

WON DER LEHR



TREASURY DEPARTMENT

UNITED STATES

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

OFFICE OF
MEDICAL OFFICER IN CHARGE

American Consulate,
Cott. Irish Free State,
August 18, 1927.

Dear Dr. Kolb:

Since my arrival over here I have been having some little trouble in fixing clearly in my mind just when an applicant should be certified for mental deficiency, so I am coming to you with my troubles. Dr. Naugh here also seems somewhat puzzled as to which is the best course to take.

Sierman, in his book, calls all mental deficiencies "feble-mindedness".
(over)

and subdivides them into
three groups: adult moron (11 to 7
yrs. mental age according to the
Stan-Binet scale); adult imbecile
(7 to 3 yrs.); and, adult idiot (below
3 yrs.). On Ellis Island, as I
understood it, the ~~translation~~ ^{immigrant}
was graded more liberally and
the Stan-Binet form was not
used but a special group of
"Ellis Island Tests" were given.

You gave us a copy of ten of
these tests, which I now have
with me and which I have
been using almost exclusively.
As I remember it, on Ellis Island
a person was certified feeble-minded
if he could not perform those



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ten tests with a fair degree of accuracy. If he was below this he was considered ~~and~~ ^{an} imbecile, and one who could not attend to his bodily needs was considered an idiot. As I remember it the term moron was practically never used in certifying — "sublemin- edness" was substituted and con- sidered synonymous.

According to Immigration Regulations those not certified as sublemin- ded, imbeciles or idiots, may be certified as "mentally defective." Those certified as men-

tally defective are those above the grade of feeble-minded but who show a milder degree of mental deficiency which is not due to lack of educational facilities.

At Ellis Island, I believe, the "A" certificate was never made for "mentally defective" because it was not considered an entity technically and was not recognized by the courts.

Here in Ireland a large number of the visa applicants are farm labourers & others who are illiterate, or almost so, and who have had little or no education. They test very poorly to the Stanford-Binet scale but most of them



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do pretty well to the Ellis Island tests. Some come in and do poorly at first, especially as regards counting and enumerating days of the week backward and months. Off-hand I understand that some of the fellows here in Europe are certifying these applicants as mentally defective, although if they go out and study a bit they often come back later and do well on the same tests that they failed on before. This applies more particularly to testing under the Stan.-Binet scale.

Now what has been giving me most trouble is the using of the term "mentally defective" in making class "A" memoranda on these ^{applicants} ~~applicants~~.

Just what does this term "mentally defective" mean to you, and do you think we are justified in using it over here?

I may be way off on this subject but I certainly would like to be straightened out. I do not wish to be too lenient in this matter, but neither do I wish to be too radical.

We had a very pleasant trip over on the "President Roosevelt."



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Not a single storm, but I got
sea-sick any way.

Ireland is a pretty good
place to live in but it doesn't
equal old U.S.A. It lacks so
many conveniences and there
is so much rain. However, the
temperature is delightful and
it hasn't been above 75° since
we arrived.

We have located in a flat
of three rooms with bath (such
as it is) and we are living
for slightly less than we could

live in Washington, but of course
the standard is very much
lower. Altogether I believe we
both feel that we can stand it
for a few years, but I don't
think that either my wife or
myself would care to change
our nationality.

With kindest regards
and best wishes,

Sincerely yours,
Vonderlich