

SURGEON GENERAL 1924
Hygienic Laboratory:
August 20, 1924.

MEMORANDUM TO THE SURGEON GENERAL: *D. Kolb's copy*

In reference to the report of its President, Mr. Richmond P. Hobson, to the Board of Directors of the International Educational Association, and to the letter dated August 11, 1924, from Mr. Hobson to Mr. Bascom C. Slomp, Secretary to the President, in which references are made to opposition of Government officials to his plans for educating the people of the country concerning the narcotic menace, I have the honor to report as follows:

I met Mr. Hobson while he was in Washington last spring and gave him some of my views as to the prevalence of addiction, the effect of narcotics, the psychology of the addict, and related subjects. I also explained to him how the rigid enforcement of our laws had decreased addiction in the United States. Shortly after this I received a request to appear before the Senate Committee on Printing to testify as to the advisability of printing fifty million copies of the document "The Peril of Narcotic Drug Addiction", a warning.

Mr. Hobson, knowing from my conversations with him that my testimony would be unfavorable to the view that there were millions of addicts in this country and that the menace was growing, tried to discredit my testimony before it was given by telling the Committee, directly or by implication, that I sympathized with the addict, was opposed to taking away narcotics from him, and did not believe narcotics caused moral deterioration. This was contrary to what I had said, and before my direct testimony began I told the Committee, in the presence of Mr. Hobson, that he had misunderstood me and informed them that I had explained to him the deteriorating effect of narcotics and the benefits derived from restricting their use. I also then opposed an amendment to the Harrison law, proposed by one of Mr. Hobson's witnesses, which would take the teeth out of the law by allowing doctors to prescribe indiscriminately for addicts, without any idea of effecting a cure. Also, in the Public Health Reports of May 23, 1924, we have pointed out the enormous benefits which have resulted from legally restricting the use of narcotics, but, in the face of all this evidence to the contrary, Mr. Hobson says "this opposition opposes interfering with the addict getting his drug."

It is not necessary for me to refer to the attitude of the Narcotic Division except to point out the inconsistency of the above statements by citing what the Narcotic Division is doing. Last year, through its efforts, over 4,000 convictions were secured and more than 4,000 years of sentence were imposed on persons, chiefly addicts, who insisted on getting narcotics in violation of law. If the attitude of the witness introduced by Mr. Hobson and above referred to ever finds expression in law this deterrent influence on addiction will be removed because unscrupulous physicians will then be able to prescribe for addicts under the guise of administering treatment. Physicians who now give narcotics to curable addicts, except in

August 20, 1924.

course of honest effort to effect a cure, are sent to jail. This is the attitude of the Narcotic Division, and I approve of it.

The document, ~~of~~ the publication and wholesale distribution of which I disapprove, is not educational; no document can be educational which ignores pertinent facts and contains inaccuracies such as this document contains. I will not refer to specific parts of the paper because the Hearings have been printed and my testimony pointing out numerous glaring errors in it may be read, along with the objections raised by the Narcotic Control Board and Mr. Neville.

My disapproval of the publication by the Government of Mr. Hobson's paper was not based primarily on the fact that it would teach errors instead of facts and therefore mislead the people instead of educating them; if this were the end of the matter we could rest assured that they would digest its errors without harm. But the paper contains enormous potentialities for harm to the mental health of the people; it is proposed to send out, with the indorsement of the United States Government, 50,000,000 copies of a document, the general tone of which is that everyone is surrounded by enemies in the guise of friends who are scheming in every possible way to get into them, by way of food or other means, a dose or two of heroin in order that they, too, may become fiendish addicts working to addict the rest of the world. From the practical as well as from the scientific standpoint everyone who has intelligently studied the narcotics question knows that such a state of affairs cannot exist. This document is to be placed on every breakfast table and in every school and institution in order that everyone may be constantly reminded of the danger which surrounds them. There are thousands of nervous, fearful, suspicious persons now making good who would be forced over the border line into insanity or a profound neurosis if they are made to believe that a new evil is about to engulf them. Many of the border-line cases would develop delusions that they were being doped. Psychiatrists with whom I have talked about this matter agree that such a state of affairs would be likely to be brought about and every one interested in mental hygiene should, as a public health measure, disapprove of the proposed distribution of this document.

Based on years of study by Dr. A. G. DuMez and myself, an article was published in the Public Health Reports of May 23, 1924, showing that addiction has been decreasing in the United States since 1900 and that there are now about 110,000 addicts in this country; inasmuch as Mr. Hobson states or implies that there are millions of addicts here and that the number is constantly increasing, some extracts from medical, pharmaceutical and chemical magazines commenting on this article are given herewith for your information:

Journal A.M.A. June 14, 1924: Vol. 82, No. 24, p. 1975:

"The contrast between propaganda statements of the character of the leaflet referred to (Mr. Hobson's leaflet) and the calm, scientific report of the officials of the United States Public Health Service is a striking one. Confidence of the public in work for the public health is more likely to be sustained by the publication of accurate statements of fact than by unwarranted and exaggerated warnings concerning conditions that do not exist".

Journ. of the Am. Pharm. Assn. July, 1924, Vol. XIII, No. 7, p. 674:

"Kolb and DuMez, the authors of this Public Health Report, have rendered a distinct service, in determining by such scientific means as are available, the maximum number of addicts."

Am. Jour. Pharm. August, 1924, Vol. 96, No. 8, p. 546:

"Reports of Governmental Bureaus are very commonly desiccated and unpleasant to browse over, but here is one at least that gives comfort to every citizen--and the authors are to be congratulated on the completeness of their compilation and for the blessed joy that is in their message."

The N.A.R.D. Journal: July 3, 1924: Vol. XXXVIII, No. 14, p. 548:

"The result of a thorough study of the prevalence and trend of drug addiction in the United States and factors influencing it go a long way toward clearing up many theories covering this question. Dr. Lawrence Kolb and Dr. A. G. DuMez of the United States Public Health Service, recently completed a study of this much-discussed question and their report is based upon facts, not theory. The summary and conclusion of this investigation are very enlightening and are reprinted herewith for that reason: "

Industrial and Engineering Chemistry: July, 1924: Vol. 16, No. 7,
pp. 662 and 663:

"Kolb and DuMez, the authors of this Public Health Report, have rendered a distinct service in determining by such scientific means as are available the maximum number of addicts"

"The data, the analysis, and discussion, as well as the conclusions reported, deserve wide dissemination."

Lawrence Kolb