

Homosexuality and solicitation : committee of inquiry to be appointed

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five-day meeting yesterday, told the group that accusations against alleged sex offenders were the easiest to make and the hardest to prove.

Statistics on sex crimes are not a reliable index of the true state of offenses because many victims for a variety of reasons do not make a complaint, he said. Many sex laws are not enforced, he declared, and noted that in this state adultery was a misdemeanor but at the same time was the sole ground for divorce.

Homosexuality and Solicitation

Committee of Inquiry to be appointed

A committee to examine the subject of homosexual offences and the parallel problem of the law relating to prostitution and solicitation generally is to be appointed by the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland.

There was a warm welcome in the House to-night for this announcement by Sir Hugh Lucas Tooth, Under Secretary, Home Office, in reply to an adjournment debate in which Mr. Donnelly and Sir Robert Boothby had pressed for a Royal Commission on the subject. The Under Secretary said that Sir David Maxwell Fyfe was anxious to secure the services of able and experienced men and women to serve upon the committee and it might be some little time before he was in a position to announce its membership and terms of reference.

The Home Secretary believed that a thorough investigation by a well-qualified body would throw useful light on the scope and nature of these difficult and controversial problems and that investigation by such a committee might make a valuable contribution to the problem of how the criminal law should deal with it.

Sir Hugh Lucas Tooth had quoted statistics which, he said, showed that there had been a serious increase in homosexual offences. There would be general agreement that the criminal law ought to provide effectively at all events for the protection of the young and the preservation of public order and decency. The problem had been posed whether the law should confine itself to those two objects or whether it should be amended to permit unnatural relations between consenting adults in private which were no crime in many countries in the world to-day.

Mr. Donnelly had warned the Home Secretary of the great public disquiet at some of the police methods that had come to light in recent litigation and that some members were watching this matter very carefully and would not hesitate to expose any cases where they thought the methods of the police had been improper. Sir Robert Boothby said that homosexuality was more prevalent than people were apt to admit. In most great cities there was a homosexual underground which was a constant menace to youth. Sporadic campaigns by the police against it had been accompanied by methods of great dubiety and did nothing to eradicate it. He did not blame the police but the law.