

1918

Correspondence

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CORRESPONDENCE

RE NARCOTIC DRUGS

Managing Editor, Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology, Chicago, Illinois.

DEAR SIR:

I take the liberty of transmitting to you herewith copy of a resolution requesting new United States statutes for the suppression of the nefarious, illegal sale of all narcotic drugs and the colossal criminal trafficking in narcotic drugs in the city and county of New York, which is within the jurisdiction of the Southern District of New York. (See p. 781).

This resolution further calls for the absolute control of the entire output of all narcotic drugs by manufacturing and pharmaceutical chemists in the United States and their possessions. It calls furthermore, for the control of all importations and exportations and the exclusive price making on all narcotic drugs by the United States Government.

As foreman of the grand jurors, United States of America, for the Southern District of New York, September-October, 1917, term, I personally drafted and prepared this resolution, which is based upon the shocking and revolting revelations and disclosures brought to my official attention as foreman of grand jurors. The resolution to be unanimously adopted by my associate members.

The aforesaid resolution I handed up October 3, 1917, to Mr Justice Robert T. Ervin, presiding in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, and with his honor's approval and judicial instructions officially placed it upon the files of the court.

The public press published this resolution, and action as contemplated by it was declared to be the speediest way for the immediate enactment of broad and suitable statutes that will eliminate this terrible evil, which induces *manifold crimes* and danger to the human race.

As foreman I caused, on account of the flagrant violations of the Act of Congress, approved December 17, 1914 *re* illegal sale and criminal trafficking in narcotic drugs, the indictment of several women defendants within the ages of 18 and 25 years, and over seventy male defendants from 18 to 30 years of age, mostly old chronic

offenders with criminal records and previous convictions for the same offense.

The majority pleaded guilty; others were tried and convicted and sentenced to terms in the United States Penitentiary at Atlanta, Ga., from fifteen to thirty months. The other defendants so indicted, viz., trained nurses, physicians, pharmacists and druggists are yet to be tried.

The amount of the narcotic drugs, viz., heroin, sulphate of morphia, opium and cocaine, found on and in the defendants' possession when arrested, averaged from one-eighth of an ounce, in small glass bottles, to large pound packages and over, some in original packages showing the original label of the manufacturing chemists.

Other packages were refilled and adulterated and sold unlabeled by these defendants at from fifteen to sixty-five dollars per single ounce.

A chemical analysis of such narcotic drugs as taken from all these defendants by the United States officials and forwarded to the chemical laboratory of the United States Treasury Department, Washington, D. C., demonstrated that approximately one-third of contents of refilled bottles was narcotic drugs, the other two-thirds showing adulteration with sugar of milk. The original packages were not tampered with and their analysis indicated pure narcotic drugs.

The nativity of the defendants was Greek, Italian, Russian Hebrews. All understood and spoke considerable English. The high type of defendants, some of the trained nurses, physicians, druggists, claimed American citizenship.

After their indictment and pleading, I interrogated some of the lower type of defendants and asked them why they traffic in narcotic drugs. They replied in substance, and in their language:

"It was easily got." "Mixed and doped it out." "Dead easy—the suckers came across without a squeal." "Easy work coining money."

These defendants were ill-nourished, of very low type of mentality, and they indicated criminal proclivities. Some of the women addicts who were witnesses I interrogated, stated they were manicures, typists, film actresses, cabaret singers, choristers. They attributed their physical condition to bad environment, cabaret atmosphere, other allurements, and evil associates. They claimed the physicians who treated them for a radical cure were sham and was only extorting money from them. Likewise, the druggists who compounded their prescriptions with adulterants, they said, were in league with these phy-

sicians, and a change to reputable physicians and honest pharmacists effected great relief and eventually a permanent cure. All these foregoing addicts were courteous and respectful in their replies, and impressed me as persons from good families, who had abandoned wholesome home influence and got the damnable drug habit.

The men addicts were clerks, some bartenders, and in other mercantile pursuits, who told their little tale of woe similar to the women addicts. They were gradually overcoming the drug habit, and a change to reputable physicians and pharmacists, saved them from the tortures of hell, as they characterized their feelings and past condition. Also these men addicts were above ordinary intelligence.

In the case of some of these defendants indicted, narcotic drugs to the value of \$150,000.00 were found concealed on their premises when arrested.

For many years I have served as foreman of the grand jurors of the United States of America, Southern District of New York. I find this evil increasing so that it seems utterly impossible to check it.

The learned justices of the bench and the United States attorney have given me their hearty co-operation, but the break-up of the evil can be accomplished only by carrying out the recommendations as incorporated in the resolution.

Col. Levi G. Nutt, Chief of the United States Internal Revenue Office in New York, and his efficient staff of special agents, Lieut. Henry Sherb, and Dr. Harry A. Dattelbaum, Pharmacist and Chemist, both of the Narcotic Drug Squad of the Police Department, City of New York, all deserve great credit for their effective and laborious work. Last, though not least, Edwin M. Stanton, Esq., the fearless and able Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, who impartially presented the narcotic drug cases to the grand jurors, and so successfully prosecuted all the indictments, resulting in convictions, deserves great praise.

Very truly yours,

ALBERT J. WEBER,

Manhattan Club, New York City, New York.

October 5th, 1917.