

DRYER

May 23, 1924.

Surgeon General,  
U. S. Public Health Service,  
Washington, D. C.

Sir: (Through Acting Director)

In reference to the article entitled "The Peril of Narcotics - A Warning" by Richard P. Hobson, President of the International Narcotic Educational Association, which was referred by you to me for comment, I have the honor to report as follows:

<sup>The</sup> A few facts this article contains are so bound up with and obscured by ~~inaccuracies~~ and misleading inflammatory statements that only a person thoroughly versed in all phases of narcotic addiction could discover them in it. Much space is given to a discussion of the prevalence of drug addiction and its alarming increase in the United States. It is intimated that we have at least 1,700,000 addicts, and the number is increasing every day, and it is positively asserted that the number is known to be more than a million. In the face of this a very careful survey of the situation by the Public Health Service during the past 18 months shows conclusively that the extreme limit of probabilities is 150,000 addicts, and the probable number is placed at 110,000. It is also shown that not only the incidence, but the actual

number of drug addicts in the United States has been decreasing since 1910 in the face of a greatly increasing population.

The article states that the amount of opium produced and consumed in the world probably exceeds three thousand tons and the average addict uses 10 grains of morphine daily. When these figures are analyzed we find that three thousand tons of opium converted into morphine and used exclusively for addiction at the rate of 10 grains per day, would supply less than 1,440,000 addicts. In this calculation we have assumed that opium contains 10% morphine and that this is increased 25% on conversion into the sulphate. The facts are that most of this opium does not contain 10% of morphine.

Published statistics show that the opium<sup>not produced</sup> and entirely consumed in the countries of the Far East amounted in 1922 to 1,415,752 pounds, a little more than 700 tons. This, if used entirely for addiction at the rate of 10 grains of morphine sulphate daily, would supply only about 340,000 addicts and it is to be borne in mind that this opium is produced for distribution among about 800,000,000.

It is stated that America now leads the world in the consumption of opium and yet it is known that China consumes in its entirety the <sup>2,000</sup> 200,000 tons she is credited with producing, as well as considerable quantities raised elsewhere. If statements emanating from interested people can be credited as reliable, tons of morphine are being smuggled into China. This would reduce still farther the supply available for the eight hundred million people above referred to, and <sup>a</sup> rational inference

would be that the other large countries could not be seriously addicted, yet Mr. Hobson attempts to show that the entire world is menaced by the narcotic evil.

Most of the paper is as unreliable as the sections dealing with prevalence and spread of addiction are shown to be, but such a striking statistical refutation as has been given cannot be made of all the absurdities it contains. We need not comment upon the statements that five tons of opium are probably sufficient for the medicinal needs of the world, that four young people can be made addicts with a grain of heroin and that nearly 2000 addicts can be created within a week from one ounce of heroin. All of this is known to be nonsense by any physician who has given the subject ten minutes of thought and study.

Much is made of an increase of crime due to dope, chiefly heroin, and fragments of statistics are furnished to prove it; for instance, the Narcotic Division is quoted as reporting 65% more criminal cases in 1922 than in 1921, and Mr. Grim as saying that 40% of persons sent to certain Federal prisons are addicts. These statements are true, but the inference drawn from them that they show an alarming increase of addiction and crime is erroneous. The reason Federal prisons are now crowded with addicts is not because addiction has increased or because these addicts are any worse than they use to be, but because a law passed in 1915 made it a prison offence for an unlicensed person to have narcotics in his possession. This law is being enforced with increasing severity and success each year. During 1923 more than 4000 convictions, representing 93% of cases that came to trial for violating the narcotic laws, were secured and sentences



were imposed aggregating more than 4000 thousand years. This speaks volumes for the efficiency of the Narcotic Division and it is one explanation of why there are more <sup>prisoners</sup> ~~persons~~ today than there were some years ago, but it does not show that the persons convicted are basically more criminal than they were before the law creating this new crime was enacted.

Neither heroin, or any other preparation of opium, ever incited any one to commit a violent crime. The effect of these drugs is exactly opposite. When taken in large doses they produce lethargy and inactivity; the normal man works less and the criminal is less likely to commit a violent crime when under ~~their~~ their influence. They do produce a certain amount of deterioration because the decreased working efficiency, which results, and the high cost of drugs brings about financial embarrassment and dependence in some cases. In addition to this the addicts associates are usually low and he has to sneak around dodging the police. The whole train of circumstances produces or accelerates the delinquency common to a sneak thief sort of individual. There is no protoplasmic change, such as is brought about by excessive indulgence in alcohol and normal people are apparently very little harmed by opium. Many of the worst criminals are addicts, but they are addicts because of the same psychopathic make-up that causes them to be criminals. The studies I have made clearly show this.

Heroin, which is held up as a drug that is about to sap the vitality of the world, is no more harmful than morphine and neither of these drugs causes a degeneration of the brain or other part of the nervous system and recovery is complete

when their use is discontinued. Heroin is now used by addicts on the Eastern sea board of the United States from Washington northward because they are unable to get morphine, the reason for this being that the smaller bulk of heroin makes it more easily concealed. Therefore, both the peddler and the addict are less likely to be arrested if he handles heroin rather than morphine. The criminal heroin addicts in the East are no worse than criminal morphine addicts in the West and South.

There are some physicians who believe that heroin is more harmful than morphine, but their opinion has been warped by a <sup>view</sup> few of the heroin addicts in New York and other large cities of the East. They have ~~not~~ made personality and psychiatric studies of heroin and morphine addicts. When this is done it is shown that there is no difference between the two, and also cured cases of one do not differ from cured cases of the other.

Practically all of the cocaine <sup>is</sup> used by persons who are also addicted to some form of morphine. The amount of cocaine used then does not increase the total number of addicts. This drug produces stimulation, but in large doses it does not cause the commission of crime. There is, on the contrary, a state of fear and anxiety brought about and a person under its influence is hiding from his enemies, especially the police. No aggressive, violent crime, such as the robbery of a bank, would ever be committed by an addict who was overcharged with cocaine. This drug, unlike opium, does bring on acute insanity when used in large quantities, but the article does not say so.

The statement that opium produces an antitoxin which causes the symptoms of withdrawal has been abundantly disproved at the

Hygienic Laboratory and by work at other places, and the idea that opium produces its effect by penetrating the fatty sheaths of the upper brain apparently originated through misunderstanding of a discarded theory that opium enters into a combination with and dissolves fats, in this way denuding the nerves.

Heroin addicts do not have a mania for producing other addicts. The psychopathic characters who become addicts today no doubt help to corrupt their psychopathic associates, but the addict who has any stability at all desires to get rid of his addiction. He also likes to have his friends cured. I have treated heroin addicts who have left the hospital and persuaded others to come in for treatment, and some of them have continued to send in cases even after they themselves had relapsed.

Mr. Hobson is alarmed because excessive indulgence in opium destroys the reproductive powers. Unfortunately, this is not true. Opium does decrease sex desire and power in all cases and when taken in large quantities there is complete cessation of sex functions for the time being. Fortunately, the psychopath, because of his extreme uncontrollable impulses is the individual who indulges excessively and consequently loses his sex functions. Because of this, numerous insane persons, criminals and epileptics, whom he might bring into the world are never born. It is to be regretted that the psychopath regains his sex power immediately after being cured. I have seen a man addicted for forty years who, nevertheless, raised a family of ten children, and I have seen children of other lifetime addicts who were healthy, normal and happy, but their parents were normal and took only from 2 to 15 grains of morphine



daily.

There is no such thing as luring girls and boys into addiction. The addicts being created today are a type mostly psychopathic, who deliberately seek associates of a certain character and who are anxious to try any experiment which promises an unusual sensation, yet this article warns boys and girls to accept nothing away from home to eat or drink, even from a supposed friend, and girls are warned to have their face powders analyzed regularly for heroin. The inference from all this being that every one is surrounded by heroin addicts in the guise of friends whose chief motive is to addict us in order that we may join them in their villainous campaign to make helpless addicts and criminals of all the world, and if we may judge by the <sup>tenor</sup> ~~tenure~~ of the article, a few doses of heroin taken unknowingly in this way is supposed to be sufficient to bring about this transformation. All of this is so absurd that many physicians would probably take the attitude that it could make no difference if the paper is published because no one would be likely to believe it, but the mere fact that it was composed by a sincere, intelligent person shows that many persons would take it seriously. Therefore, if the article is placed in every home and school with the indorsement of Congress, as is proposed, an unfortunate state of fear will be aroused in thousands of persons. The arousing of fears like this is contrary to the principles of mental hygiene and can result in nothing but harm. The paper will cause addicts to be still farther handicapped in their contact with society with the result that moral deterioration will increase and opportunities for their <sup>only</sup> ~~their~~ treatment <sup>likely to prove</sup> ~~will~~ <sup>successful</sup> ~~will~~ <sup>only</sup> ~~only~~ decrease. The spreading of misinformation and the arousal

of harmful fear is not the only evil to be feared from the wholesale broadcasting of this article. Thousands of psychopathic characters in the United States have never heard of heroin or drug addiction. It is a weakness of such characters that an impulse to action is sufficient justification for the act, they are susceptible and have unusual cravings and desires, they do not have the inhibitions that restrain normal people from committing antisocial acts and they apparently do not see the necessity of conforming to social customs. Many of them will be impelled to seek for and try this newly advertised sensation and vice and some who live in or near large cities will persist until they find it with the result that new addicts will be created among people who are most harmed by addiction. One hundred and ten thousand drug addicts are sufficient for the United States. I estimate that it is at least 90,000 more than there is any good reason for being and it would be unfortunate to have the work being carried on to reduce this evil set back or handicapped by an assault like this.

The International Narcotic Educational Association was formed in California and I understand that the headquarters are still located in that State. I have been told that the president receives a salary of \$20,000 per year. The Association is said to have conducted an educational campaign in California along the lines indicated in this article. The President of the Association was denounced recently by Commissioner Enright of New York for publicly asserting that there were 17,000 school children addicted in one borough of the city.

Respectfully,

Respectfully forwarded:

R. E. Dyer,  
Acting Director

Lawrence Kolb,  
Surgeon.