

Control, Compulsion and

Controversy:

Venereal Diseases

in

Adelaide and Edinburgh

1910-1947

By

Susan Lemar

Department of History
University of Adelaide
February 2001

Control, Compulsion and Controversy: Venereal Diseases in Adelaide and
Edinburgh
1910-1947

| Contents | Page |
|---|------|
| Declaration | |
| Abstract | i |
| Acknowledgements | ii |
| Abbreviations | iii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Part A | |
| ADELAIDE | |
| 1. Controversy in Adelaide's Public Health | 22 |
| 2. Pox, Prostitution and Public Policy in Darkest Adelaide 1873-1910 | 35 |
| 3 Locating Adelaide Eugenics : Venereal Disease and the British Science Guild South Australian Branch 1910-1914 | 52 |
| 4. "It serves the lustful beggars right": Social Hygiene and World War I 1915-1920 | 77 |
| 5. Proclamation, Propaganda and Prophylaxis: 'Controlling' the 'Grave Menace' in Inter-war Adelaide 1921-1939 | 112 |
| 6 "Sexually cursed, mentally weak and socially untouchable"- World War Two, National Security Regulations and the New Campaign, 1939-1945 | 144 |
| 7. Conclusion | 185 |

Part B

| EDINBURGH | Page |
|--|-------------|
| 8. Compulsion in Edinburgh's public health policy | 189 |
| 9. "For the protection of others": venereal diseases and policy in Britain 1916-1928 | 201 |
| 10. "The liberty to spread disaster": campaigning for compulsion in interwar Edinburgh, 1928 | 216 |
| 11. "The lesser of two evils": war responses 1939-1947 | 243 |
| 12. Conclusion | 267 |

Part C

| | |
|--|-----|
| 13. Social Responses to Venereal Disease in Adelaide and Edinburgh | 269 |
| Bibliography | 280 |

ABSTRACT

Control, compulsion and controversy: venereal diseases in Adelaide and Edinburgh 1910-1947

This thesis argues that despite the liberal use of social control theory in the literature on the social history of venereal diseases, rational discourses do not necessarily lead to government intervention. Modern analyses usually overestimate the capacity of social control strategies to hit their mark. Where intervention was proposed the degree and method was, in the case of venereal diseases, continually debated and revised. Through the unique experience of the failed attempt to introduce compulsory notification and treatment for venereal disease in Adelaide and Edinburgh in the period defined by the title it will be demonstrated that legislators were constrained in these two cities by a variety of factors in determining the public health policy in regard to these particular diseases. The complexity of the relationship between governments and the societies for whom they legislate and the influences or otherwise of social organisations, institutions and pressure groups are seen as important factors in this relationship. Also, analyses that assume geographic as well as empirical specificity demonstrate the difficulty for historians who attempt to mould a national experience from a diverse set of circumstances. Comparative analysis reveals that culturally similar locations can experience similar impulses and constraints to the development of social policy under differing constitutional arrangements.