

6645 - 32nd Street, N.W.
Washington 15, D. C.

April 26, 1956

Dr. Karl M. Bowman
Langley Porter Clinic
San Francisco, California

Dear Dr. Bowman:

I believe that the American Psychiatric Association should do something about narcotic addiction designed to stop the progression of the United States to a position just as wrong and vicious as the long discarded practice of punishing the insane and executing witches. As you know, fanatics - some honest and some dishonest - continue to advocate and secure the enactment of more and more harsh and unreasonable narcotic laws. They disregard medical opinion and grab at the more or less forced and always unreliable statements of prostitutes and criminals to the effect that opiates cause moral deterioration, disease and crime and were responsible for their downfall. They denounce or ignore physicians who disagree with them. You remember how the La Guardia Committee on Marihuana was, and still is, denounced because it found no crime and no organized traffic among school children in New York.

They would now do away with the need for warrants to arrest suspected narcotic cases, increase sentences still more, (Already in 16 States the minimum sentence for possession of narcotics is two years.) abolish probation and parole, legalize wire tapping, etc. All of these measures are advanced with the implied and frequently stated idea that narcotic addiction is the greatest menace that faces civilization.

Just today there are headlines dealing, among other things, with a proposal to prohibit admission of voluntary patients to the Federal narcotic hospitals and force (the report says permit) the hospitals to reveal information about patients to the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, etc.

I could go on with this but you know as much about the general problem as I do.

I think the Association should pass and publicise a resolution to the effect that chronic drug addiction is an emotional disease, that opiates, including heroin, cause very little disease and no crime, except the crimes incident to the harsh law enforcement; that marihuana has been shown to be not the crime producing thing it is alleged to be and

that the United States should adopt narcotic policies similar to those in effect in Europe, where physicians are free to prescribe narcotics in accordance with their professional discretion.

I could give details about all this, with figures. England does convict some people for narcotic violations - just enough to discourage illegal traffic.

Perhaps, in addition to the resolution, the Association should appoint a committee to study the problem and report to the Council during the year or to the next annual meeting.

I am not attending the meeting of the Association this year and I have not suggested to anyone in the Public Health Service that they take the lead in this matter, because I know they would be vulnerable to vicious attack by more or less prominent people.

The article I told you about is being typed. If published, it should be helpful.

Sincerely yours,

Lawrence Kolb, M. D.

LK/jbf