published in conjunction with the State Board of Health. Match boxes with quack remedies advertised on their sides were another material disdarded under the new law, replaced by boxes of the Society’s circulars on the counters of cigar and drug stores around the state.\textsuperscript{21}

The strengthened advertising law eventually decreased the number of quack operations in Oregon with help from the policing of the hygiene society, whose field agents carefully watched all medical institutes. After passing the law through state
legislature, the Society quickly arranged for a second series of arrests against those “Painless Parkers” who narrowly escaped prosecution from the legal system during the first series of arrests, as well as prosecution of any other suspected quack practitioners operating without a license. Under the newly-revised law prosecution of these businesses was a “simple matter” and those quacks upon whom proceedings were brought reluctantly agreed to discontinue all illegal operations. Soon “For Rent” signs were hanging in the windows of a number of these establishments. Nevertheless, many of the unlawful practitioners moved across state lines to continue their businesses, a migration that would “hardly prove a blessing” to the surrounding states, according to Society officials, unless it prompted them to create their own anti-quack campaigns. Still, practitioners who continued to operate after the revised law went into effect were forced to change their advertising to meet state codes; signs hanging on doorways and windows of such establishments now offered to treat “stomach,” “blood,” disorders in addition to traditional “urinary” problems. No longer could these establishments advertise to treat sex-segregated ailments and former “men’s specialists” sought women as a new customers under the reformed law.22

Another of the quack committee’s policing actions was brought against a traveling “specialist” in the summer of 1914 known as Dr. Dudley, one of a number of “picturesque, slippery, itinerant old peddlers....” Visiting the smaller towns of Oregon such as Silverton, Dallas, and Forest Grove for two day stands, Dudley advertised “in the manner of a circus,” claiming he was a specialist from the Cataphoric Medical Institute in St. Louis. The committee’s agents, hearing of this
man from District Attorney Arthur Clark in Benton County, had Dudley investigated. They discovered that he was holding “free” diagnostic consultations in his hotel room for a good faith “contribution” of $36.50 which would be returned on his next trip in thirty days if the patient was not cured. With every diagnosis Dudley was giving away a bottle of “it matters not what” medicine and a one-dollar “electric” battery to make the medicine absorb, relying on the public’s faith in the “all-healing power of ‘electricity.’” The committee considered Dudley’s practice a “form of robbery” and had him arrested in Lebanon on two different charges of fraud. He fled to Portland, only to be tracked down by one of the committee’s directors. Dudley declared spiritedly that Oregon had neglected to treat him with “Western hospitality” and was the only state where his “services to mankind” went unappreciated. However, under pressure from the Society’s agent, he quickly agreed to leave the state, having “sung... [his] swan song.”

A third incident that summer involved a “Modern Specialist,” known as Dr. Dean, a licensed physician whose “electric-lighted palace” had been driven out of business by the committee’s policing efforts to uphold the new law. Members of the Committee on Quacks understood that many of these companies would start up business again under different names. When Dr. Dean’s business re-opened on a downtown corner as a free museum of anatomy the committee’s agents were close behind. Such “anatomical museums” were a common device used as a front by quacks to prey especially on the curious minds of youth, whose absence of information due to the conspiracy of silence made such enterprises all the more
appealing. Museums typically displayed exhibits with gruesome and exaggerated images of gory operations, monstrosities of childbirth, or ulcerated faces and genitalia caused by advanced stages of venereal disease. Alongside those exhibits were pictures of men with their twisted faces or sagging abdominal muscles to display the evil “dangers” of masturbation. Others showed parts of the body which had been “greatly aggravated” by the use of mercury as a cure in an attempt to keep men from seeking a treatment from a more qualified doctor. Exhibits such as these gathered business by frightening young boys and men with the dangers of untreated sexual troubles and encouraged them to return to them for advice of any future “abnormality” in their own personal life they might encounter.24

Dr. Dean’s museum operated in conjunction with his doctor’s office across the hall where he could fill his time with those worried from their museum experience. The quack committee became involved, however, and the doctor was ordered to appear before the State Board of Medical Examiners. Though the board could not convict him for failure to license, it did find him guilty of employing a capper and a steerer to entice patrons into the museum, and revoked his license. Dr. Dean, angered at the state board’s decision, appealed his case to the Superior Court. The jury, to the committee’s dismay, voted in favor of Dr. Dean. Two charges filed against him over his grotesque exhibits, however, caused the sheriff to close Dr. Dean’s museum. Dean, thoroughly incensed, threatened at one point to sue the hygiene society’s president for his role in the arrest. Instead Dean disappeared, only to be caught later selling liquor at a country road house where he was re-arrested, along with a group of
women, for violation of the liquor law. Dr. Dean’s case displayed to the committee the trouble with licensed physicians who barely operated within confines of the law. The reformed legislation simply did not address such practitioners. Yet the committee was determined to shut down these museums. Drawing up an ordinance prohibiting any anatomical museums operating in conjunction with doctor’s offices, it presented the ordinance to Mayor H. Russell Albee in March of 1916. Panel members complained that these museums were producing the same results as unlicensed physicians—prompting young men to take treatments when none were needed. The mayor, an energetic social hygienist, was easily persuaded by the committee’s evidence and pushed the bill through Portland’s City Council, attaching to it an emergency clause that enabled the law to go into effect immediately. The city’s remaining museums of anatomy closed their doors for good.25

The real test of the reformed advertising law, however, occurred in May of 1914 when Irving R. Stearns and Edwin A. Hoolinshead, chemists operating a manufacturing firm in Portland, were arrested for advertising in the newspaper for “Zit Complete Stearns,” a safe and non-injected remedy that guaranteed to cure advanced cases of gonorrhea without pain to the affected member. The men were convicted by the Circuit Court and given a one hundred dollar fine. The two decided to test the validity of the law. They appealed the case to the Supreme Court, contesting that Oregon’s advertising law was unconstitutional because it was neither clear enough nor “within the legitimate scope of the police power of the state.” The Supreme Court,
however, upheld the conviction, stating that not only was the act constitutional but that
the law, similar to ones upheld in other states, was "in the interest of public morals."\textsuperscript{26}

Not all public opinion was favorable to the new quack law, especially for its
effect on the pharmacies of the state. For those who did not realize the seriousness of
venereal disease, a trip to the pharmacist or "druggist" was often the first and most
preferable step for self-treatment. Those honest druggists who advised their clients to
seek consultation from a trained specialist were susceptible to "a skeptical glance" and
a customer who turned to a store which kept "that which is advertised and called for."
What was "called for" were nostrums such as "Knoxit," which claimed to cure
gonorrhea in only five days and was a "well-known and meritorious medicinal" which
many in the public held "in merited esteem." Many druggists considered the sugar
pills "harmless placebos." Such medicines were a bane to hygiene reformers,
however, because claims of rapid treatment hid the seriousness of venereal disease and
made contracting it appear less dangerous than "going in swimming."\textsuperscript{27}

The new quack law made advertisement of such ineffective medicines illegal
and, to many who were accustomed to such treatments, the law seemed much too
stringent. The Committee on Quacks was quick to argue in the law's favor. Too
many people, reformers knew, were ready to accept the "bizarre and the exotic" as
healing agencies rather than more scientific medicine. And druggists were willing to
sell these placebos, no matter what their origin. Sources outside the committee, such
as a 1905 examination of five thousand prescriptions in a Philadelphia drugstore,
proved that 41 percent of the medicines given over the counter included "unknown
content,” a statistic that was not altogether uncommon in other areas of the nation.
The new law, Oregon’s hygienists hoped, would lessen demand for such ineffective
drugs, driving them from the market and reducing their profitability to druggists. On
the contrary, forward thinking hygienists argued, Oregon’s law had not been stringent
enough. Not only should the prohibition of quack advertisements be instituted, but
prohibition of the sale of any drug without a physician’s prescription should be
enacted. “What do you suppose the attitude of the State Legislature would be,” they
counteracted, “toward the advertising of some nostrum that would guarantee to cure
smallpox or typhoid fever...whose deaths annually do not total those from venereal
disease?” No man, they added, could treat himself for venereal ailments successfully;
ieither should the druggist.28

The nostrum issue exemplified the widening gap between physician and
druggist and the two groups’ attitude toward professionalization during the
Progressive era. Physicians tended to condemn druggists for substitution,
counterprescribing, refilling prescriptions without permission, or filling a “‘favorite
prescription’ recommended by some friend,” knew that the medical profession was to
blame for neglecting to treat venereal cases and for lack of sexual instruction to their
patients. Those physicians seeking to professionalize attacked druggists openly,
criticizing drugstores as a “major conduit of quackery,” a premise substantiated by the
fact that a large part of the druggists’ income depended on false venereal prescriptions.
Druggists countered that inflicted patients often turned to them by default. According
to a speaker at the American Pharmaceutical Association convention in 1907,
druggists were right: 50 to 75 percent of gonorrhea cases received their primary treatment through a druggist’s prescription without the knowledge of a reputable physician. Certainly if patients had any confidence in the medical profession, druggists retaliated, they would not “seek health in a glass bottle” and such high rates of treatment by the pharmacists would not be possible.\textsuperscript{29}

Taking up a rising national crusade against the alliance between the newspaper industry and the druggists’ trade, the Portland Social Hygiene Society had began, in concurrence with its quack campaign, a movement against local druggists in the fall of 1911. With the promise of aid from one of Portland’s “leading druggists,” the Publishing Committee began printing brief one-page circulars advertising the ineffectiveness of nostrums in the treatment of venereal disease. The druggist and his firm began placing one of these abbreviated circulars in every package of “Nostrums and Specifics” his pharmacy sold. Encouraged by the response of letters from this plan of action, the Committee on Publication approached a number of other drug firms in the city. Although the firms’ responses were overwhelmingly negative, a second company, Woodward & Clarke Co., agreed to place the Society’s circulars in nostrum packages. Again the experiment proved to be a success.\textsuperscript{30}

By June of 1912 the Publication Committee suggested throwing the weight of government regulatory agencies behind the experiment by urging the City and County Medical Society to support the use of circulars. A meeting was set, not only with the city and county society but with the Pharmaceutical Society as well. The Pharmaceutical Society’s positive reception of the experiment may have been
surprising to some hygiene reformers, whose distrust of druggists was as strong as their distrust of quacks. The reformers, however, should not have been surprised. The druggist's medical empire was under attack by not only the Oregon Social Hygiene Society but by the American Medical Association, whose campaign to regulate nostrum prescriptions undermined the druggists' high-profit trade. The pressure from the American Medical Association combined with the hygiene reformer's attack on quacks and newspaper advertisements weakened the alliance between Portland's press and the druggist trade. By July of 1912 the Society was pleased to report to its members that it had received full "cooperation and endorsement" from the Portland Retail Druggists' Association and from the Oregon State Pharmaceutical Association regarding its stance on the venereal medicine issue.\textsuperscript{32}

Aided by the State Pharmaceutical Association, a number of druggists formed a Committee on Education which dedicated itself to enlisting the cooperation of other druggists in Oregon. The Committee on Education worked with the Society to mail a flier to five hundred druggists around the state that described the Society's aims and requested support of its anti-nostrum campaign. The committee included samples of the Society's abbreviated anti-nostrum circular with the letter, requesting pharmacists to place the circulars in all nostrum packages they sold. Sixty seven of the druggists replied by sending requests for additional circulars, making the campaign, according to the committee "a bit of noteworthy work."\textsuperscript{33}

With the new advertising law firmly backed by the Supreme Court and the druggist and newspaper alliance weakened, the Society was ready to take on
“advertising specialists” again, this time at a national level. Nationally circulated magazines entering Oregon were subject to the reformed quack advertising law. The Society set out to ensure that magazines containing illegal advertising, such as *The Black Cat* or *The Police Gazette*, were either prohibited from entering the state or informed that they must publish a separate Oregon edition. The *Police Gazette* had long been considered especially noxious to members of the Society because, as one reformer stated, it “‘...reeks with medical advertisement which probably represent as choice a collection of fakes as can be found anywhere.’” Two pages of the magazine contained “offensive” material such as ads for “Blood Poison” and “Knoxit,” as well as promotions for gambling and saloons, subject matter which incensed hygiene reformers. Society members decided on a plan of attack which enlisted the aid of Harry S. Montgomery of the Oregon News Company. They persuaded Montgomery to send a letter to the American News Company that warned of Oregon’s new advertising law and cautioned that acceptance of their magazine would be an infraction of this legislation.\(^{34}\)

The Society realized that by threatening the *Police Gazette*’s circulation base in Oregon it could put pressure on the magazine to try and force its conformance. The plot worked. Cancelled circulations was a risk the American News Company did not wish to take. The *Police Gazette*’s publishers in New York quickly responded to the Society in November of 1914, agreeing to forward the state a special “international” edition of their magazine. The “international edition,” the editors stated, did not contain the two pages of material that the Oregon Society found objectionable and
would be in compliance with state law. Members of the Society did not have to wait long for the change. Purchasing copies of the very next issue of the *Police Gazette*, they were pleased to find the objectionable material replaced by two pages of feature stories. This tactic was so successful that other states eventually followed Oregon's lead. California's hygiene society, learning about Oregon's "international" *Police Gazette*, arranged for the same edition to be sent there in 1915. Two years later New York patterned its advertising law after Oregon's and arranged for the Police Gazette's "international" version shortly after an article, "What Oregon Has Done New York Can Do," appeared in that city's Health Department bulletin. Such action, the bulletin stated of the Oregon society's work, "...illustrates what a forceful and enlightened health crusade can accomplish." By 1917 the Portland Ad Club was able to print in the *Portland Telegram* that "approximately ninety-five percent of advertising...originating in Portland...[was] truthful."

With the successes of the quack campaign and new channels of public support, the Society was ready to undertake a campaign of education. Educational work, the Finance Committee realized, would be costly. Though financial options appeared hopeful at the organization's outset, resources had dropped by almost half within the first six months of the Society's operation. The State Board of Health, recognizing the Society's financial difficulties, contributed $1,600 to keep their work going. This contribution, however, could not fix the greater funding problems faced by the Financial Committee. By May of 1912 membership in the Society had tapered off while publishing costs and other expenses increased. Yet demand for circulars
rose as the Society’s work gained popularity. Three months later the organization’s capital equalled only $1,700 while expenses had nearly doubled. A man who donated one hundred dollars to the Society’s cause, wrote: “I was particularly impressed with the work that was done [by the Society]. Will probably send additional sums as needed.” Clearly, the monetary fluctuations caused by a lagging membership base and the uncertain nature of donations proved that this was an unstable way to operate.

Hygiene reformers were aware that additional funds would be needed if they were to fund their growing desire to expand educational work statewide. They realized that even the most diligent society could not ensure preventative measures against disease alone. Working with the legislature to divert quack interests away from Oregon had revealed to reformers the possibilities of invoking vast changes through the intervention of the state government. At a meeting held by the organization in June of 1912, bold members unanimously voted to pursue a state tax to support for their work.36

The Society believed that the economic argument it would present to legislators was a strong one. Reformers would attempt to persuade the state government that investment in their work would save the state thousands of dollars, as prevention cost much less than cure. Though lack of statistical reporting made it almost impossible to calculate any exact figures on the damage caused to the community by venereal disease, social hygienists knew the increasing popularity of scientific proof. As members prepared their speeches to present to the legislature they added as many statistical facts as they could gather. “Insanity from syphilis,” they
quoted, "costs the people of the United States almost 467 million dollars per year" and over 5 percent of inmates in state insane asylums were the result of syphilis at a cost to states of twenty-two thousand a year. As a result of gonorrhea, one third of the students of Oregon's blind school also burdened state finances at twenty-two thousand a year. Dr. Wilson D. McNary, superintendent of Eastern Oregon State Hospital, contributed his own statistics to the speeches, stating that 25 percent of the state hospitals patients owed their visits, either directly or indirectly, to venereal disease. Hygiene reformers would attempt to persuade the legislature that venereal disease not only cost the public in tax dollars, but caused business losses as well. The effect on labor and production by venereal disease was a factor, they claimed, that few businessmen understood. Whether an economic issue or the more important one of human welfare, it was not difficult to see the loss to the individual, businesses, and to the state.\textsuperscript{37}

The Society was prepared to change these costs to benefits, speakers wrote into their speeches. They estimated the economic gain due to their quack campaign saved the state at least one hundred thousand dollars in medical bills from men whose diseases might have gone uncured. An increase in the number of productive labor days from disease-free workers would save the state two hundred thousand dollars a year. Therefore, the Society's work could be estimated to save the state a total of three hundred thousand dollars a year. This analysis did not take into account individuals' costs saved or the unmeasurable price of health and human happiness. The Society believed that sixteen thousand dollars a year would be sufficient to begin
its work on a state-wide level; a small price compared to the money that could be saved by their work. It was difficult to see how any state would not be able to afford this investment. The only difficulty, speakers feared, was to persuade the legislature.\textsuperscript{38}

In June of 1912 the Committee on Legislation, formed to deal with all legal aspects of the Society, began its work by gathering into a list the names of legislative members and candidates who would soon be running for office. Taking no chance that those on the list might be unfamiliar with the Society’s work, the committee forwarded each a sampling of hygiene literature. To ascertain the members’ and candidates’ attitude toward their cause, reformers interviewed each one personally to ascertain whether they would be willing to support an appropriation to fund their work. Committee members were relieved to discover that a large number of those they interviewed favored the hygiene reformer’s efforts. Evidence gathered by the committee was presented to the Society’s executive members who created a bill to give the Society an annual appropriation of sixteen thousand dollars. By August of 1912 a five person committee had been formed to present the bill before the legislature.\textsuperscript{39}

The Executive Committee, however, was hesitant. The move to request state support for sexual education work was largely a pioneering effort, as only one other state in the nation had attempted the same. Such a large step, executive members believed, required a great deal of caution if it were to be successful. The committee was not ready to put the bill forward before it was assured that a consensus of members in the legislature was in agreement with its work. Additional preparations
were necessary. Society members affiliated with the various counties across Oregon were requested to use their influence by contacting their local state Representatives and Senators and convincing them of the need for such a bill. Reformers flooded members of the legislature with an aggressive letter writing campaign to persuade them of the benefits of hygiene work and the need for financial funding. A series of eight letters was sent to each legislator every other week for four months requesting them to pass the bill. Mailed with the letters were hygiene circulars, the newly formed bill, State Board of Health Notices, juvenile court proceedings, or any other influential literature the Society could find. The Society’s work paused briefly during legislative elections, then a “vigorous campaigning” was instituted. Newly-elected members were courted as carefully as the ones they replaced, invited to weekly luncheons hosted by the Society where influential guests, such as the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate, attended.  

The Portland Social Hygiene Society’s exhaustive lobbying efforts were successful. At the 1913 legislative session Frank Mitchell, Republican representative from Baker, introduced House Bill 191 which unanimously passed. The bill appropriated the Society ten thousand dollars annually for the years 1913 and 1914 for their “…educational campaign throughout Oregon in the interest of social and sex hygiene, and for the prevention of social evils and venereal disease.” The state’s appropriation represented a break with the conspiracy of silence, signaled confidence in the hygiene reformer’s work, and opened channels of public approval that made the additional six thousand dollars needed to meet the organization’s estimated yearly
budget that much easier to raise. A new constitution was adopted that changed the organization’s name to the Oregon Social Hygiene Society to reflect its transformation to state-wide status. Its offices moved from the Y.M.C.A. to avoid accusations of private control over state money and eventually settled into Portland’s downtown Selling Building. William T. Foster proudly stated that his society appeared to be the only one in the nation that had persuaded its state legislature that “…appropriations for the purpose of curbing the most terrible diseases that ravage human beings…[were] as important as appropriations for conserving the health of hogs and cattle.” Oregon had led the way as the “first and…only state to appropriate money for education in Social Hygiene,” proclaimed Foster. With quacks out of the way and solid financial backing, the Society was able to say that it was now on “a firm basis.” Educational work to spread the “gospel of social health” could now begin.41
CHAPTER III

SPREADING THE “GOSPEL OF HEALTH”

With state appropriations backing the Oregon Social Hygiene Society, its members were now ready to pursue a campaign of education to reach every man and woman in Oregon’s population. Their zealous belief in the ameliorative effect of education to manipulate the social environment was one shared with many reformers of the Progressive era. A crusade of enlightenment, they believed, would change the negative attitudes and behavior associated with these diseases and lift them “out of the gutter where ignorance and superstition had cast...[them].” To do so Portland’s hygienists advocated instilling a “heightened public consciousness” and envisioned themselves as the organization to diffuse this information. Their interest in education lie not only in warning the public of the dangers of venereal disease, but in “shoring up” social standards that they believed were slipping and returning men and women to proper sexual behavior. What is unique about the Society in Oregon was not only the ambitious and confident pursual of its goals but also the extent to which reformers were successful in achieving them. Through the use of speakers, newspapers, theaters, exhibits, and the creation of an advisory department, the Society spread its “gospel of health” to all who were willing to listen.¹

One of the most important ways to achieve its educational goals, the Society proposed, was to find speakers to spread the “gospel of health and purity” to the public. The Public Education Committee was extremely conservative in their
selection of presenters. Only those appointed by a special speaking committee were
permitted to represent the Society. Members of the organization agreed that they
would rather let opportunities pass than allow inadequate speakers to lecture for them.
Consequently, men and women were vigorously trained before the committee sent
them out into the public. Lecturers were taught to achieve a proper balance of hygiene
and morals in their speeches and avoid invoking excessive curiosity in the sexual
content of their message. Often the Public Education Committee chose established
laymen and physicians to lecture, focusing on those who possessed speaking
experience and an extensive knowledge of purity or disease. In the typically
conservative fashion of the Society, speakers were sent to lectures in pairs: one
physician and one purity representative were dispatched to each speaking engagement
to ensure the right balance of hygiene and morals in the message.²

The Society guarded the privilege of public speaking closely. Unhappily,
stated William Foster, a number of hysterical, enthusiastic people unrelated to the
organization had “thrust themselves forward” as social hygiene speakers. This, he
feared, would tarnish the Society’s reputation and retard the hygiene movement. The
Public Education Committee kept a close eye on any speakers outside the Society
whose lectures touched on the subject of sexual hygiene. To defend their state-given
rights, representatives of the Public Education Committee approached any
questionable hygiene speakers to demand information on their lecture’s subject matter
and title, and to investigate the audience speakers intended to address. Most lecturers,
the organization found, contacted the Society out of professional courtesy before
preparing a speech on social hygiene; those that did so were requested to present a syllabi of their speech for examination. "Outside" lecturers whose content met committee standards were asked to join the Society's rank of speakers, providing the person's character and attitude matched the organization's strict criteria. Those whose message did not meet the Society's strict moral criteria were subject to public castigation by the Public Education Committee. "Here mistakes will not do..." reformers emphasized, "here incompetent teachers cannot be trusted."³

By October of 1911 the committee had prepared a group of carefully-trained speakers to take the Society's message to the public. A series of public and private meetings was scheduled in the Portland area for speaker presentations. Lecturers were sent to groups of physicians and teachers, to civic and religious clubs, or to any other groups the Society believed would benefit from their message. A majority of the earliest meetings were held only for men since they were considered the primary contributors to the spread of disease. It did not take long for the Society to realize that a primary gathering point for men was the job site. By far the greatest numbers of men were in lumber camps, ship yards, or railroad yards around Portland. Others worked at firms and businesses houses such as Western Union Messenger Co., Northwest Steel Co., or F.C. Stettler Paper Box Mfg. Co.⁴

Social hygineists found a large pool of young men between the age of eighteen and twenty-five working to save a "nest egg" to support a family before "settling down." This trend left a large population of healthy, strong young men living and working alone, disassociated from traditional family networks. Hygiene reformers
realized that this segment of the population was the most sexually active. They believed that leisure hours for many working men resulted in escapes to "the city," where liquor and women awaited them. Dalliance with prostitutes, known as "sowing one's wild oats," had often been considered a natural occurrence in a group of men abstaining from marriage. Social hygienists disdained this view. "If the boys realized the crop they would reap from their wild oats," one hygienist stated, "they would be less anxious to sow [them]." Reformers feared it was just this sort of sexual experience that led to venereal infection that caused tragedy later in life when men took wives. What better group to disseminate information to?

The Society sent Harry H. Moore, as General Secretary of the organization, to speak with managers and owners of lumber and mining camps, railroad yards, and canning factories to ask them about the possibility of posting signs at their places of business concerning the dangers of venereal disease. Many employers, reformers knew, were receptive to "welfare" programs due to fears of labor unrest and were often willing to take steps necessary to raise sympathy between employees and themselves. To convince business leaders of their plan, Moore resorted to an economic rationale over the potential monetary loss of capital and manpower to businesses when workers were diseased. Employees of high standing, Moore stated, were always in high demand. Yet ignorance had forced many men down through contraction of a disease they might otherwise have avoided. Infected workers were prone to decreased production in their work due to absentmindedness and worry over their infections. In addition, the number of days missed by workers who sought

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treatment or suffered side effects of from diseases decreased business efficiency. Education concerning the seriousness of sexual diseases through the Society’s posters made good economic sense, since workers warned of venereal dangers would certainly avoid them.6

Moore’s economic argument effected greater action by business leaders than the Society had hoped. Employers asked Moore if he might be able to supply speakers to present information directly to workers. Though some of the employers arranged meetings after working hours, almost half allowed lecturers to make presentations on company time. Many employers accepted the Society’s “red plague” envelopes, which contained two hygiene circulars targeted to young men. These envelopes containing “Sex Truths for Men” and “The Four Sex Lies,” were then circulated to men through the company’s paymaster with their wages. News of Moore’s success spurred the Society to hire a special agent to aid him in frequenting businesses to persuade employers to utilize the organization’s services. Moore calculated that with both men working they would be able to reach at least ten employers a day.7

Businesses such as Meier & Frank Co., Pacific Paper Co., and Willamette Iron & Steel Co. agreed to the Society’s services. Talks were arranged for groups of city patrolmen including a midnight talk given at the “change of reliefs.” Another way reformers reached men was at sexual hygiene lectures held in the donated rooms of the Commercial Club. Reformers arranged for business houses around Portland to send their workers to lectures at the club with a card of introduction. To ensure attendance at these meetings, employers required that one of the Society’s members sign their
worker's card at the end of each meeting, certifying that he had remained throughout at his employer's expense. Another way Moore reached businessmen was to invite them to lunch meetings at the Portland Chamber of Commerce arranged by prominent members of the hygiene organization. Not only were large numbers of business men educated in this way but private subscriptions were raised to continue the hygiene reformers' work. Moore's strategies, the Society stated, were "very satisfactory," and speakers were scheduled far in advance.\(^8\)

The Public Education Committee vigorously pursued its educational campaign to reach all men over the age of eighteen with material centered around subjects such as "The Great Social Evil," "The Four Sex Lies," or "What Every Man Should Know." Reformers also targeted men at rooming houses, Sunday school classes, city parks, and Men's Brotherhoods. Estimates stating that almost 60 percent of men had at some point contracted venereal infections led speakers at these meetings to emphasize the danger of disease. Gonorrhea, which was considered no worse than a "common cold," was actually difficult to treat. "You might as well try to clean a dirty well by putting a little chloride of lime in the pump-spout as to hope to cure gonorrhea, in its chronic form, by a mild antiseptic injection...," men were told. Gonorrhea's symptoms, including urinary stricture, yellowish discharge, or swollen genitals, might "hide," leading the inflicted to assume he was cured. Eating spicy food, drinking liquor, or becoming sexually aroused would cause the disease to "light up" again, speakers warned. Syphilis, with symptoms such as rashes, pimple-like sores, and loss of hair, were more difficult to ignore. Reformers cautioned that men
with chancre were liable to infect the innocent through accidental contact or kissing. Clinical treatment of venereal disease must be handled by a licensed and trusted physician. "Doctors" who required their money up front, lecturers concluded, were "up to no good."\(^9\)

Another prominent mission of hygiene speakers was to warn men away from "sex lies" that were common under the conspiracy of silence. One of these myths involved a "double standard" of conduct which made sexual indulgence acceptable for a man but required chastity of a woman. "Is not the man who commits murder as guilty as the woman who commits murder?" lecturers questioned. "Why is not the man who...commits adultery, as guilty as the woman who commits adultery?" The idea that sex was necessary for a man's health was a blatant lie. Sexual continence, hygienists stated, did not lead to impotence, atrophy, or physical decline, but to optimal physical health. In fact, famous prize fighters and athletes abstained from sex during training to conserve strength. Look to the buck deer, reformers declared, "splendid in strength and endurance." The deer's magnificent physique was not harmed by the fact that he mated only once a year in the spring. Lecturers warned that sex was a force that was dangerous unless it was contained. Since treatments were unable to cure all cases of venereal disease, continence was the best prescription for avoiding trouble. A man marrying "clean" could not infect his wife or newborn child. "Every young man should know that to bring a polluted body to the marriage alter is a crime against his bride and will be a millstone about the neck of his posterity." Men could, and should, abstain from sex, requiring of themselves the same purity they
expected of their sister. “Social progress,” they were told, “depends upon fuller and
darker comradeship... between men and women.” Good hygiene was men’s moral
obligation. 10

Sexual purity would be achieved, reformers added, when men learned to
control both their mental and physical impulses. Men were “a higher order of
mammalia,” and did not need to live “helpless in the grip of passion.” Animals could
not control their sexual urges but humans, due to increased intellect and morality,
could. To help oneself achieve purity, “mental sanitation” was required through
avoidance of corruptive influences such as immoral literature, theater, or conversation
that might turn one’s mind toward sexual indulgence. Another way to achieve purity,
lecturers stated, was by avoiding women of questionable character: the prostitute was
the most dangerous because her unclean sex organs were liable to “reek with germ
life.” Reformers warned that young men must also take care to avoid the “good time
girl,” or the “soft snap” who was “ten thousand times more harmful than the
professional” because she gave herself for pleasure. Girls such as these often required
to be “treated” to amusements or gifts before exchanging sexual favors and men were
advised to avoid places where they might be found such as saloons or public dance
halls. A wholesome recreational alternative preferred by reformers was a diversion
such as the sound physical regimen offered at Portland’s Y.M.C.A.. 11

The Y.M.C.A. was central to American men’s drive for purity in the
Progressive era. The association, whose triangle emblem symbolized “‘spirit upheld
by body and mind,’” believed in an inherent link between character and physique, and
worked to return American men to the ideal of a sound mind through a sound body. Clubs nation-wide initiated physical education programs of gymnastics, weights and other athletic exercises to return men from a weak, demoralized state resulting from an overcrowded, soulless, urban setting to the muscular and mental strength of the well-built farm man that was considered the country’s agrarian anchor. The Y.M.C.A.’s message of health and purity echoed that of Society speakers. By adhering to physiological rectitude through exercise and a daily regime of eating plain food, “bathing in cool water” and “dropping promptly into sound sleep,” an individual could achieve increased vitality and develop the physical and mental control necessary to abstain from immorality, thus perfecting, according to the Society reformers, the “sublimation of the sex instincts.”

The Public Education Committee sent speakers to places men might congregate such as the Y.M.C.A., whose emphasis on healthful recreation fit well into hygiene lectures. Leaders of Portland’s downtown Y.M.C.A., such as Harry H. Moore, Harry W. Stone, and A.M. Grilley and Dr. S.A. Brown, were staunch advocates of social hygiene and encouraged the organization to speak freely before groups of men and boys at the health association. Another place speakers reached younger men was at college campuses. Colleges were increasingly open to the benefits of promoting sexual hygiene and some, such as Reed, began offering courses in sexual hygiene to their students as well as early as 1913 due to Foster’s influence. Courses such as these were a vital part of training not only for students but for speakers from the hygiene society. Reformers realized the need to reach women with
the Society’s message when large numbers of them enrolled in sexual hygiene classes. Consequently, the Public Education Committee began circulating hygiene literature at women's campus dormitories.\textsuperscript{13}

The Public Education Committee began to consider the possibilities of reaching women with its message of sexual purity. Reformers realized that the number of girls entering colleges or the work force was on the rise. Women were leaving home to find careers in factories, offices, and retail stores. Between 1880 and 1920 the number of women in the workforce rose by 50 percent among both married and single women. Reformers believed women had always been able to retain a certain amount of sexual innocence because they had been tightly guarded in the past. Working out of the home, reformers understood, would change that. Single working women were a group marked by a new sexual openness and a desire to socialize that worried reformers. New forms of behavior among this group such as drinking, flamboyant dress, late hours, and increasing promiscuity led social hygienists to believe that women were just as much at risk for venereal infections as men. Reformers fears were grounded. Estimates for young women entering into sexual relations before marriage in this period were between 25 and 50 percent.\textsuperscript{14}

Hygienists believed that women were not only at risk in their leisure-time pursuits but in the work place as well. Female employment that had once been limited primarily to domestic service was expanding to include work in shops, laundries, and department stores. The increasing demand for women employees in retail establishments was considered especially perilous. Working as salesgirls they were
exposed to clients, co-workers, and employers of the opposite sex, who might easily lead an unsuspecting girl into sexual escapades by their designing ways. Hygiene literature of the time reflected the danger to women in the workplace. "I left my first employer because

He, too, solicited those favors that No contract mentions," a reformer’s poem read. Another temptation, they believed, were the "low wages of virtue" paid to women, wages that made self-sufficiency difficult. Shop girls paid these meager wages might become dissatisfied; especially girls surrounded each day by "vulgar displays of finery." Longing for items such as expensive jewelry and clothing might lead women to sacrifice moral living to gain them. Other women might fall into immorality to supplement their meager earnings. Reformers considered the unpleasantly crowded living conditions of many of these women a potential reason for their downfall. To escape crowded tenements, hygienists reasoned, single women might be willing to accept treating from questionable young men in search of "a good time."\(^\text{15}\)

These worries prompted the Public Education Committee to begin calling on businesses that employed women. Though scheduling women’s meetings through employers presented little problem to the committee, finding women speakers was more difficult. As men were not considered appropriate lecturers for female employees, women must be found that would be willing to speak out on venereal diseases, a subject that many in the public considered reasonably unpleasant and which women were not to speak of. Locating women hygienists for the task proved to be challenging as no women had been included in early membership of the Society.
Though the possibility of women’s membership was discussed at some length at a Society meeting in March of 1912, no consensus had been reached and the matter was “postponed indefinitely.” The fact that women were not included in the Society meant that they must be sought from outside the Public Education Committee’s pool of speakers. The number of women the Society was willing to draw upon was limited. As with male speakers, the committee preferred women to speak who were specialists in their field, such as doctors or health workers, or women willing to be trained who would not become “hysterical” about the hygiene cause. Reformers discovered that women knowledgeable on the subject of sexual hygiene were more limited than they had imagined.¹⁶

By May of 1912 members had prepared a select list of potential candidates to present to the Executive Committee. Candidates such as Seattle doctor Maud Parker and Dr. Esther Pohl of the City Health Department were suggested as “suitable speakers” to lecture before women at shops and department stores. Lola Baldwin was another candidate requested by the Society to speak on social hygiene. As a Portland policewoman working in the Women’s Protective Division, Baldwin’s experiences reforming prostitutes gave her an intimate knowledge of the venereal disease problem. Though she was a staunch advocate and experienced lecturer for the social hygiene cause, the Society was looking for a woman willing to give a large majority of her time to speaking on a permanent basis. Four months later, however, no qualified speakers had been found and the Public Education Committee was forced to admit that the matter was proving more difficult than they had imagined. Finally, in October of
1912, Dr. Eleanor Rowland, Reed College’s Dean of Women, joined a growing group of faculty members of the college in promoting the social hygiene cause by accepting the Society’s offer to become a permanent women’s hygiene lecturer.17

Speakers such as Rowland lecturing to women in colleges and businesses delivered much of the same material that was presented to men. Sanitary emphasis imparted the dangers of venereal disease not only to the woman but to any children she might deliver. Gonorrhea, which might enter a woman’s reproductive organs, could cause “invalidism, sterility or even death.” Hygiene speakers reported that surgeons specializing in women’s diseases claimed that almost 80 percent of “mutilating operations” on women were due to gonorrhea contracted from their own husbands. These same organisms could enter a newborn’s eyes and lead to blindness, a cause of almost 35 percent of blindness in the United States. Syphilis was crueler than gonorrhea both to women and their offspring. Like gonorrhea, the husband often transmitted the disease to his wife before it passed to children in the womb.

Reformers warned that many children of syphilitic parents were dead at birth. Those who remained alive often suffered horrifying mental or physical defects. Women were advised to require their fiancés to obtain a pre-nuptial medical exam. A woman had a right, hygienists stated, to demand that the man she married was “free from disease.” Marriage was the fountain out of which flowed parentage and posterity. “If the fountain be poisoned at the source,” they stated, “the stream must inevitably be polluted.”18
After 1913 women were also instructed on Oregon's new eugenics law backed by the Society. The law passed through the 1913 Oregon legislature stated that every man, within ten days of applying for a marriage license, must present a "certificate of freedom" signed by a licensed physician signifying that he was not infected with venereal disease. The law caused considerable debate because its opponents claimed it was a "farce." Some argued that only a handful of physicians were able to make a proper examination or that those who wished to avoid the law altogether could obtain a false exam or travel over the river to Vancouver to wed. Many argued that women should be required to receive the exam. Hygiene reformers were quick to disagree. Ninety-nine percent of venereal disease carriers were men, they retorted. Hygiene advocate Governor George E. Chamberlain upheld the Society's claim, stating that to require women to receive the exam would be "an affront to Oregon's womanhood." Hygiene reformers believed the law was a useful educational tool. The effect of the law, according to their argument, was that it forced men and women to consider venereal disease more seriously when they were planning marriage. The law, however, had a more severe effect than hygiene reformers predicted. By the end of 1913 two of Portland's Justices of the Peace were overheard complaining about the lack of fees from the declining number of marriages at the courthouse. According to the clerk's record at the Multnomah County office, marriage licenses had decreased by 50 percent.\footnote{19}

Oregon Social Hygiene Society speakers who advocated the eugenics law assumed that most women were entering their marriages "pure." According to a
prevalent theory of the sexes, men were predominantly aggressors while women remained passive. "Proper" women were considered to have little sexual desire so that sex was something she was tempted into rather than pursuing for herself. Girls from an early age were carefully guarded from men who might seduce them and advice to women centered on keeping men in their proper place by disallowing them liberties such as kissing or hugging. The Society's speakers warned women that any man who made improper attempts was one who should be "avoided entirely" as well as those who offered to "treat." Purity was essential in those who would become "mothers of the race." Women were also advised on personal habits that maintained their purity. Most important for a woman was to avoiding clothing that caused "muscular and nervous strain" such as tight corsets or high heels that caused "redness of the face and nose." Clothing should be as simple and comfortable as possible, avoiding restrictions and damage to the internal organs, the chest, or any other anatomy necessary for reproduction. "Flashy" clothes, speakers declared, were those worn by women with questionable manners. A woman with decent manners would maintain purity by adhering to sound physical habits such as eating slowly and moderately, exercising, and bathing in cool water. These practices would ensure that a woman became "a more useful citizen and a better mother." Healthful practices would also create the self-control necessary to abstain from sexual relations until marriage when the sex impulse would be channeled into its proper function: procreation. 

The Oregon Social Hygiene Society's success in reaching private audiences with its hygiene message inspired it to undertake a campaign to reach more general
audiences. The Society’s literature had proven a useful educational tool. Yet many avenues for education were available that had not yet been tapped, avenues that might reach a greater number of Oregonians with “clean” information to replace the “bad.” Some of the Society members recommended utilizing the press to further educational endeavors and counteract patent medicine advertisements. Though many reformers had been hesitant to place hygiene material in the newspaper, others realized the potential of the press to spread the Society’s message farther than individual speakers could. For those in the public who preferred more visual forms of stimulation the Society was prepared to expand the use of its social hygiene exhibit and lantern shows to re-channel those who had attended anatomical museums. For those who preferred personal interaction, a new department was envisioned where hygiene reformers could meet individually with the public to give free and accurate advice to replace that given by quacks. By eradicating negative sources of information, the Society had opened the way for an expanded program of education.21

An important step taken by the Society was to approach Oregon newspapers on the possibility of printing articles concerning the hygiene cause. Newspapers were typically reticent about publishing pieces on venereal disease for fear of offending or losing subscribers. However, frank statements about the danger of disease by well-known physicians in official positions were certain to attract readers’ interests. Therefore, the press conceded and agreed to allow more open discussion of the social hygiene movement within their columns. Though the newspapers agreed to the Public Education Committee’s plan, many purity members within the Society remained
ambivalent about publishing in Oregon newspapers. Though they realized the potential to reach greater audiences through the press, they worried that newspapers would take liberties with the hygiene message and leave aside its moralistic elements. This would create an imbalance in the message’s mixture of sanitation and purity, causing more harm than good. Purity advocates were eventually persuaded that the press might prove a useful ally and in December of 1911 members agreed to experiment by forwarding certain newspapers a list of hygiene books recommended by the Society. Though public reaction to the list was negligible the move had made many members uneasy and it was another two months before the Society resumed its experiment with the newspapers in advertising its cause.22

By February of 1912 reformers were prepared to undertake a second experiment with the newspapers. The organization approached six “country newspapers” that agreed to publish a three-inch advertisement every other day for two weeks to promote the Society’s literature. A month later, after receiving little opposition to its move, pressure by members of the Society mounted to advertise in the newspapers again. The Executive Committee, always cautious, mandated that the Society continue waiting for any additional criticism of its first advertisement from subscribers. Another full month went by after which the Executive Committee decided to pursue a bolder move. Country newspapers were requested to publish the Society’s “printed matter” in their columns as hygiene reformers had seen the “considerable good” done by the advertisements run two months before. Use of the newspapers proved to be a success and the Society began to utilize them across the
state. A year later the Executive Committee proudly announced to Society members that fifty-five newspapers in the state had aided the sexual hygiene cause by accepting advertisements, a move that had dramatically increased the public’s demand for hygiene literature and publicized the work of the Society. Reformers, however, would never be completely satisfied with the newspapers, stating that they did not seem to appreciate some of the more important activities of the Society. “Prominent men visiting Oregon from almost every state in the Union have called upon various members of the Executive Board,” members complained, “showing great enthusiasm regarding various activities which have received no comment at all in the columns of Oregon newspapers.” Although the Society’s relationship with the newspapers would never receive full endorsement among all of its varied members, the press increasingly began to cover the hygiene reformers’ work in Oregon.23

The Society’s use of exhibits was a more popular method for gaining publicity for the social hygiene cause in as much as they offered a way to reach large audiences with little effort. The adult exhibit, set up yearly at the state fair in the state capital in Salem, was housed inside a large white tent erected by the pavilion’s main entrance which allowed the noise and distraction of the fair to be shut out. Outside the tent, large banners advertised “Fighting the Great Red Plague” while attendants in crisp white suits and gloves waited on the public inside the tent and distributed literature. The Public Hygiene Exhibit Committee was proud of its work, as it was a subject of “genuine interest.” In addition, the display was inexpensive to construct, reaching the public at a cost of only two cents per person. The exhibit’s attendance at the state fair
in 1913 averaged two thousand persons a day, totaling over eleven thousand for the week. Throughout the next six months the exhibit was displayed at six additional fairs, two of which were held in Portland. Such success prompted reformers to create a Boys' Exhibit modeled after the larger public one. Displays aimed at younger audiences, titled "The Inner Force," "Chivalry," and "What It Means to Keep Fit" used more diagrams and illustrations than the exhibit for older audiences in order to sustain interest. After approval by a number of school board members, principals, and business members, the Boys Exhibit supplemented the use of literature with talks to older boys. The exhibit format was so successful that San Francisco requested permission to copy the adult exhibit and France asked use of it for that nation's international fair.24

Another way to reach large public audiences was to hold the Society's meetings in large theaters. Some purity-minded members must have been hesitant about delivering their message in places known for crude vaudeville shows and sexually suggestive motion picture films. Referred to as "popular priced theater," movies attracted large attendance due to low prices. Moving picture shows had become so popular that by 1914 Portland theater's seating capacity exceeded the city's population. A number of Portland purity crusaders shared the hygiene reformers' worries. As early as 1911 a group made up of representatives from agencies such as the Women's Club, People's Amusement Company, and the Associated Charities, formed the motion picture's advising committee in Portland. This group's task was to censor locally exhibited films and persuade the Mayor to close down those it found the
most objectionable. Three and a half years later, responding to censorship pressures, Mayor Albee appointed Foster and fourteen other members of the Oregon Social Hygiene Society to a sixty-person committee to study Portland’s theater situation. Foster, as chairman of this panel, steered each member of the group to conduct a survey of at least twenty-five movie or vaudeville theaters a week over a three month time period. Surveyors prepared detailed reports to assess the moral content of each performance, including information on portraits of chivalry, kindness, or wholesome home life in addition to acts of cowardice, brutality, or robbery. Foster requested investigators to report any instances of vulgar dance or suggestive costumes, as well as immoral words or phrases from the vaudeville shows’ songs. Representatives were also asked to make value judgments: were the “rascals” admirable or the wrongdoers prosperous? Audience behavior and responses were to be carefully monitored by investigators. Did the audience laugh or applaud at objectionable parts of the shows?25

On September 21, 1914, Foster and his committee submitted their final report to the mayor following the investigation of fifty-one theaters around Portland. Some of the committee’s conclusions must have surprised purity reformers within the Society. Instead of denouncing the theater, investigators admitted that, as a whole, the shows were not as immoral as they had originally suspected. Rather, most performances were “empty, vapid, flat, harmless,” and a worthless waste of the viewer’s time. A few of the films were as immoral as representatives had anticipated. Silent motion pictures such as “Thunderbolt” or “The Battle of the Sexes” contained
questionable content that would be harmful, reformers noted, especially to younger viewers. The majority of films were quite senseless and reporters watching the audience for reactions saw that a large number of viewers actually looked bored. The committee concluded that the only harm such motion pictures might have on younger viewers was if they were habitually viewed, for this would fill their mind with meaningless information and keep them away from home influences. Committee members agreed that vaudeville shows were much more morally objectionable than their film counterparts. Though three-fourths of the material in these shows was "trite and empty," the other 25 percent was considerably vulgar. Even "high-class" theaters were resorting to showing these immoral acts, the committee contended. Reports suggested that such immorality might jeopardize young viewers. A poll of over 2,500 children at five of Portland's larger schools during 1915 concluded that 64 percent of children under the age of fourteen admitted to attending theaters at least one night a week.²⁶

The committee's recommendations may have surprised the Society's purity members more than its report. Foster's group, in an unexpected move, refused to support censorship efforts. Instead, the committee preferred a gradual and conservative program, a more progressive "educational" approach that would remain well within the confines of public opinion. The majority of the public visited immoral shows from ignorance of their contents, the committee stated. Therefore, reformers recommended a Board of Praise be established to select shows with high moral value and designate them "Class A" entertainment. Viewers would attend the quality
entertainment of “Class A” films, the committee reasoned, if they were educated to their moral content. Reformers hoped enterprising theaters would take advantage of the moral films by offering specific “Class A” nights at their theaters where only these types of films were shown. More venturesome entrepreneurs might even open “Class A” theaters where no objectionable shows were allowed. Censorship, they repeated, was not in the best interest of the public because “progress lay in the more positive approach of praise.”

Purity reformers in the Oregon Social Hygiene Society, suspicious of the positive findings recorded by Foster’s group, initiated their own theater investigation. Much smaller than the mayor’s committee, the group of hygiene investigators focused its efforts on the twenty-five theaters that had been neglected by the larger report, ones that combined vaudeville and moving picture shows. Yet the hygienists’ results were much the same as that of the mayor’s committee. Of the nineteen moving picture shows viewed by Society members, only three were considered immoral for offensive scenes that included drinking, flirtations, smoking, and cheap references to family life. Vaudeville, the committee concurred, was “rank,” making light of sexual immorality and a joke of sexual decency. Taken as a whole, however, the theater was not as vulgar as hygienists had expected. They were pleased to discover that theaters in the outlaying areas around Portland were social centers where people could gather and chat, where children ran freely before the showings, and where theater owners knew many of the viewers by sight. Many men attended the theaters with their families, causing reformers to admit that money taken by theaters meant far less for saloons.
Social hygienists noted the attendance of families, especially those of the lower classes. Such a reassessment of the theaters may have contributed to the Society's willingness to use these facilities for its public lectures.\textsuperscript{28}

Reaffirmed by the Society's theater investigation, the organization's Public Education Committee instituted its plan of using the theaters to host its lectures. The theaters' easy availability and large quantity of seating combined with the potential of darkened rooms to show lanternslides made such venues attractive. Cramped quarters in libraries or lecture halls left little room for the expanding crowds lured to the Society's public lectures. In addition, the popularity of the theater created a natural draw for some who could not be reached in any other way. With these attributes in mind, the Public Education Committee approached the managers of local theaters in the fall of 1913 to request use of their buildings for the hygiene cause. Manager J.A. Johnson of the Pantages Theater donated use of his theater during its forty-five minute lunch period. The committee printed "tickets" of admission to a series of men's noon hour talks planned for the Pantages. These "tickets" advertised free admission and were distributed to men in parks, saloons, and the streets in a "special effort to reach loafers." The series of meetings, with its three-minute lectures titled "Red Plague and Its Black History," "Bacteria in the Mind" or "Animalizing the Human or Humanizing the Animal," drew large numbers of curious men to the theater. "More and more it is being realized that the red plague is working vast injury," audiences were told. Innocent children and women were its victims. The crowds responded enthusiastically.\textsuperscript{29}
Propelled by success, the committee hosted additional series of meetings in theaters for both men and women. Eventually other theaters joined in to support the hygiene cause by donating use of their buildings and the Oregonian and Portland Evening Telegram lent their support by advertising the meetings and reporting their record-breaking attendance. Large audiences attended these meetings, making it necessary to turn people away. At a series of noon-hour talks held at the Empress theater in March of 1916, 1,500 men attended a day while the same month a series at the Heilig Theater drew over a thousand a day. With the success of these talks apparent, a series of speeches was initiated for women and another for boys. At a lecture for women in April of 1916, two thousand women crowded the Hippodrome Theater’s aisles and lobby, while “hundreds” were turned back for lack of room. By July of 1916 the attendance at one men’s meeting had climbed to over five thousand. Clearly the popularity of the Society’s topic and its public support were increasing.30

Though the reformer’s educational efforts at preventing disease were a success, calls to the Society from men who were already diseased necessitated a different approach. The large number of hygiene placards placed around the state offering advice had drastically increased the number of requests for Society assistance. Infected men required not only advice but treatment as well. The Quack Committee’s fight against unlicensed practitioners alerted members to the fact that many men were not receiving proper treatment when in the hands of disreputable physicians. What men needed, reformers believed, was an office where they could visit for advice, a center with “correct” information to replace those medical institutes that preyed on the
infected. Remedial steps must be taken to aid those who were diseased and to educate them against re-infection. Educational advice could be given to those who mistakenly believed they were infected to prevent them from later contracting venereal disease.

What the Society created was an Advisory Department, a "medical and moral clearing house" to send the suffering through the right channels toward cure or advice. Rather experimental in nature, the Advisory Department combined both educational and medical staff more closely than in any other work the Society had accomplished.  

In September of 1911 the Advisory Committee began discussing who would work in their new department. Even in the planning stage members of the committee were skeptical about how the agency would handle cases that needed treatment. Though many physicians within the Society were qualified to treat venereal disease, to allow the Society's physicians to do so would raise questions of professional ethics and personal profit. Another option discussed was the possibility of allowing a physician unassociated with the Society to treat venereal patients on site. Opponents stated that this would be costly and was not budgeted into the Society's funds. Finding a physician willing to take time away from a personal practice would also be difficult, even more so for the fact that many of the patients would be unable to pay and because the workload might easily become overwhelming. Treatment of venereal disease, members agreed, should be undertaken by a state-run clinic. The committee decided that the only proposition would be to request men needing treatment to seek a certified physician, preferably their trusted family physician who would treat their
case with confidentiality. Those that did not know a reputable doctor could be furnished the name of a licensed physician unassociated with the Society.\textsuperscript{32}

The treatment problem solved, members of the Advisory Department began to plan its office. Since much of the Society’s work had been conducted from the Y.M.C.A. building, committee members decided to establish a separate office where men would feel comfortable coming for advice. Members proposed to rent an office in downtown Portland, somewhere in the vicinity of Washington and Second Streets. Their search was shortened when the State Board of Health cooperated with the department and offered them space at its offices in the Selling Building. Posters advertising the new department were framed and placed in areas around the city. Advertising the office was a bold move, as many physicians decried publicizing medical treatments, afraid that they would be taken for quacks. The Advisory Department had leverage, however, because its offices were located within the State Board of Health building. Hours of operation were set seven days a week and a select group of ministers and physicians were enlisted to volunteer their services. By March of 1912 the department was ready to open.\textsuperscript{33}

As always, work in the department was divided between those with medical and purity backgrounds. Dr. Calvin White, in his dual role as the Society’s president and Secretary of the State Board of Health, agreed to expand his duties even further to act as chief advisor of the new department. White’s assignment was to examine applicants to the office to ascertain the presence of venereal disease. With the State Board of Health’s Secretary handling the examinations, the public would be less likely
to complain that a private physician was compromising his professional ethics. White then referred men requiring medical attention to a private physician of the patient's own choosing or from a list of "carefully selected physicians" unrelated to the Society. Men who did not require medical attention were sent to H.H. Moore, who would take a "friendly interest" in them and attempted to channel them away from their preoccupation with sexual matters into more healthy channels such as the exercise and recreation offered by the Y.M.C.A. Physical exertion, reformers such as Moore believed, would cure men of their lustful cravings. Recreations such as gymnastics and weights were just the method to build muscular fiber that would, in turn, build moral fiber and keep men from the artificial stimulations of sexual and drunken debauchery.  

Results from the department's first months of work caused ambivalence among the committee. On a positive note, reformers stated, 521 calls for advice had come into the department between April 14th and August 31st of 1912. Ten percent of these calls had come from outside the city of Portland, a fact that exemplified how news of the Society's work was spreading. Many of these men had written for advice and as many as one hundred letters were "cheerfully" answered by a member of the department. Out of a sampling of those contacting the Advisory Department for advice, 82 percent were unmarried, a statistic that supported the department's work to reach men before they wed. Men that were unmarried had less chance of infecting innocents and proper treatment and education might ensure that they never would. Yet other news was disconcerting. Though a few of the men coming to the department
had contracted the disease from ignorance, many already knew the nature of their infections as they had experienced similar afflictions in the past, sometimes more than once. These “medical” cases probably did not surprise physicians but the results were disappointing to purity reformers who had serious doubts about their ability to influence these types of men toward moral behavior.35

As members of Advisory Department soon discovered, only half of their cases were suffering from physical or mental disorders that required immediate treatment. Of the 521 who called for advice, 52 percent were suffering from “real sex troubles” including 158 with acute, chronic gonorrhea and forty-three who had contracted syphilis. Thirty-one with sex troubles were “Neurotics and Masturbators,” a category which required serious mental treatment. Masturbation, considered an unnatural act by both physician and purity groups, was more dangerous than other forms of sexual indulgence because it wasted “vital spermatic fluid” necessary for vigor and health. The ease of practicing this habit to excess worried physicians as they considered it the first step to “debauchery, disease, and death.” “At the age of 15,” one young man confessed to the Society, “I learned to masturbate. No one told me the dangers connected with it, and I developed the habit...I am engaged to a sweet, pure girl...I am so unworthy. I have reached a parting of two ways...I am ready for a fight.” Other patients with “real sexual trouble” included those with problems relating to circumcision or with ailments associated with sexual excess such as frequent seminal emissions.36
The Advisory Department realized that its offices appealed not only to men who were infected with disease, but to those with a guilty reason for suspecting they might be. Thirty seven percent of the 521 men contacting the department were driven to seek aid by mistaken fears of sexual trouble. Ten percent of these had a non-sexual disease they feared had been caused by a sexual indiscretion such as “lost manhood,” a fictitious ailment advertised by quacks and commonly associated with masturbation. Symptoms such as an “inability to perform the sexual act at frequent intervals or the so-called going off too soon” sent men to the Society in need of reassurance.

“Varicocele,” or distended veins on the scrotum, was also commonly believed to result from self-abuse. Eczema around the thighs caused a number of men to contact the department fearing their rash represented the pimple-like symptoms of syphilis. Most of these men were relieved to find that what they had perceived as “sexual problems” were only “purely imaginary.” “In practically none of these men,” the department stated with disgust, “[has]...any higher ideals than simply pastime ever occurred to them.” One young man of twenty-three admitted to the department a worry that his night emissions, or “wet dreams,” would negatively effect his marriage. “I have never had any sexual intercourse with women of any kind or age, and cannot understand why I should be troubled in this way...the girl I am to marry is wholly innocent, I would not want for the world to injure her health in any way.”

The remainder of the 521 men suffered from a variety of physical troubles that were not considered serious enough to warrant treatment by the department. Thirty-five men experienced night emissions that were infrequent enough to be considered a
normal sign of health and vigor, and one man had apparently been "assaulted" by a prostitute. Another caller believed he should be castrated, a treatment which, like cauterization, was often resorted to in serious cases of gonorrhea. Those patients with problems "non-sexual" in nature were plagued by more generalized physical symptoms they, too, associated with venereal disease. One of these callers suffered from acne, nine from warts on their members, and four from hernias. This odd assortment of maladies demonstrated to the department the broad range of cases with which it would deal as well as the high level of anxiety, guilt and fears men associated with problems of a sexual nature. Most importantly, these cases proved to Society members the availability of a certain amount of "common" sexual knowledge gathered through sexual subcultures. This was exactly the sort of knowledge the Advisory Department had been organized to fight.38

Throughout the department's first four weeks of operation calls at the office steadily increased. By May of 1912, after only two months of work, Dr. White reported to the committee "off the record" that the number of men calling on the department for help overwhelmed him. If business at the office continued to increase at the rate it had been, he warned the committee, "other arrangements would have to be made." Business continued to increase over the next month and in June the Executive Committee responded by initiating a search for what it considered to be the "right man" to take over White's position. By September, however, a director had not been found. White, who was traveling east for two months to attend the International Congress of Hygiene and Demography, admonished the committee at a Society
meeting to find his replacement quickly. Reformers should locate a person who could devote his entire time to the Advisory Department, as he himself had not been able to do because of his duties at the State Board of Health. Members of the Advisory Department, defending themselves, pointed to the difficulty in finding a "first-class" physician who was willing to give up private practice for the Society's work, but indicated that they would continue searching until they found someone they could trust. White left for Washington D.C. soon after the meeting and the Main Office of the State Board of Health temporarily took over examinations for the Society.39

The Committee's quandary over hiring a new advisor reflected the tension between purity and sanitary forces within the new department. Although sanitarians on the committee preferred a medical man to act as the advisor, purity members favored hiring a morally inspired layman to do the job. Purity members were quick to point out the difficulty in procuring a full time physician willing to give up his time. The role of advisor, they stated, did not necessitate a medical man, as the main task of the person employed would be to direct cases to physicians who could help them. When many of the men coming to the department were on their second or third infection, the greatest service the department could provide was moral advice. This called for an employee of exceptional character, one who could win men's confidence and turn them to virtuous and rational living. Most important would be the advisor's work with younger men who had contracted the disease through ignorance, a group that was "well worth the time." They would be the ones most positively influenced by
the purity content offered by a non-medical advisor. The Advisory Department had
an opportunity for moral service, they reiterated, a service that was great indeed.40

The sanitarians, however, were not convinced. Though many believed morals
should be a high priority for any advisor, was it not Moore who should work with
these men? If the chief advisor was not medically trained, they added, a separate
physician would have to be hired to make the initial venereal diagnosis. It made better
sense for the advisor to be medically trained. Debate continued until December of
1912 when purity reformers were allowed a chance to test their theory. Due to lack of
funds to hire a new advisor H.H. Moore took over the advisory role from the State
Board of Health and attempted to channel those entering the department without the
precursory medical examination. The plan did not last for long, as it was difficult to
decide exactly who needed treatment through oral interviews alone. By March of 1913
sanitarians had won the debate. Dr. J. Allen Gilbert, Deputy State Officer of the
Oregon State Board of Health, was employed by the department as chief advisor and
given his own office that adjoined the Society’s in the Selling Building.41

The Advisory committee’s work had not gone unnoticed. By October of 1912
the Oregon Journal reported that D. William Howard Eliot and John D. Rockefeller
Jr. of the American Federation for Sex Hygiene, had written Oregon’s hygiene society
for suggestions on how the Advisory Department’s program might be applied to their
own work back east. Through the Society’s determination to reach every man and
woman it had unified purity and sanitary forces and attracted national attention.
Physicians and purity forces united not only in the Advisory Department, but also on a
varied range of educational endeavors in both the public and private sector. Like other professional Progressive reformers, the Society's hygienists were willing to utilize any means necessary to overcome the social problem of venereal disease, even if it meant straying "far afield" to do so. From sending lecturers to business houses, logging camps and theaters, to forming an alliance with the local newspapers to advertise their cause, the Society's members took on many forms of work in their determination to educate the public. Underlying these efforts to spread the "gospel of social health" was the message that sexuality, if controlled, would bring healthier families, fit children, and the bright future of tomorrow.⁴²
In the spring of 1915 the Y.M.C.A. conducted a survey to ascertain how young
men received their first sexual knowledge and experience. Under the supervision of
Dr. M.J. Exner, Special Secretary of the Y’s International Committee, 948 college
men were asked at what age they first learned about sex in a “striking way.” The
results shocked those purity-minded reformers who held preconceived notions
concerning children’s sexual knowledge, especially since the committee indicated that
the statistics were understated rather than overstated. Ninety three per cent of men
reported receiving their first sexual impression under the age of fourteen and 124
admitted that they had experienced this impression before the age of seven. The
college men acknowledged that, in most cases, their first sexual information came
from “improper sources” such as older boys sharing sensational knowledge and vulgar
stories. The majority were ashamed of these early experiences. “It was bad in that it
led me to look upon sex as nasty and not to be spoken of to my parents,” one
responded. “It made me think of nothing but sexual indulgence and every girl that
passed was thought of in a vulgar manner,” another reported. Other men stated that
their experiences had produced “evil imagination and practices.”

1
Even more shocking to purity reformers was the information gathered by investigators that concerned the sexual practices of college men. Of the 531 respondents willing to answer these question, 83 percent admitted to “indulging” in “some form” of sexual practice, a statistic that may have involved a higher percentage of masturbation than copulation. Over 75 percent of these young men had done so before the age of fifteen. Most added that their sexual experience had been she with little serious consequence. Nevertheless, investigators believed that such behavior never would have occurred in the first place had these boys been instructed earlier in matters of sexual hygiene. Many of the young men blamed their parents for failing to give them “clean” information or stated that the parental education they received had come too late. The majority admitted that they had not received sexual instruction until they were at least fourteen years of age. Investigators concluded that sexual education should be provided to the young by the age of six or eight at the latest. Better yet, the report concluded, information should be given in a gradual process from childhood to early adulthood, or whenever questions arose.²

Reports such as these worried hygiene reformers who were concerned that children were receiving foul sources of sexual knowledge. They believed that the conspiracy of silence was responsible for young people’s inability to receive sexual instruction from agencies such as the home, the church, or the school. Disreputable sources of knowledge would not only lead the young to think of procreation as vulgar and perverted, hygienists insisted, but would cause children to experiment with sexual practices at an early age. Even private practices such as masturbation were dangerous
because of children’s ability to utilize them to excess and were considered by
reformers a habit that would eventually lead to moral degeneracy and a longing for the
“real thing.” These longings would cause sexual promiscuity, a primary source of
venereal disease. Reformers believed that to rectify this problem two things were
required: eradicating negative sources of information that were reaching children, and
replacing them with “clean” sexual knowledge. The solution they proposed was a
plan of constructive action to “correct tendencies which tend to make children bad and
to promote those agencies which keep the normal child pure and sweet.”

The primary question in reformers’ minds was who should be giving this
instruction to youth. Purity reformers within the Society stated that parents should be
the ones addressing their children’s need for sexual knowledge. Others hygienists
argued that because parents were failing this responsibility, another agency, such as
the church or the school, should administer hygiene education. A percentage of
reformers believed that neither the home nor the school possessed the capabilities to
pass on morally correct sexual knowledge; therefore it became the Oregon Social
Hygiene Society’s responsibility. Though reformers could not agree who should
educate the children, they were willing to go to any length to make certain that youth
had access to pure sources of sexual information, even if this meant experimenting
with a variety of instructional methods. The most important step, they concurred, was
to attempt to remove all negative sources of sexual information that were leading
children astray.
The first step in the Society's plan of action was to identify negative sources of sexual information that were corrupting the young. Idle children, hygienist stated, would choose to spend their leisure time either in wholesome activities that promoted a healthy sex life or in illicit amusements "fraught with danger." Judge Gaten's report at the September 18th meeting in 1911 identified Portland's city streets as a primary pitfall of the young. Children with an absence of authority in their home or whose interests expanded outside the family often took to the streets. City streets, according to reformers, were the children's new playground, attracting girls and boys who hungered for excitement, recreation and pleasure like "moths...about the candle flame." Large groups of unsupervised children worried reformers who believed that the innocent would be lured into temptation by the immoral amusements and questionable characters lurking on every street corner. Amusements craftily designed to "excite sex impulses" such as public dance halls, moving picture shows, and skating rinks kept children on the street well after dark with their "glitter and glare."

Reformers detested vaudeville performances, anatomical museums, penny-in-the-slot machines, and picture post cards for their suggestive content and negative sexual innuendos. Children's idleness, combined with the negative instruction of the streets, they concluded, would inevitably lead youth astray to immorality.5

In September of 1911 the Committee on Social Evil, organized as a subcommittee of the Oregon Social Hygiene Society, was instructed to begin examining the problem of children on Portland's city streets after dark. According to a Vice Commission investigation over a two-night period the same year, over 1,200
youth under eighteen years of age could be found unattended on the streets at night. The Commission’s report stated that most problems with children occurred when they were unsupervised by agencies such as the family, school, or church. As these social organizations were shirking the responsibility of chaperoning children, this left police officers to do the work. Police officers, however, were occupied by other duties and could not contain the number of children seeking after-hours recreation. The Commission also revealed that not only did Portland have two conflicting curfew ordinances, but that neither was enforced, each having become “almost a dead letter.” These statistics proved that many children were unattended at night and reports stated that unattended children were more likely to get into trouble. Considering that three quarters of juvenile crime prosecutions stemmed from after-curfew activities, enforcement of this law was the remedial measure suggested by the hygiene committee to ensure that children remained under the influence of the home. With the large number of children on city streets and the limited capability of officers, however, upholding the law seemed a futile proposition. A plan that might work, the Committee contended, involved lobbying the mayor for additional curfew officers to be instated to monitor children’s nightly activities.6

On Sept 20, 1911, the chair of the Committee on Social Evil appointed three men to address Mayor A.G. Rushlight with their plan. In an interview later that same week, the mayor spoke “strongly in favor of supporting the Curfew Law.” Rushlight assured the reformers that Police Chief Enoch Slover was taking steps necessary to see that the ordinance was enforced. The committee’s men met with Slover, a member of
the Oregon Social Hygiene Society, the next week to further discuss the curfew problem. Slover was pleased at the committee’s proposal and stated that a better way to attack the problem would be to hire a juvenile court officer for each ward to patrol the activities of the young from the time school let out until midnight. Ten additional officers, he calculated, would be sufficient to get the job done correctly, guessing that the cost to hire these officers would be somewhere around $800 dollars. To gain the mayor’s support for this plan, Slover proposed that the hygiene reformers invite Rushlight and the Police Commissioners to become members of the Society, a suggestion that was not popular among those members suspicious of the leaders’ commitment to reform efforts. Instead, members decided to raise public opinion to persuade the City Council of the need to hire the extra officers. Over the next week reformers brought their proposition to the attention of churches, public school employees, and parents in an attempt to raise support for the Curfew Law’s enforcement. The committee secured additional support by obtaining written statements from such prominent citizens as Judge W.N. Gatens and policewoman Lola Baldwin to present before the Mayor.7

A delegation of influential members and public figures including Judge Seton and Judge Gatens met with Mayor Rushlight and the Police Commission at the Society’s headquarters on October 27th. Yet members of the Society were unprepared for the events that unfolded when discussion over the committee’s plan to procure the ten additional officers unexpectedly turned sour. Rushlight, who had previously voiced his supportive, now spoke against the Society’s proposal. It would be “almost
impossible,” he stated, to secure the funds necessary to hire ten additional officers. Turning on the police department, he attacked his colleagues for their “lack of discipline” and added that even ten more officers would not make up for the department’s inability to perform effective curfew work. John B. Coffey, chairman of the Police Commission, sided with the mayor by declining to see any way to increase the number of officers required for curfew work. Slover, somewhat subdued, stated that perhaps what the police department needed was simply the right type of officers to do the work. Judge Seton was more encouraging, reminding the Society of its purpose; perhaps progressive educational measures would be a better method of supporting the Curfew Law than remedial police regulation. Remedial action, he added, would have little effect on the greater problem of venereal disease resulting from the curfew problem.

The Committee on Social Evil, though disappointed by the unsympathetic reaction to its proposal, was not ready to give up efforts to coerce the recalcitrant. “The law gives power to place a policeman on guard in front of the house where contagious disease is found,” stated Calvin S. White indignantly, “but the law provides no protection against the diseases of darkness.” Something more than additional curfew officers was needed, the committee stated, since the police department refused to recognize “the seriousness and extent of immorality prevailing among the youth of our city.” Judge Gatens, always supportive of attempts to control the city’s young people, suggested that the Society hire its own deputy sheriffs, men of character who intimately understood the delinquency problem among the boys and girls of Portland.
The county could pay the deputies’ expenses, he added, while the officers’ work would be directed by the Society. Committee members agreed to try Gatens’ plan. Twenty prominent citizens were selected by the Society to represent its case before the County Court in December of 1911. When a month went by in which the Court gave no response, Society members decided to contact twelve prominent Rotary Club members to go before the court and remind it of the need for the juvenile deputies.9

The Society’s work at the county level put pressure on Mayor Rushlight, who called a meeting with members of the hygiene organization in February of 1912. Fifty policemen, the Mayor told them, had been newly appointed by the city council in January to maintain “basic law and order.” The Mayor stated his willingness to take ten of these officers and assign them to full-time special duty enforcing the Curfew Law. The hygiene society’s task would be to meet with the police chief and his special officers to instruct them on which curfew duties the reformers wished them to pursue. Hygienists, pleased at their victory, established a permanent committee of reformers to work with the ten officers in upholding curfew. For two months following the curfew squad’s appointment approximately two thousand children were sent home. The satisfaction of the new committee, however, was short lived. After only a week of working with the juvenile officers, the Society’s men admitted to the Executive Committee that dealing with curfew issues was a “much bigger and more difficult problem than was at first thought.” Apparently the officers agreed. Though a large number of children had been sent home the first month, the succeeding month saw a significant drop in the number of children dealt with by the officers. The curfew
work was further stunted when it was called off over the summer months though vacationing school children were out on the streets in greater numbers than before. By August the committee updated Society members that the curfew matter was far from satisfactorily solved. The reformer’s campaign of repression had not worked as well as they had hoped. Instead, they decided to turn heed Judge Seton’s advice and turn their attention to what the Society was better at: educational work.¹⁰

When it came to sexual education of Oregon’s children, the first place many Society members looked to was the home. The question of who should teach the children was a heated one between those whose opinion was divided over the inherent nature of children. For purity reformers who believed children were “innocent” and modest by nature, sexual education meant stressing ideals of modesty, chastity, and self-control. Purity advocates could imagine no better place for children to receive sexual information than at their loving mother’s knee. She, as no other, could appeal to the child’s conscience and instill a reverence for the “holiness of motherhood” that was the highest ideal of the sex instinct and romantic love. Mothers, by filling children’s thoughts with the sacredness of motherhood, would occupy the mind’s “virgin soil,” leaving no room for the “noisome weeds of vulgarity and obscenity” to grow. Children who were essentially “good,” therefore, must be guarded from all evil influences that would jeopardize this innocence.¹¹

For those who believed that children were inherently “naughty,” the mind was not simply a blank slate on sexual matters but one filled with all manner of sexual curiosities and morbid fascinations waiting to be triggered. Children were “abnormal”
from other species in the animal kingdom because their mind was filled with sexual impulses long before puberty. Therefore education required instilling “clean” and wholesome information at an early age to offset vulgar sources that might awaken children’s “unnatural” tendencies. Parents, these reformers believed, were not always the best source for teaching their children, as they carried the “burden of inherited prudery” or had “so vicious a view of sex as to be incapable of conveying the knowledge without their own taint of morals.” A polling of parents by the Society revealed that 90 percent admitted they did not give their children any sort of sexual advice in the home, further cinching these reformers’ arguments. Clearly, they stated, children in the home were not receiving the instruction they needed to guide their sex impulses from vulgar imaginings to the “temple of clean and reverent minds.” They recommended that some other agency such as the church or the school must take responsibility for educating children if parents were not willing or able to do so. Since the church did not hold the same sway over children as it once had, this left the school as the agency most likely to provide correct information. These reformers recognized, however, that persuading the public to allow sexual education into the schools would be a long and difficult process. Though the idea had been gaining ground for a number of years among the hygiene community, public opinion was not quite ready for such a radical step. The only course of action left, both sets of reformers agreed, was to experiment with educating parents on the need to instruct their children in sexual matters.12
At the Society’s October 11th meeting in 1911, the Committee on School Cooperation introduced the idea of holding parents’ meetings at public schools around Portland. Meetings could be divided into series for mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, or for parents only. Not only would meetings in the school provide an ideal setting for emphasizing the need for sexual education, they also would provide the schools and public with an opportunity to become comfortable with the idea of sexual instruction in their facilities. The meetings would provide a variety of opportunities for the Society: a chance to discover parental attitudes concerning introduction of sexual education into the public school’s curriculum, an opportunity to build support for the same, and a way to instruct parents on what they should be telling their children about sex. Society members were unanimously supportive of the Committee on School Cooperation’s idea and suggested that it meet with Portland’s teacher committee, the School Board and the District Superintendent to propose the plan.  

That same month Dr. Calvin White, acting as spokesman for the committee, met with both the School Board and the Superintendent of Schools requesting that they allow a series of parents’ meetings to be held in Portland’s public schools. As a number of representatives on the school board were also social hygiene members, there was little opposition to the request. Reflecting common social sentiment against sexual instruction in the schools, however, the board stated that it would allow the meetings provided the Society did not misconstrue its approval as an authorization to introduce sexual hygiene into the public education system and as long as speakers were careful in their endeavors. The committee began planning its next move.
Invitations to parents were given to each principal, who forwarded them onto the teachers. Teachers were instructed to give the sealed envelopes to their students, who could bring them home to their parents a few days before the meetings were to take place. The committee scheduled the first of these meetings and speakers prepared material on what sexual knowledge should be passed on to the children.  

The night of the first meeting Society speakers waited eagerly for parents to trickle in. When enough adults had gathered, the lecturers began their instruction. Parents, the audience was told, had failed in their responsibility to instruct their children in matters of sexual reproduction. In every intelligent home there should be a "council of two" passing on information to growing daughters and sons. If parents could not work together to provide instruction, then mothers should educate their daughters and fathers speak with their sons. The hygiene message, even at an early age, should reflect a separation between the sexes. Young boys should be taught that strength, courage, energy and endurance were crucial to virility. The virility of famous men might be exemplified, men such as presidents Washington and Lincoln, or Livingston who braved his trip to Africa. A boy should be taught that his thyroid gland, not sexual activity, would be the secret of his strength. A girl should be taught the reasons for menstruation or her "sick spell," the dignity and sacredness duty of motherhood, and most importantly, the need to beware of any boy who attempted to take liberties with her. Speakers told parents that information for both sexes would be best illustrated by introducing sexual instruction in the context of biological principles such as the reproduction of bees or salmon. For older children, reproductive
illustrations of "higher" animals such as cats, pigs, or horses might be used. Above all was the importance of stressing that man was "above" animals because of his or her ability to control sexual impulses and save them for their proper reproductive purpose. General hints on good health such as the necessity of exercise, bathing, and simple clothing would aid children in the achievement of purity. Parents should emphasize the hazards of over-stimulating amusements. Above all, information should be given to children by parents as early as possible, the speakers concluded, to "make heroines of girls and place boys on the side of right."15

Despite the clarity of their message, Society speakers were disappointed by the results of their first meeting. Though the parents of every child in the school had been invited, only sixty-three attended. Results for the next meeting were similar; only 18 percent of the parents invited were present. Something was wrong, the committee decided. The panel soon discovered that many of the invitations given to older children were not taken home to the parents, and committee members watched as students at downtown's Lincoln High School threw their invitations away before leaving school. Learning from experience, the committee decided that a better course of action would involve mailing invitations to the homes of older students by using lists of names and addresses obtained by principals. As committee members mailed their invitations for additional meetings they waited for larger crowds. Yet they were to be repeatedly disappointed, as attendance at the subsequent meetings remained similar to the first. To add to the committee's troubles, many parents who did attend were not satisfied with the content presented by the hygiene lecturers. Although
parents voiced approval of the committee's efforts to educate them, they did not feel that enough practical application was introduced and remained baffled as to how this instruction sexual instruction should be passed on to their children.¹⁶

Not to be put down easily, the Committee on School Instruction decided to make another attempt. A second series of meetings was scheduled, and this time the committee advertised heavily for the lectures. Parents who had attended the first set of meetings were mailed a letter informing them of the second series of lectures and asking them to contact five of their neighbors with children to inform them of the Society's efforts. Speakers at the second set of meetings, the letter promised, would present more definite answers on ways to instruct children. Along with these letters the committee mailed a printed schedule giving the dates each meeting would occur. The second set of meetings, however, was to prove just as disappointing as the first. Despite the committee's aggressive advertising, only a few more parents attended the second set of talks than did the first. The speakers' efforts to impart more detailed knowledge of ways to instruct children raised criticism from a number of ladies who objected to "the plain and blunt way" in which the material was handled, suggesting that the speakers use more "delicacy and refinement" at any additional talks. These objections pointed to the contradictions between the conventions of moral purity and social hygiene.¹⁷

Although frustrated by the apparent indifference of parents to their meetings, committee members were not yet ready to give up. The panel now decided to canvass homes for their next series of meetings by visiting over seven hundred residences in
the school district where the lectures were to be held. After an extensive canvassing effort, members of the committee were pleased to note that 1,300 of those parents they had spoken with stated a desire to attend the Society’s meetings. On the first day of lectures, however, only fifty-one were present, with additional meetings providing similar results. Members decided that mothers might be too busy taking care of children on a school night to come to the meetings. Experimenting with a different approach of advertising, the committee targeted fathers specifically. Letters were sent to fathers of school-aged boys asking whether they would be willing to attend a third set of parents’ meetings at one of Portland’s schools. Included in the letter was a prepaid envelope for remitting a reply. Out of sixty-three recipients, however, only five responded. As a last resort, committee members attempted to draw parents by allowing their children to attend meetings with them. “Tickets” to father-and-son or mother-and-daughter lectures were handed out in ways similar to those of the parents meetings. Children were instructed by their teachers to tell parents who would not be present at the meeting to sign their tickets, enabling their children to attend the lectures alone. Nevertheless, committee members who watched the results of these meetings were increasingly discouraged. Large numbers of children arrived for the lectures with tickets in hand, but less than 10 percent of mothers and fathers came with them.18

Although twenty-four parents’ meetings were held in a two month period, over five times as many as were held for businesses, teachers, or theaters audiences, parents proved to be the least likely of all groups to attend social hygiene meetings. Committee members were not alone in their frustration. “Ask any social hygiene
worker to state his most perplexing problem,” a reformer declared, “and almost invariably he will tell you, ‘How can I arouse the parents to the dangers surrounding their boys and girls?’” The sharp contrast between the “contaminating conditions…in Portland” and the complacent indifference of parents gradually caused Society reformers to pursue a bolder experiment to reach children in the public schools.\(^{19}\)

By the beginning of 1912 the Committee on School Education began to consider more seriously the experiment of placing sexual instruction in the public schools. The idea was highly controversial, even among hygiene reformers. One of the most dividing issues was an argument over what age children should receive instruction. For purity reformers in the Society such as Portland Reverend W.G. Eliot Jr., grandson of William Greenleaf Eliot, nationally renowned temperance and purity reformer, education was to be attempted only for older children so that their innocence would be maintained as long as possible. To reformers such as Foster, however, the earlier that sexual education began the better. Some children, he stated, were receiving vulgar sexual information as early as seven years of age. Another problem reformers considered was the lack of qualified instructors to present the information to children. Well-meaning but ignorant teachers, reformers agreed, might give children wrong ideas or prompt prurient curiosity about the subject that would be harmful. Classes on sex hygiene and morals should be taught by teachers with high ideals, those who approached the subject with the “reverence…joy and inspiration” that came from knowing that one was serving mankind. Teaching children was an area where no mistakes should be made. Another precept upon which reformers agreed was that any
sexual education in schools must be taught in a conservative manner. Sexual material, they concurred, should be taught within the context of a more generalized series of educational topics such as health, physiology, biology, or ethics to make the information appear as a part of the world's "natural order."²⁰

To avoid ill-taught educational efforts, the Committee on School Cooperation suggested that an experiment be undertaken in which the Society offered to provide its own trained speakers to give lectures in the public schools. Lectures could begin by giving talks to groups of older boys who would soon be leaving school, since they were the ones most in need of a "first-aid" sexual hygiene information. This was an option upon which members consented, providing the school committee avoided "hasty ill-advised plans." Any mistakes, hygiene reformers stated, would only provoke negative public opinion for a move that was certain to be controversial at best. In March of 1912 the Society decided to approach Brooklyn School in Southeast Portland where members knew the principal was sympathetic to the hygiene cause. A meeting was scheduled with the principal and school board to discuss the possibility of presenting a series of four lectures during school hours in which sexual hygiene topics would be introduced.²¹

Society members were well prepared for the emotional responses their subject might arouse. But when the Morning Oregonian printed an article stating that the school board had refused the Society's plans even before the meeting had occurred, members feared that one of their own had purposefully leaked news of the scheme to encourage the public's negative response. The Society postponed the school board
meeting. Attempting to pacify a public backlash, Foster assured *The Oregonian*, "'If we were going to do what some people think we are going to do, we would have a panic in advance, but we are not going to put the teaching of sex hygiene in the schools.'" Nevertheless, the hygiene society gathered behind closed doors to once again discuss plans for introducing sex education lectures. Reformers eventually reached a unifying consensus on the plan, and the decision to introduce sex education was cautiously put before school board members.\textsuperscript{22}

Ironically, the Society's apprehension over negative publicity proved to be ungrounded. Later that month the school board granted the request and even asked that high school girls be given the lectures as well. The Society now went ahead with two talks a week to both girls and boys. The older boys' response to the meetings, however, was more troublesome than speakers anticipated. When the speakers met with Brooklyn's principal to evaluate the plan's success, the educator complained that the talks had gotten a little rowdy, with many of the boys treating the subject as a joke. Worse was the argument that broke out among the boys as to whether the disease was curable or not. One group of youngsters argued that they had heard from doctors that the disease was incurable, while another group disclaimed the fact by stating that they knew for a fact the disease was curable because they had contracted it before and been cured. There was also the problem of boys who stated that their parents would not have wanted them to attend the meetings.\textsuperscript{23}

The hygiene speakers admitted that they had been working at a disadvantage. In many cases the boys had come against their will or that of their parents. They
believed, however, that the size of these meetings was at the heart of the problem. Boys especially would benefit from a smaller group size of perhaps eight at the most. Speakers could sit among the smaller groups to encourage intimacy in the discussion and engage the youths' sympathy. With the smaller group size, youth would feel freer to question whenever they had doubts and matters could be kept from becoming rowdy. Speakers emphasized that boys should be divided by maturity level rather than age. Meetings should be voluntary, they stated, and only upon the signed approval of parents. Because these factors would limit the number of youth that would be reached, speakers suggested that only boys and girls who were graduating from school should be chosen, since they were the group most likely to need the information in the near future. What lecturers needed was a chance to try again.24

The Society’s arguments persuaded the school’s administration. Additional series of talks were allowed, not only at Brooklyn but at other high schools as well. The talks, however, were only a wedge into introducing sex education into the schools, a campaign in which Oregon’s reformers, like others around the country, would make little headway before World War I. Though hygienists boldly advocated sexual education for children, many in the general public tended to side with purity reformers on this issue. The overwhelming consensus was that sexual hygiene education was too risky to be undertaken lightly. To jeopardize the “innocence” of youth would be to jeopardize “the future,” and was a risk not many, even among hygiene reformers, were willing to take. Another more populist response by some in the public was disapproval of educational “elite” taking control of family affairs by
superceding the home in supplying sexual instruction, a duty they believed was solely the responsibility of parents. This public censure against sexual education in the public schools was not limited to Oregon. Despite hygiene reformers’ efforts in some areas of the United States, Denver was forced to discontinue a sexual hygiene course after a storm of public protest in 1912. The next year Chicago schools abolished a sexual education program after only three months in the public high school. It would take many years before social conservatives in the public would accept the idea of sexual education in Oregon’s schools. In the meantime Society members focused on training teachers for that day. “Nobody is greatly concerned over mistakes in the teaching of geography and penmanship,” explained Foster, “but the moment we propose to teach a subject of real consequence there is a cry of protest—and rightly...here incompetent teachers cannot be trusted...[and] may aggravate the very evils we are trying to assuage.”

The best way to train teachers, the Society believed, was to introduce them to sexual hygiene material in the state’s teacher education program. Few courses, however, were offered in this subject other than lectures given by the Society. The University of Puget Sound, in 1911, had taken a “daring departure from regular lines of instruction” by initiating sexual hygiene course for teachers according to the “new preaching of scientists.” By 1912 the State of Washington required teachers to receive a course in “The Pedagogy of Sexual Hygiene” at their normal schools. Oregon was behind in even these basic measures. To compensate, the Committee on School Education decided to urge the state’s normal school to communicate with the
teacher education programs in Washington to obtain information about beginning the same program in Oregon. Slowly Oregon colleges began to respond to the hygiene society’s pressure. Reed College, under Foster’s direction, took the lead, offering classes available to the public as well as to its students. An extension course for parents on how to teach their children sex hygiene was offered in October of 1912. The next year Reed College, with the support of the state department of education and the Oregon Social Hygiene Society, offered another twelve-lecture extension class entitled “Sexual Hygiene and Morals.” A forty-page syllabus for the course was mailed, along with the Society’s circulars, to 4,500 teachers in the state, of which 150 attended. So popular was the series of lectures that it was eventually developed into the book *The Social Emergency*, edited by Foster.26

Due to pressure from the Oregon Social Hygiene Society, recognition of the need for sexual education in the public schools was gaining ground among teachers. In April of 1914 Society members convened a conference at Salem’s Willamette University entitled “Sex Education in the Schools and Colleges.” Teachers from around Oregon were invited to attend in order to plan a definite program for introducing sex education into every level of schooling, from grammar school to high school, as well as to college. Reverend W.G. Eliot Jr., member of the Society’s Executive Committee, was the conference’s introductory speaker. That teachers had gathered to discuss the possibilities of sexual education in the schools was a “progressive” and “groundbreaking” step, he stated proudly. The Society had experimented with sexual education in the schools, he admitted, and teachers were
being trained. However, no definite plan of action should be taken until the public was convinced it was absolutely necessary to use the school as an agency to impart sexual knowledge. Until teachers were properly trained and the public was supportive, educational efforts in the schools would do more harm than good. For the time being, education belonged in the home. Those teachers at the conference, though forward in their thinking, were inclined to be cautious in their actions. As professional educators, they agreed with hygiene reformers that instructors of sexual subjects should be trained before being placed in the classroom. Therefore, those at the conference unanimously accepted Eliot’s purity-based proposal. No plans were made for introducing sexual education into the schools during the conference and would not be for many more years.27

With the school options exhausted, the Society’s reformers were ready to return their attention to parents and the home as a prescription against sexual immorality. A Society meeting called on June 17, 1914 once again devoted itself to discussing the problem of children on Portland streets at night. With Mayor Albee, Judge Gatens, and public school truant officer Hugh C. Krum in attendance, members reviewed evidence that proved the curfew problem far from satisfactorily solved. The Vice Committee’s survey three years before had revealed that 1,215 school aged children were unaccompanied on the streets between the time of 8 p.m. and 12:30 a.m., many of them congregating in theaters, cigar stands, and billiard halls. The Committee on Commercial Pleasures’ Report, directed under the supervision of Mayor Albee, reported that of 2,618 children surveyed, 29 percent were away from home at
moving picture shows two nights a week or more. Though the remedial work of the
ten curfew officers hired under Rushlight had sent two thousand children to their
homes over a two-month period, the program had ended in failure. The Society's own
survey of children on Portland's streets at night, gathered prior to the June 17th
meeting by Superintendent of Public Instruction L.R. Alderman and 207 teachers,
revealed that the number of children on the street had not changed much in the past
three years. Krum validated the Society's evidence with reports from his own
investigations which showed that children who were unattended by adults at city
playgrounds were not conducting themselves properly. Since remedial efforts had
failed, the Society declared, a new measure was needed to keep children off of the
streets at night.28

William F. Woodward, chairman of the Society's Public Education
Committee, now proposed a progressive strike at the street problem, an educational
program he called a "Back to the Home" movement in which parents were urged to
make their homes more attractive for children. Mayor Albee stated his support for any
movement that would help the children of Portland. If parents were not watching over
their children, he stated, than it became society's responsibility to do so, not only for
the child, but for community's future as well. He would do everything he could to
help ensure that "the men and women of tomorrow" were safe in their homes at night.
Judge Gatens was a little more reluctant to dismiss the idea of curfew enforcement, but
he acquiesced. It was important, he said, for children to be lured by "fireside and
home” and he would support any movement that made the home more attractive than the street.29

As a “home-and-morality” reform effort, the movement hit at the heart of what Progressives were trying to accomplish. Growing industrialism and ethnic diversity of the cities worried many reformers who saw an end to an “American” way of life. In contrast to the Lamarckian idea that argued for humans to adapt to their environment in order to survive as a species, urban uplifters were determined to adapt “decaying” cities to their own middle-class Anglo Saxon standards. Efforts to purify, departmentalize and idealize industry by providing hygiene facilities for working-classes mixed with campaigns to educate immigrant mothers on childcare, first aid, and nutrition in a general movement to superimpose an orderly “household” environment on urban areas across America.30

The idea of the “home” was foremost on most Oregon reformers’ minds as well, as it was “the biggest institution in the land.” The idealization of a small home set against the backdrop of a rolling lawn recalled to many reformers the virtues of rural living that were considered ideal for children. In contrast to the image of crowded and diseased streets associated with the “dangers” of the slums, spacious yards filled with children busy at play represented a societal bulwark against the tarnish of industrial civilization and the decay of social order. Progressive reformers wanted to change what they believed was the degenerative and corrupted character of the city, returning it to traditional middle-class and rural values, to order, and to righteousness. Playgrounds and parks represented one method of social uplift and
were a direct contrast to the inactivity of an indoors setting. Homes with yards were especially favored because they allowed the supervised recreation of children. Yards symbolized primitivism and even the smallest glimpse of green could evoke an upsurge of pride, strength, and character in a tiny section of the American "wilderness" that had withstood civilized society. For this reason, hygienists wanted to encourage children to stay in their yards and make Portland the "best home city in the world." 

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Theories of home life were at the heart of the society's goal and drove it to seek practical results. Members quickly endorsed Woodward's campaign and asked him to oversee preparations for the project. Directly after the meeting the Public Education Committee prepared 383 letters to be sent to ministers around Portland and across the state which asked them to preach on the Society's new movement sometime in the month of July. Ministers were sent investigative surveys and other social hygiene materials to use as the basis for their sermons. Also included with the letters was a Society circular which listed hints to keep children under parental supervision by making homes "centers of helpful activities" for them. A large yard was the most important suggestion on the list, although even a small one was "better than none." The yard should be not only one that was aesthetically pleasing, but a space that could be used for play, including a variety of activities appealing to children such as sand boxes, swings, and "teeter-boards." For boys a shack in the back yard could be given over to serve as a fort; for girls a sewing cabinet indoors might help to "crowd things more objectionable" out of her life, thus providing a "stitch in time." Other
suggestions included activities that could be enjoyed inside the home, such as a workbench in the basement where boys could build birdhouses, or a child’s library filled with books selected by parents that were neither too boring, nor over stimulating. Many of these suggestions, the committee believed, could be placed into sermons to give parents a practical application of the Society’s message.\textsuperscript{32}

The Society won a positive response to its progressive home movement. Out of the ministers receiving the packet of information, 111 responded, sending in the dates of their sermons for the Public Education Committee to publicize. The committee, determined as ever to draw a response, sent a follow-up letter to the ministers who did not answer and fifty more replied. In addition, letters were sent to two hundred editors of state newspapers asking them to support the hygiene society’s home movement, thirty of which agreed. Throughout the Society’s work hygienists had come to recognize that “progressive” educational work was their preferred medium of action. Though legal repression of quacks had succeeded where education could not, work with the curfew law had failed miserably and reformers gradually admitted that “legal compulsion” was “a poor means to combat evil.” Campaigns such as the home movement were not only more popular with the public, but work upon which all members of the Society could agree. Ironically, it was this emphasis on education that would become the dividing line upon which the Society eventually faltered in its work to save the nation from venereal disease.\textsuperscript{33}
CHAPTER V

THE SOCIETY’S RISE TO PROMINENCE: 1913-1918

According to appropriations designated by the state legislature, the Oregon Social Hygiene Society was organized to reach men, women and children in all areas of the state. By the beginning of 1913 the Society prepared to undertake this work in a more serious manner by mandating its State Extension Committee to formulate a plan for reaching cities and towns across Oregon. The committee decided to concentrate its initial efforts in reaching larger communities around the state by sending prominent speakers, such as Calvin White, to raise interest in the hygiene cause. Speakers traveled in pairs, bringing the hygiene exhibit along with them. They lectured extensively in cities such as Corvallis, Salem and Eugene. Yet reaching these communities was time consuming, requiring extensive travel by train or shorter distances by a new form of transportation: the car. Many of those who donated their time as speakers had additional vocations besides those of purity work. After a few months work to reach cities in the Willamette Valley became too time consuming for the limited availability of the Society’s limited pool of volunteer speakers. Another plan was necessary, members of the State Extension Committee declared. The panel now called upon committees in each city to guide local hygiene work and train community-based speakers to promote the hygiene cause. To organize these committees the Society would hire an agent to travel to each city in the state.1
The proposal for paid agents was approved in March of 1913 by the Society’s executive members and they immediately employed E. J. Cummins of the Y.M.C.A. as field secretary to devote full time to organizing statewide hygiene work. Cummins’ task was to assist the organization of “local promotion committees,” sub-committee modeled after and directed by the Society, that would carry on the campaign of hygiene education at the town level. Cummins, after gathering the names of prominent persons in each community, approached these citizens about the possibility of leading a local committee. Those that met his idea with enthusiasm were requested to aid him in scheduling meetings to rally other town members to the hygiene call. At these town meetings promotion committees were organized, members signed on to support the committees, and leaders were delegated by Cummins to serve as the decision-making body of the local hygiene organization. One of the three leaders of each organization was elected to serve as a member of the Oregon Social Hygiene Society’s executive board. Promotion committees aided the state society by sending it lists of prominent citizens living in their city. Citizens on the list were mailed the Society’s literature and invited to become members of the local organizations which, in turn, meant that they were part of the larger Society as well. All costs for local work were paid directly from the state society’s treasury.2

Corvallis was the first city which formally “launched” the Society’s statewide movement. In March of 1913 a conference was called in the city at which William Kerr, president of the local Oregon Agricultural College, presided. Two hundred and seventy-five men attended the meeting where Calvin S. White spoke along with other
community leaders. Corvallis citizens agreed to organize a local promotion committee and three leaders were chosen, among them President Kerr and Judge V. P. Moses. Additional meetings were then scheduled for the promotion committee’s work to begin. Yet the Oregon Social Hygiene Society warned local members from its own experience: “It is comparatively easy to arrange an enthusiastic conference and organize a movement. The test comes after the initial interest has subsided.” Like the larger society, however, hygienists in Corvallis were determined to succeed. Two months later the local committee held a meeting for employed women at which fourteen attended. Plans to organize parent meetings were arranged and mothers were canvassed to participate. To the Oregon Social Hygiene Society’s surprise, the parent meetings worked well outside of Portland. Local committee members were more successful in drawing upon those they knew personally, and the first mother-daughter meeting in Corvallis drew 500 attendants. The Society’s literature was amply distributed at the sessions. Local committee members also posted State Board of Health notices at thirty-four places around the city, and three out of four druggists in town began distributing circulars warning against the ineffectiveness of nostrum drugs. Over one hundred circulars were handed out through paymasters around Corvallis. Corvallis, declared the Portland Society, had “stood the test.”

Following the Corvallis organization, a string of local promotion committees organized in rapid succession across Oregon. On May 6, 1913 the Society called a conference at the Commercial Club Auditorium in Hood River, sixty-three miles east of Portland in the Columbia River Gorge, where a committee was organized and
executive members assigned. On May 27th citizens in The Dalles, another town in the Gorge, organized a committee of their own with the Society’s help, presided over by Judge W. L. Bradshaw. One month later Portland neighbor Oregon City followed by forming a local organization after a hygiene meeting at the Commercial Club. By November of 1913 the Willamette Valley towns of Salem, Hillsboro, and Forest Grove formed promotion committees, while eastern Oregon’s Baker, Pendleton, and La Grande organized committees by March of the following year.4

Another way the Society promoted its work was by employing women to raise interest in the hygiene cause. During the Progressive era, middle-class women played an increasingly important role as reform activists, particularly as “social housekeepers.” Some progressive crusaders encouraged women to become proactive in their communities, stating that a woman’s sphere was not bound “by the four walls of her home.” Women’s responsibility lie outside the sheltering perimeters of her immediate family, these reformers claimed, and their talents should be used to benefit society. Other progressives, however, criticized women for moving into society to reform it while leaving their children unattended to ward off dangerous temptations on the streets. Paradoxically, although many reformers in the hygiene society wanted women back in the home as mothers and domestic guardians, it was their role as “municipal housekeepers” that hygienists were willing to utilize to aid their movement. Consequently, the State Extension Committee proposed an experiment to employ women living in cities across Oregon to “canvass” homes. Prominent and influential women of “discretion and tact” in each city were to be employed to
personally visit homes to distribute Society literature to mothers, explaining its importance and how it might be used in the instruction of their children.\(^5\)

To measure the success of this experiment, a subsequent hygiene employee returned to the canvassed houses two weeks later to ask whether the mothers had been able to utilize the circulars and whether the literature had been of any value in instructing their children. The committee was pleased to discover that in the 4,147 homes visited during the experiment, 85 percent of mothers admitted that they had used the literature and found it helpful. Most of the mothers, in fact, were eager to receive the Society’s material and stated their hope that more information would be forthcoming. In addition, investigators noted a general acceptance among mothers to the idea of sexual education for their children, as well as an anxiety that this education should come from a trusted source. Many of the mothers expressed approval of the concept of Society talks given to their children in the schools, though they themselves might not be able to attend. “Few can realize how the smaller towns are neglected,” one mother stated, adding that children in the remote areas had few opportunities to attend lectures. The Extension Committee, bolstered by its success, was enthusiastic about continuing this type of work and reported that it believed this line of work would be just as beneficial in the more remote towns of Oregon.\(^6\)

By the beginning of 1914 the Extension Committee gained approval from the Society’s executive committee to target smaller Oregon towns. In order to aid the growing statewide work, a second field secretary, Thomas D. Eliot, was employed. Having graduated from Columbia University, he was taken on by the Society to work
with Cummins organizing local committees in the towns in the state's more remote communities. To prepare the way for these meetings, local promotion committees in larger towns gathered lists of prominent men and women in smaller communities to forward to the Extension Committee. The Society's literature was sent to each name on the list with a letter requesting these citizens to aid the hygiene cause. The committee realized that reaching remote towns would be challenging. Not only was the number of small towns greater than that of larger cities, but additional volunteers would be required to act as speakers until local citizens could be trained. The expense and difficulty in reaching these towns often meant that traveling speakers hosted a large number of lectures in one small town before moving on to another in the same area the following day. Though volunteers were able to reach many of these towns by a combination of the train and auto, others speakers rode in wagons or walked on foot to reach their meetings. In one instance it took White and another field secretary eight hours to travel seventy miles across a mountain pass from meetings in eastern Oregon's Canyon City to those in Burns. Rain had caused the road to become slippery and the two were forced to abandon their automobile and walk an eight-mile stretch of road. Despite such difficulties, Society speakers managed to reach a large number of southern and coastal Oregon towns such as Coquille, Grants Pass, and Bandon by April, 1914.\footnote{Reverend J. E. Snyder, a volunteer speaker reaching out to smaller communities, displayed the extent to which Society members were willing to pursue their educational goals. Arriving in eastern Oregon's Ontario by train on a Monday,}
Snyder traveled seventeen miles to Vale by auto for a 3 p.m. woman's meeting. Another session was held from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. for business and professional men. After a two-hour break for dinner, he spoke at a men's meeting at 8:15 p.m. The next morning Snyder returned to Ontario for a 1 p.m. convocation with the mayor and businessmen there. At 3 p.m. he talked to a women's group and from 7-8 p.m. he spoke with older boys at city hall. From 8-10 p.m. he addressed a meeting of 144 men, one of which came from Vale after missing the previous day's meetings.

Wednesday was another day full of meetings spent in Nyssa's opera house, where Snyder was able to reach "every business and professional man in town." One of the women attending Nyssa women's meeting stated, "I live four miles out. My husband and son are making hay and will be tired, but I will go home and see that they come to the evening meeting."

Snyder spent Thursday giving a series of lectures in Huntington to men in a railroad yard and another series to women and men. The town, he stated, was a little suspicious at first because its citizens thought he represented a "moral squad." When they learned he was a hygiene speaker, most of the community turned out for his lectures. But one of his most interesting meetings, he reported, was his trip to a U.S. Reclamation Service camp outside of Coyote, where he was met by a school superintendent who drove him with a team and buckboard across three miles of sagebrush, sand, and blistering heat. He admitted that the lecture, held in a large tent, was unlike any of the Society's meetings he had attended in the past, as there were men of all conditions and nationalities present, from college students to "common
tramps,” “sixteen to seventy” years of age. That night he could not sleep because of the coyotes howling and awoke at four in the morning to return to Hermiston for another meeting later that day.⁹

Ironically, those “yeomen farmers” in the countryside whom reformers considered virtuous, saved from the taints of civilization and prostitution through their harmony with nature, were the most eager to receive the hygiene information. “We have little opportunity to attend lectures in our smaller towns,” one citizen replied. Reformers discovered that any opportunity for a lecture or social meeting was certain to be heavily attended. A hygiene speaker lecturing in central Oregon’s Moro found that his audience included “almost every man” residing in the town and the near vicinity. In Eastern Oregon’s Richland, whose total population was 334, almost half that number attended a meeting held by the Society. Citizens who attended these sessions were a more diversified group than hygiene reformers were accustomed to. In Portland, meetings were aimed at large representative groups such as lawyers, shop girls, or railroad workers. In smaller areas general meetings were divided only by sex. Society volunteer speaker L.E. Smith, commenting on a meeting in central Oregon’s Redmond at which he lectured, noted “the different kind of men present” including bartenders, saloonkeepers, pool room proprietors, preachers, teachers, lawyers, and merchants as well as farmers who came in from six to eight miles to attend the session.¹⁰

The popularity of the hygiene society’s work in smaller towns encouraged reformers to continue their statewide educational efforts. Oregon’s aggressive
campaign to spread the gospel of health and hygiene began to attract notice from surrounding states in the Northwest almost at its inception. As early as October of 1911 a group of men from Seattle contacted Grilley of the Y.M.C.A. in an effort to obtain information about the Oregon society’s work. Four months later the Society arranged for four delegates from Oregon to visit Seattle to assist in inaugurating work in that city modeled after the Portland Society. Hygiene work in Washington continued when men in Tacoma followed the Oregon Social Hygiene Society’s lead and began to organize a society in their town in June of 1912. That same year Moore and two other hygiene representatives were invited to speak at gatherings in San Francisco, where Moore remained for three weeks following the gatherings to aid in the organization of the California Social Hygiene Society.¹¹

The Oregon Social Hygiene Society now enjoyed status as a leader in reform work among states in the West. By June of 1913 the Society was persuaded by hygiene reformers in surrounding states, as well as those in the east, to extend its work in pursuit of an interstate agency to work with eastern social hygiene societies and field hygiene work for the West Coast as a whole. The Oregon society agreed to plan a Pacific Coast Conference on Sex Education at the request of the American Federation for Sex Hygiene, the new name given to Dr. Prince Morrow’s American Society for Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis in 1910. Now a national organization, the federation was under the direction of Dr. Charles W. Eliot, President of Harvard University, who acted as the organization’s honorary president. The western conference was to be held in Seattle in July in conjunction with the National
Conference of Charities and Correction, an agency dedicated to the re-socialization of female delinquents. As Executive Secretary of the Oregon society, Moore was asked to organize the conference and initiated plans to make certain that members from each state in the West would be in attendance. Not only social hygiene workers from Oregon, Washington, and California were invited, but activists from Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and Idaho as well. Though a few of the hygiene societies already were in contact with one another with reciprocal literature and speakers, the conference would present the first opportunity for many of the reformers from those states to meet, giving them a chance to compare successful campaigning methods, ideas, and experience.  

The Seattle convention featured prominent social hygiene delegates from Portland, Spokane, San Francisco, and other cities in the West. Dr. William F. Snow, active hygiene professor from Stanford and executive officer of the California State Board of Health, was a guest speaker at the meeting as well as White from Oregon’s State Board of Health. William T. Foster of Reed College was to provide opening and closing speeches, while the Oregon society took the lead by supplying speakers for almost half the lectures at the conference. Despite the number of notable speakers and enthusiastic hygiene reformers who attended the conference, however, Oregon’s hygienists were disappointed because they felt their meeting was “overshadowed by the larger interest of the general conference on Charities and Correction.” Hygiene reformers agreed that not enough discussion time was given to their cause, as their meetings were squeezed into spaces that had not been taken by the larger convention.
Yet in spite of these setbacks hygienists were gratified to note the attentive crowds that flocked to their lectures, some too large to accommodate in the space provided.  

Another bright spot that reformers pinpointed was a consensus formed by hygiene workers from all states in discussions on eugenics, school cooperation, and quack doctors. As the societies compared campaigning experiences, California and Washington reformers reported that they had taken steps to introduce sexual education into their public schools. Oregon hygienists shared news of their statewide educational efforts and were pleased to find that other states in the West considered them in the forefront of the national hygiene movement for their ability to procure legislative funding for their work. As the conference drew to a close hygienists discussed the possibility of coordinating work between the states to avoid overlapping policies and gain efficiency in their educational endeavors. “It has become increasingly evident,” Foster prompted in his closing speech, “that the tasks [of social hygiene] are too big for any one community or even for any one state.” At the last session of the conference Moore realized his long-awaited dream of creating a sex education movement throughout the entire Northwest when hygienists from all seven states followed Foster’s initiative and created the Pacific Coast Federation for Sex Hygiene.  

Organized as a formal organization, the Pacific Coast Federation for Sex Hygiene was to be a western version of the American Federation for Sex Hygiene. Geographical separation made it difficult for reformers from the Pacific region to attend hygiene conferences or maintain contact with their counterparts in the east. The
Pacific Coast organization was created to provide services that the eastern federation had difficulty fulfilling, acting as a clearinghouse to direct sexual hygiene information and coordinate western societies in their educational endeavors. The regional federation was to make certain that progressive hygiene legislation passed in one state was unanimously approved in other western states while driving quack doctors who traveled from state to state from the West entirely. The federation's added charge was work with the American Federation for Sex Hygiene, conducting conventions to which all western states might send their representatives, and assisting the formation of new societies in each state. Oregon's hygiene reform movement stepped to the forefront again when Foster was elected president of the newly formed organization and Moore was chosen as its secretary.  

The Oregon Social Hygiene Society was pleased when its persistent work attracted interest not only from reformers in the West, but in the East, a fact which hinted at the traditional "inferiority complex" of western states in relation to the eastern United States. J. C. English, member of the Oregon society's Executive Committee, boasted of the organization's national prominence when writing to other members concerning his trip to New York in August of 1913 to attend the fourth annual meeting of the American Federation for Sex Hygiene. Sent as Oregon's delegate to read a speech for Foster, who could not attend, English was able to hear first-hand the unanimous opinion of those at the convention that "the Oregon Society had made more progress than any other [hygiene organization]." Part of the Society's national prominence, English bragged, was the fact that the Oregon Social Hygiene
Society was the only organization in the Union, aside from Massachusetts, supported by state funding and also under the supervision of the State Board of Health. Two years ago no one was interested in Oregon reformer’s hygiene work, English declared. Now societies from fifty states were looking to the Oregon Social Hygiene Society for leadership.¹⁶

Looking toward Oregon for direction as well was the American Social Hygiene Association, consolidated at the close of the August convention in 1913 from members of the National Vigilance Association, primarily a purity organization, and the American Federation for Sex Hygiene, a medically-orientated organization. The merging of the two entities sent Foster to New York four months later to aid in the organizational efforts of the newly formed association. Foster, who had been elected vice president of the American Federation for Sex Hygiene, was duly elected vice president of the new organization. Foster’s rise to prominence in the social hygiene movement was in part due to recognition of the Oregon Social Hygiene Society as a model of ideal campaigning work among hygiene reformers nation-wide. His leadership in the Oregon society was applauded by many in the east who watched the Western movement’s strengthening aplomb. As Foster gathered in New York to plan work for the newly-consolidated association he was surrounded by hygiene notables such as Dr. Charles W. Eliot of Harvard; Dr. Edward L. Keyes, Jr., president of the Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis; purity reform leader Grace H. Dodge; and Thomas M. Balliet of Columbia University.¹⁷
The American Social Hygiene Association, Foster was pleased to note, was as interested in western organizational efforts as had been the American Federation for Sex Hygiene. Executive members of the association requested Foster to recommend a Pacific Coast Secretary to be employed by the national organization. They solicited Foster to allow the secretary to work alongside the Oregon society in order to learn its methods before being sent to a temporary office in San Francisco to continue reform on a national scale. Foster, gratified by the national organization’s recognition in choosing Oregon to model its hygiene work, accepted immediately, and Thomas D. Eliot was taken from work as field secretary in the Oregon society in March of 1914 to fill this position. In a letter written to the members of the Oregon Social Hygiene Society, Foster stated his pleasure at discovering not only in New York, but among his travels in larger cities of the east, that the Oregon society’s work was being watched with “great interest.” Oregon, he hailed, was considered by those he met to be “blazing the way for similar societies” in social hygiene education. No other society that he had visited in his travels, he commended his fellow reformers, had accomplished as much work as Oregon’s organization.18

In spite of the prominence of the Oregon society’s work, however, trouble for the organization was brewing on the horizon. The merger of the National Vigilance Association with the American Federation for Sex Hygiene was an uneasy union from the beginning. Leaders of the National Vigilance Association such as Grace Dodge, Jane Addams and James Bronson Reynolds were predominantly purity-based clergy and social workers who favored reforming prostitutes. Federation for Sex Hygiene
leaders such as Prince Morrow, Dr. Charles W. Eliot and Dr. Edward L Keyes Jr. were primarily sanitarians and physicians concerned with suppressing and regulating prostitution to eradicate the spread of venereal disease. The restless union of these two groups over the prostitution issue affected not only the eastern association, but influenced western hygiene societies as well. At the second annual conference of the Pacific Coast Federation for Sex Hygiene in June of 1914, members of the western federation followed the national association's lead and voted to continue not only educational measures but to "suppress public prostitution" when other agencies were not effective. By voting to repress prostitutes, the western organization invited disunion into its ranks between many purity reformers who did not advocate these measures and the sanitarians who did: it was a hurdle over which social hygiene societies would repeatedly stumble.19

The Oregon Social Hygiene Society was not immune to the effects of accepting work that suppressed prostitution. Since the Society's inception it had purposefully avoided the remedial work associated with the repression of prostitutes, preferring instead to pursue progressive educational efforts to prevent disease. Members agreed to leave remedial matters such as containment and treatment of diseased prostitutes to government agencies such as the police, state-run clinical facilities, or the Oregon State Board of Health. Oregon's Society, by increasingly allowing repressive efforts into its organization, opened the way for questions over whether the hygiene society was overlapping in its endeavors with other government agencies. Police, not the hygiene society, should take on prostitution work, some
reformers within the Society declared. Outside the Society, others questioned whether the State Board of Health might not be willing to take over the organization’s educational work. If the Society’s mission could be accomplished just as well by other agencies, a number of citizens argued, why spend state money on their organization?20

Those who linked the Society’s work to the State Board of Health did so for good reason. The fact that the State Board did not take the initiative to educate the public concerning venereal disease in 1911 did not mean that it did not support the work. However, like other boards of health around the country, the Oregon agency had to spread its meager finances over a broad area including pure milk campaigns, administering vaccinations, and compiling statistics on a variety of diseases. The large number of tasks appointed to the Board made it impossible for the agency to take on the type of intricate work demanded by hygiene reformers to eradicate one type of disease. Instead, the Board allowed the Oregon Social Hygiene Society to take the lead in educational efforts and stepped back to act in a supportive role. White, as secretary of the Board, was elected president of the Society and a number of Board members served on the Society’s executive committee. The Board also assisted the Society in printing circulars and employed Moore as Deputy State Health Officer to devote time to hygiene work until December of 1912. Throughout the Society’s first year of work it was pleased to affirm that hygiene reformers had a “very happy relationship” with the State Board of Health. The offices shared by the two agencies as well as the fact that the Society’s literature and letterhead were printed with the
Board's name reflected a symbiosis between the two agencies and may have led many in the public to assume that the two were actually one organization. The two agencies remained separate in their endeavors, however, assisting each other when necessary.\textsuperscript{21}

Trouble started when the Society decided to take on added activity relating to suppression of prostitutes, work that required money above that put aside by the state for education. The timing of the Society's decision conflicted with problems in the state's budget. By the end of 1916 cuts in the budget of over $700,000 from a tax limitation amendment caused many reformers in the Society to wonder whether their educational efforts would be funded for another two years. Other reformers in the organization however, intent on pursuing work with prostitutes, persuaded the Society to push legislators for the extra money required to pursue such endeavors. In spite of the cutback, hygiene reformers boldly put in an estimate of $40,000 to continue their work for the next two years; the only agency of all departments, institutions, and commissions funded by the state that asked the legislature for a raise in its budget. The State Board of Health, which had been gaining strength and public support since 1911, suddenly stepped forward to oppose the Society's proposal. Though the Board had always been supportive of the organization's work, its members were irritated by the Society's gall in requesting additional funds, and indicated that the venereal disease campaign was taking too much money out of the state's health expenditures "to the neglect of other work." White, who had resigned from his position as Board secretary in March of 1915, was no longer present to defend the Society's cause. Consequently, members of the Society were startled to hear that the Board had
proposed to take over their work. The cost to do this, Board members estimated, would entail only $13,000 for two years, saving the state $27,000 and aiding it in overcoming its tax limitation amendment.\textsuperscript{22}

Trouble loomed larger when many in the public offered their support of the State Board of Health’s proposal. Members of the Society were heated as they clashed against opponents in Salem before the Oregon Senate’s Ways and Means Committee. Hygiene reformers now put aside the prostitution issue as they came together to save their educational work. It was “folly,” members declared, to suppose that anything but the Society’s educational work would cure venereal disease. Again they reverted to an economic argument. Of course the state should demand the most economical and efficient means to continue venereal disease education. If anyone could come up with a program less costly and more effective than their own they should propose the plan, members decried. The consolidation proposed by the State Board of Health, however, was “out of the question.” The state would lose money if it went along with the Board’s plan. The cost of the thirty men alone who devoted their time to the Society was estimated to be $50,000 a year worth of service in addition to the fifty speakers who donated their time without pay. This estimate did not include the thousands of dollars donated through “vision and public spirit” to the private organization that would stop if the Board took over the work. In addition, members pointed out, the State Board of Health had never taken much interest in the work before and was not organized nor experienced enough to take over hygiene activities. No board of health in the country, they added, had ever accomplished “one-tenth” the work undertaken by
the Oregon society, especially its moral endeavors. "Almost every week the county
commissioners allow payment for the execution of infected cattle," reformers
declared, "because they fear animal diseases will afflict humankind." How much more
important were diseases of human kind where physical and moral dangers were "grave
and great?" The state, they closed, should not be "stingy" in extending aid for the
Society's work, for to do so would be a "monumental blunder," showing "rank
ingratitude" for an organization that was the "envy of every other state in the union."23

To the Society's relief, funds were appropriated from the state, but the decision
had cost members a split with the State Board of Health. The Society was declared
officially separate from the Board, and was no longer able to use the board of health's
name on placards or stationary. Yet the Society's decision to put the prostitution issue
in the background during the fight over funding was a temporary affair. After 1914,
the sanitarian side of the issue took on new impetus as the prospect of the United
States' involvement in World War I brought to light the dangers of prostitution and
venereal disease among the country's young manhood. News of war brought home to
hygienists the uncomfortable realization that both venereal disease and prostitution
would escalate. Soldiers, traditionally known to have a greater amount of sexual
unrest than other groups in society, were more susceptible to venereal disease which,
according to reports gathered by reformers, traveled most rapidly during times of war.
Hygienists believed that no group spread sexual diseases more effectively than
prostitutes. The issue of prostitution became just as prominent as education for
Oregon's reformers who watched the precursor to World War I unfold on the Mexican border.  

Realization that military men were in need of sexual hygiene education was a concept familiar to the Society reformers. Early in their work reformers had given lectures to groups from Oregon's National Guard. In July of 1915 officers of the National Guard's Third Regiment requested Society speakers to lecture before all twelve companies in their regiment and, although recruits were required to attend, most of the military men seemed enthusiastic about the venereal disease cause. The next summer three more lectures were given to the Third Regiment at Gearhart on the Oregon Coast to prepare it for the trip to the Mexican border in response to raids into New Mexico by the revolutionary bandit Francisco "Pancho" Villa and his men.

Realizing the lax moral environment that was traditionally found around army encampments, the Society arranged to send ten thousand circulars with the Oregon Regiment to be distributed among troops from other states. Sanitarian reformers were disturbed to hear of the high rates of venereal disease on the Mexican border despite the presence of educational pamphlets and the military's provision of prophylactic measures. One regiment had nineteen new cases of venereal disease in two months. More appalling to vigilance reformers in the Oregon society were the vice districts created along the border to serve soldiers where men "stood in line" at "crib" doors during their evening leisure hours. "If a Soldier is killed in the trenches, the agony is over," bewailed one hygienist, "but if he is affected with disease the effect is far-
reaching.” By the beginning of 1917 many reformers came to realize that controlling prostitution was just important as education in preventing venereal disease.\textsuperscript{25}

To reassess the Society’s stance on education and prostitution, Oregon’s hygiene reformers created a special committee to study the military problem. Reformers decided that controlling prostitution should equal their educational endeavors. This settled, reformers proposed to engage the state government once again to support measures proposed by the Society. White, as chairman of this committee, sent a letter to “friends” and Society members in April of 1917, urging them to write or telegraph Oregon’s Representatives and Senators demanding that they take immediate action to prevent the infection of “hundreds of Oregon boys” enlisting in the Army. Included with the letter was a piece of literature entitled “Shall Prostitution Follow Our Army?” which listed reasons why the Society believed drastic action should be taken by the United States Congress to prevent immoral sexual activity in navy and army camps preparing for the war. Blatant sexual practices of the troops along the Mexican border, the literature stated, should be a primary reason for legislative action. Another reason given was the number of men in Europe who were becoming incapacitated by venereal disease that had been contracted both before and during the war. More men had been immobilized from the malady than from fighting along the front. Physicians of the American Medical Association agreed that venereal disease rates rose during times of war, the literature added, only to be passed to innocent wives and children when the fighting was over. Prophylactic measures were not a safeguard against disease, as had been proven along the Mexican border, and
became all the more difficult to employ when the Army was “in motion.” Fixated to the letter was a list of legislators to contact concerning the prostitution issue. One of the names was George E. Chamberlain, one of Oregon’s U.S. Senators and Chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, an important political leader who would later become influential in fulfilling the Society’s proposals.²⁶

Oregon’s hygiene reformers, however, did not neglect their work of educational suasion as the nation prepared to enter the war. Responding to requests from Colonel J. J. Morrow of Vancouver Barracks and General Green at Camp Lewis, the Society placed its posters in the men’s barracks around military camps throughout the month of November 1917. Posters such as “Fit to Fight” attempted to persuade military men that the most virile fighters were those that abstained from sexual contact. Those who were unclean were considered traitors to their country. Echoing a similar message were exhibits for military men. That same month, the Society’s exhibits portraying the need to keep fit were chosen by the federal government to be sent across the United States to every naval training station and army camp. “No other organization,” the Oregon Social Hygiene Society boasted, “was found to have such good materials.” Two exhibits were prepared by Oregon hygiene reformers, one for navy training stations and one for army camps. A number of the Society’s poster were also commissioned by the government to be sent to troops stationed in France. In addition, the Y.M.C.A. requested a Society exhibit warning civilian men of the dangers of venereal disease. Sixty of these exhibits were prepared by Oregon’s reformers to be sent to Y.M.C.A.’s throughout the country. Members of the Society
worked tirelessly to inform the public of their cause and aided educational efforts on a national scale by volunteering to make the exhibits at cost.\textsuperscript{27}

The dedication of Society members eventually gained the attention of not only the city government, but government at the state and federal level. By the end of the month, Oregon's social hygienists, in conjunction with advice by the federal government, succeeded in persuading the city of Portland to pass a "drastic ordinance" declaring that venereal disease was a public menace. The "emergency" Foster declared in 1911 had become, after six years of diligent education, a reality. On November 23, 1917, the city of Portland passed an ordinance stating: "Emergency. Inasmuch as this ordinance is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health, peace and safety of the city of Portland in this: That said [venereal] diseases are so prevalent that steps must be taken immediately to control their spread, therefore an emergency is hereby declared to exist...." Gonorrhea, syphilis, and chancroid infections were officially declared to be dangerous, communicable diseases, and were to be reported to the city by every licensed physician within three days of diagnosis. Physicians were given "full powers of inspection, examination, isolation and disinfection" to ensure that others in the public would not become infected. The law also required druggists to report all sales of drugs used to treat venereal disease. In addition, every infected patient was given a circular of information and advice concerning their disease. Foster and the reformers of the Oregon Social Hygiene Society had accomplished what they set out to do: persuade the public through education that venereal disease was a menace to society.\textsuperscript{28}
Hygiene reformers in Oregon succeeded in influencing not only the city government, but the state and federal government as well. On April 9 of 1918 the Oregon Social Hygiene Society petitioned the state emergency board for $15,000 for its new campaign to combat venereal disease by quarantining diseased women deemed “a menace to the public health” at a Portland detention home under construction. The request was approved by State Treasurer Thomas B. Kay, Governor Chamberlain, and Dr. R.E.L. Holt, acting secretary of the State Board of Health. Yet the Society was not ready to stop at the state level. Again Oregon took the lead by pushing legislation for venereal disease through the government at nation-wide level. There was “much gratification” in the Society when, on May 25, 1918, California representative Julius Kahn introduced a bill to Congress which requested $4,000,000 for the control and prevention of the “red plague” in the United States. As the measure was in referral in the military affairs committee, A. F. Flegel, acting as the new president of the Oregon society, visited Senator Chamberlain in Washington D.C. to urge him to aid Kahn in passing the hygiene bill through the Senate. Chamberlain agreed to aid the Society. He incorporated the hygiene measure into the general appropriations bill and gathered support for Kahn in the House of Representatives. The bill, named the Chamberlain-Kahn Act, passed into federal law on July 9, 1918. Oregon hygienists cheered for the payoff to all their hard work. The law provided for the federal government to match hygiene funds set aside by the states “dollar for dollar,” and created a division of venereal diseases in the U.S. Bureau of Public Health which employed 35 secretaries,
assistants and clerks in the Washington office and 160 employees across the United States.  

The Chamberlain-Kahn Act gave one million dollars to be divided among states by the Public Health Service for support of venereal disease education in the Army, of which $7,314.87 a year was given to Oregon for the years 1919-1920. The Interdepartmental Social Hygiene Board, created by the federal government to regulate how the money would be spent, included prominent figures such as the secretary of navy, the secretary of war, surgeon generals of the navy and army, and representatives of the public health service. To obtain the money Oregon had to allot an equal amount of funding to both “repressive” and educational measures to prevent venereal disease. Hygiene reformers agreed to adopt any measures, remedial or educational, mandated by the federal government in order to permit the Social Hygiene Society to utilize the Chamberlain-Kahn funds. According to the act, half of the money given to the states was to be utilized for the treatment of those infected with venereal disease. Of the remaining half, twenty percent was available to the Society for educational measures; however, an equal amount was to be utilized for remedial and repressive measures to control prostitution. Consequently, the debate among reformers over the degree to which remedial versus educational efforts were to be sought was settled.

Though education had been the Society’s main focus at the beginning of its efforts, consolidation with vigilance forces and the national government brought the Society officially into the arena of repression during the war years. H. H. Moore
contributed to the drive to see that all “vagrant” women were arrested for medical examination in an attempt to free a five-mile zone around Vancouver’s military facilities from houses of “ill repute,” a zone which extended to the city of Portland. This work proved so successful that, at the urging of the national government as well as President Woodrow Wilson, a plan was initiated to persuade other states to mold other social hygiene campaigns after the Oregon Society’s zoning work. To promote this plan, the President requested international Rotary Club members to host a convention, at which six thousand reformers from various states attended. The Oregon Social Hygiene Society’s methods of work were presented with the purpose of encouraging prominent delegates from other states to adopt Oregon’s plan and pressure their state governments to match appropriations for their hygiene plan.31

Despite the repressive activities that went on during the war, such as detaining diseased prostitutes and initiating nightly curfews for soldiers, the Social Hygiene Society was able to point to the educational value of its earlier programs when reformers received statistics in June of 1918 concerning Oregon men drafted into the army. Only 2 percent of Oregon men drafted to Washington state’s Camp Lewis were infected with venereal disease, 2 percent lower than the national average. In November of 1918 the Society’s work once again gained recognition when it received a letter from Surgeon General Rupert Blue congratulating Oregon for having the lowest rate of venereal disease in men entering the army—only “fifty-nine hundredths of 1 percent,” top ranking for cities of its size in the nation. This statistic, stated reformers, presented justification for Oregon’s campaign of education, one in which
their organization had been the “admitted pioneer.” Sound teaching as well as enlightened popular sentiment aided the organization in achieving results. Oregon hygiene reformers had taken the lead once again, proving that perseverance, dedication, and determination were the keys to success as the Oregon Social Hygiene Society educated the country to the dangers of venereal disease by “hitting the line hard.”32
CONCLUSION

World War I represented a chance for the Oregon Social Hygiene Society to accelerate its campaign for moral order and social control after seven years of hard work educating the public to the dangers of venereal disease. The hygiene reformers' ability to persuade the public that the spread of sexual diseases constituted a major emergency caused citizens to promote health efforts and led to a strengthening and reorganization of Oregon's State Board of Health. Part of this reorganization involved the government's move to take greater responsibility for venereal disease education and treatment, as the state now viewed those diseases as highly communicable. The powers given to the Board to control sexual disease began to undermine the Society's predominance as sole proprietor of the educational movement and gradually the organization began to lose strength.

Adding to the breakdown of the Society was the absorption of many of Oregon's hygiene leaders into venereal disease education at a national level as well as other developments that took reformers from the state. Harry H. Moore, after acting as the Society's secretary for six years, was promoted to Washington D.C. to become committee secretary of the National Council of Defense, a position he used to combat venereal disease among civilians. Moore eventually became chief of staff of the United States Public Health Service. Active hygiene member Professor Norman F. Coleman of Reed College was placed in charge of the Y.M.C.A.'s Division of Social
Hygiene in France, while Reed reformer Walter Leigh was requested by the Washington D. C. hygiene bureau to compose its sexual hygiene literature. William T. Foster resigned in December of 1919 as president of Reed College and moved to San Francisco.¹

The Oregon social hygiene movement also suffered from a decline of public interest in the venereal disease cause after the war. Federal funds for venereal disease education, health, and sanitation “dried up” after the conflict. The relationship between the Oregon State Board of Health and the hygiene society, which strengthened during wartime concerns over venereal disease, grew increasingly sour as the troops returned. By the beginning of the 1920s purity reformers in the Society were at odds with the medically-orientated goals of the Board and eventually declined any association with the state organization. In 1923 the Society was dealt another blow when Oregon’s state legislature pulled the hygiene association’s funding and, although the Society managed to limp on for two years without the state appropriation, it was forced to close its offices in August of 1925. The Society managed to re-open in February, 1928, but it would never again influence the public as it once had and “attempted to do very little work outside of Portland,” one hygiene official euphemized, due to monetary problems.²

The waning of Progressive reform also affected the social hygiene cause. Oregon’s hygiene society shared many characteristics with other Progressive movements such as the campaign to eradicate prostitution, citizen uplift movements against municipal corruption, and public health reform. Proponents of these
movements were often willing to support one another in their reform campaigns. Indeed, reformers from different backgrounds often coalesced before World War I to reinforce and advance one another's causes. For example, hygienists were willing to support efforts to eradicate prostitution, while some of the same physicians that spoke out in the campaign against tuberculosis were also willing to join the fight against venereal disease. Within the Oregon Social Hygiene Society, physicians, purity reformers, businessmen, and educators put aside their differences for almost a decade to attack venereal disease and the behaviors that advanced the problem. As the intensity of Progressive reform waned in the 1920s, however, social hygienists found themselves increasingly marginalized.

Another common trait shared by Progressive reformers in the Oregon Social Hygiene Society was the air of immediacy surrounding their efforts. By calling the venereal disease problem an "emergency" that demanded urgent and pressing response, Foster was adhering to Progressive social action. Because of the lack of accurate statistics, the fears of sexual irresponsibility among males, the malady's horrifying effects on women and children, and the lack of a true cure, the disease must have appeared to many to be of epidemic proportions; similar to the American public's reaction to the AIDS virus in the 1980s and 1990s. Yet as World War I ended, reformers found it difficult to sustain the metaphor of social emergency regarding personal behavior.

The response to the emergency in Oregon had included the volunteer efforts of prominent and elite professionals, another characteristic of the Progressive ethos.
Noted government leaders such as Portland mayors Allen G. Rushlight and H. Russell Albee, Governor George Chamberlain, and Judge William N. Gatens were mobilized for the hygiene cause. Technicians and experts in science and medicine were also recruited by the Society. Groups of elite physician were sought for their intricate familiarity with venereal disease. Y.M.C.A. leaders with advanced knowledge of the benefits of health and purity also were mobilized, as well as business leaders from advertising clubs who knew the best forms of persuasion to win the public over to the hygiene cause. In addition, the Society welcomed the moral expertise of ministers and prominent educators skilled in teaching the young. Most of these members were from the middle and upper classes, and could provide monetary support in addition to their expertise. Yet it may have been difficult to preserve an overtly elite organization during the irreverent mood of the consumerist 1920s.

Members of the Society shared an identity with other Progressives across the nation, strengthened by a common set of values on the subject of health reform. Many of the leaders in the Society were well-connected with their counterparts in the East, with whom they maintained extensive communication. Religious reformers such as William G. Eliot Jr. shared connections with not only their families in the East--such as Eliot's with his grandfather, William Greenleaf Eliot--but also with the larger Unitarian church in the East and various Boston charities. Foster, who attended Harvard for his education, moved among elite eastern reform circles that included Grace Dodge, Eliot of Harvard, Dr. Edward L. Keyes of New York, and the Office of the Surgeon General. Like other Progressive reformers country-wide, many in Oregon
were of a younger generation; Foster and W.G. Eliot were in their thirties and forties when much of their reform work was undertaken. Yet their open ties to eastern elites may have ultimately contributed to the inability to sustain the movement in Oregon.

The campaigns initiated by the Society also shared the tendency of Progressive reformers to juxtapose and alternate remedial and educational efforts. Despite the reformers’ use of government to invoke changes on a city or state-wide level, however, many remained ambivalent concerning the utilization of such remedial measures. A number of hygienists were optimistic about the use of specific laws, such as those preventing false advertising, believing that the initiation of reform legislation would positively benefit the community. Other reformers in the Oregon society held a distrust of both the government and legal system as coercive purveyors of reform, pointing to the failure of the curfew law to keep children from the streets. This ambivalence could best be seen in the Executive Committee’s hesitation to introduce their funding bill at the close of 1912. The Society only utilized government to achieve its goals when other options failed.

Education was the preferred and most agreeable method of change that hygiene reformers aspired to.Provoked by a utopian vision and an innate belief in environmental determinism, reformers banded together in an attempt to rid the city of false information in quack advertisements and bring children from the streets into their family’s homes, certain that such action would influence citizens to lead more moral lives. The drive to conform individuals to a positive moral standard rested upon reformers’ efforts to educate children. Those youth reached early enough with
“correct” and decent sexual information, Oregon’s reformers believed, would be provided protection against any corruptive sexual influences they might encounter later in life. Hygienists were willing to go to any length to pursue this education, no matter how wavering and piece-meal the approach, or what the cost.

Despite the subjective nature of its criteria for appropriate behavior, and despite the limitations and contradictory tendencies of the social hygiene movement, Oregon’s hygiene society was surprisingly effective in attaining its educational goals. The organization’s statewide campaign managed to reach most towns in Oregon with populations of three hundred or more. Not everyone in the public, of course, supported the hygiene reformers’ cause. Due to the Society’s remedial activities some citizens tended to view the morality and zealousness of the movement with suspicion, often associating its work with censorship efforts, excessive legal control, and “moral squads.” Others in the public with more puritanical views continued to regard venereal disease as a “sin” visited on those with erring moral standards despite sanitarians’ assurance that disease was spread through contagion. Nevertheless, the Society was eventually able to win a substantial following among Oregon citizens. Evidence of the number of citizens who attended meetings and social hygiene exhibits demonstrated, if not support for the Society, at least an overwhelming curiosity concerning the sexual message hygiene reformers put forward.

What hygiene reformers could not accomplish, however, was returning America’s sexual mores to those of an earlier Victorian era. Sexual promiscuity would continue unhindered in spite of the reformers’ warnings about disease. The use
of prophylaxis that became common among military troops in the war would become increasingly depended upon as a method to prevent the spread of venereal disease by private citizens as well.

Ironically, reformers may have paved the way for broadening sexual mores by the very efforts they instituted such as the campaign to rid society of the “conspiracy of silence.” The Society’s success in shattering taboos concerning frank discussion of venereal disease opened channels about conversation of sexual matters in general, a consequence purity reformers had hoped to avoid. Nevertheless, open sexual discourse was a trend increasingly common as American culture entered the Jazz Age of the 1920s.

Another lasting reform initiated by the hygiene society involved educating the public about the dangers of the sexual double standard. This standard, if not eliminated, was increasingly considered “taboo” by a growing percentage of the population. Women, especially, were moving away from the suppressed role of conduct mandated by the double standard. The role of women was increasingly broadened both within the family as well as without. Within the family, wives were taking on a new social equality with their husbands and were recognized (perhaps uncomfortably at times) for having sexual drives that were just as strong as men’s. Middle-class women were no longer confined primarily to domestic duties but were encouraged to pursue avenues of work and socialization beyond the walls of their home, moving out into the world in order to mold it to their liking. Social hygiene work provided one key outlet for such energies.
Another legacy initiated by hygiene reformers involved the effort to place sexual education into the public schools. Beginning in the 1920s, Oregonians began to take up the nation-wide movement to incorporate sexual education in the schools, a move in which the Society would play a prominent role. Under the organization’s tutelage, the Willamette Valley town of Newberg began experimenting with the Society’s material in its high school biology program. Eventually sexual education would become a mandated part of every school curriculum in Oregon.³

Despite these accomplishments, however, the Oregon Social Hygiene Society was never able to successfully consolidate purity and sanitarian viewpoints within the organization. During World War I purity reformers reluctantly followed government-mandated policy requiring the suppression of prostitutes, a move which represented the darker side of their work to prevent venereal disease. Purity forces within the Society would gain the upper hand again throughout the 1920s by separating from the Oregon State Board of Health. Sanitarians, however, would again take the lead during World War II by pursuing government-enforced eugenics policies such as sterilization aimed at repressing those lower-class and often foreign-born citizens whom “elite” reformers in the Society considered “unfit.” Reformers eventually separated on a permanent basis. Sanitarian work was taken over by the University of Oregon Medical School and purity reformers continued to promote morally-based family sex education with funding from the E.C. Brown Trust, work that was channeled into periodical literature such as “Focus on the Family” and into creating sex-education films for public schools.⁴
What set the Oregon Society apart from other hygiene societies around the nation during the years before the World War I more than any other factor was its persistence in pursuing the hygiene cause. Though other societies initiated similar educational campaigns, it was Oregon's obsessive and incessant activities to attack the venereal disease problem that drew the attention of other states. In 1919, the *Oregonian* quoted former President William H. Taft, who called Oregon a "federal experiment station" in social hygiene. Initiatives were experimented without cost to the government, he stated, before being applied on a national level. It was this willingness to experiment to reach each person in the state on an individual level that led the Society to be considered a "pioneer" in social hygiene and a standard-setter for state-wide hygiene education in the United States by the end of the Progressive era.⁵
NOTES

INTRODUCTION


CHAPTER 1


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19. MOSHS, 3-15-1912, 4-19-1912, Box 1, File 2; 5-18-1912, 6-16-1912, Box 1, File 3, V7-05-01, OHS.


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*Appendix*

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