

If you can't tell your psychiatrist, who can you tell?

This is the preliminary report on drugs which Dr. Keith Yonge, president of the Canadian Psychiatric Association and head of psychiatry at U of A, drafted for distribution to members of the association for consideration as their submission to the government's inquiry into the non-medical use of drugs. A story on the report is published on page one.

These opinions are offered from our particular position as medical specialists whose special field of knowledge is that of human brain function, mentation and behavior. Our special concern is to integrate the knowledge available from various biological sciences with that from certain social (behavioral) sciences. While we are aware of the incompleteness of some of this knowledge and of some lack of scientific validation, we are also aware of the responsibility to reach decisive opinions based on such knowledge as we have available, in order to determine the best course of health care, the course most likely, if not certainly, to be beneficial. It is from this position that we offer the following opinions:

"All psychotropic drugs, including marijuana are definitely harmful"

All the psychotropic drugs presently being used non-medically on a wide scale in Canada, particularly by youth, are definitely harmful—marijuana certainly included. They are all detrimental to health (health as defined by the World Health Organization as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being"). On this we can be firm and definite in the face of opinions of others to the contrary who argue that there is no reliable evidence that these drugs cause damage to the brain structure. While it is true that there is yet no direct evidence that damage to the cellular structure of the brain is caused by these drugs, there is some evidence that they may induce lasting changes in the chemical processes of the brain cells. But what is of much more significance and on which there is much more certain knowledge is that the use of these drugs does indeed induce lasting changes in personality functioning, changes which are pathological in so much as they impair the "mental and social well-being."

This impairment of mental and social well-being should be clearly identified. Otherwise it might be wrongly concluded that psychotropic drugs, by inducing a pleasant subjective feeling of well-being, were enhancing rather than impairing mental functioning. Yet it is well known to the psychiatrist that some forms of mental illness, not necessarily those re-

lated to drug intoxication, are characterized by subjective feeling of well-being, complacency, euphoria, magnanimity or a sense of jubilation and omniscience. The pathology of such states lies in the inappropriateness or falseness of these feelings and by their association with other aspects of personality disintegration and deterioration of behavior.

"The effects are of same order as the pathology of serious mental illness"

Although some of the mental changes induced by the psychotropic drugs may be subjectively pleasant in these ways, they should be recognized as being distortions of normal mentation, particularly of the perceptual and cognitive (thinking) processes. The harmful effects are of the same order as the pathology of serious mental illness (psychosis), namely in distorting the perceptual and thinking processes and in diverting awareness from reality, impairing the individual's capacity to deal with the realities of life. Hence, the frequent association of psychotropic drug use with the development of asocial attitudes—non-participation, "dropping out," "opting out" of society, the "hang loose" attitude, and a generally idle and parasitic attitude to society. (That is not to say that the psychotropic drugs cause these attitudes.)

The evidence that some of these psychotropic drugs—marijuana, for example—are less harmful than others should not detract from the conclusion that all, including marijuana, are seriously harmful by virtue of their specific action of distorting perceptual and cognitive processes of the brain. The argument that marijuana is no more harmful than alcohol is specious. Although alcohol does constitute a serious health hazard in our society because of its readiness to intoxication, its action on the mental processes cannot be simply equated with that of marijuana. The primary action of alcohol is that of a relaxant. Impairment of mental functioning occurs when intoxicating quantities are taken. Marijuana, as with all the psychotropic drugs, on the other hand, acts solely as an intoxicant, its effects being primarily the distortion of perception and reasoning.

The addictive hazards of the psychotropic drugs demand serious consideration. Their addictive power has been questioned and uncertainty about it prevails. Addiction, or habituation to drugs, is a complex phenomenon—a combination of elementary physiological with complicated psychological processes. While some drugs, notably narcotic drugs like heroin, have been found to be highly addictive physiologically, others, psychotropic drugs like

marijuana, have not. But physiological addiction is only one aspect of the process. The psychological factors of addiction must be taken correspondingly into consideration. There is ample evidence that people who use any of the psychotropic drugs, including marijuana, tend to do so habitually. The habituation does not depend simply on the elementary physiological processes, which are much more operative with some drugs than others. All should be considered addictive either physiologically or psychologically.

"Serious health hazard now epidemic"

In seeking some solution to this serious health hazard now epidemic in our society, it is important to discern also its social import—the form and setting of its social pathology. For this, psychiatrists, as specialists in psychopathology, should be in a position to distinguish sickness from health in social trends. In psycho-social development man grows from the prevalence of self-gratification and dependency, with little regard for reality, to the prevalence of self-determination and self-abnegatory involvement in his society. Against this progression, the trend towards "instant" self-gratification and artificial self-exploration (by the use of psychotropic drugs) is distinctly regressive—a reversion to the immature, the primitive. The regression is further evidenced in the other trends in group behavior with which the non-medical use of drugs tends to be associated—reversion to the crude or primitive in speech, in sexual expression, and in taste for music forms (however much these may be rationalized as emancipation from soci-cultural oppression).

From our present knowledge of individual and group behavior, we can predict that attempts to stem the epidemic of non-medical use of drugs simply by prohibiting supplies of the drugs, and by the use of the present penalties (fines and imprisonment) as deterrents will not be effective and may even provoke further social deterioration. Remedial measures need to be aimed not at the drug problem alone, as if it were a separate issue, but at other pathological forms of behavior which have come to be associated, though not exclusively, with it. These are the definite patterns of pathological behavior—deliberate idleness, neglect and non-self-support—which have seeped from the nihilistic attitudes of the "opting-out," the "drop-out," "hung loose," passive-resistive and non-participatory groups. It should be recognized that the excessive permissiveness of 20th century society—its parental, school and state attitudes—has probably contributed considerably to these pathological social trends. To be remedial this permissiveness needs to be balanced

by manifest and unequivocal firmness, decisiveness and limit-setting.

"Establish a new system of work colonies"

With this orientation, it is our recommendation that the laws regarding the non-medical use of drugs should not be more permissive but that the penalties should be made much more appropriate and remedial. This would call for an entirely new correctional system. Instead of the present penitentiary system it would be much more appropriate to establish a new system of work colonies, based to develop natural resources or material services of the country, organized on the principles of "work therapy," in consultation with specialists in social psychology. These would then be essentially rehabilitation centres rather than penal institutions.

It would be this sort of correctional system which would be more appropriate for dealing with drug offenders and offenders under what would have to be an extended law against "loitering," extended to include the neglect of educational and occupational opportunities, and persistent and unwarranted idleness as an offence.

Beyond these recommendations for government action on this problem we recognize that there would remain unresolved the more fundamental problem in the need for extensive revision in our public educational system. With all its beneficial advances in technique for intellectual development, it can now be seen, by its results, to have been singularly misguided in cultivating ill-balanced permissiveness in the social climate for learning. But this is a matter which can hardly be corrected by direct government action.

Recommendations:

In brief, our recommendations to deal with the problem of the non-medical use of drugs are:

- (1) that the laws prohibiting the supply and use of psychotropic drugs (including marijuana) should not be any more permissive.
- (2) that the penalties under the law be drastically changed to render them more appropriate and remedial.
- (3) that consideration be given to the feasibility of extending in its application the law against "loitering" to make neglect of educational and occupational opportunities, and persistent and unwarranted idleness an offence.
- (4) that an entirely new correctional system be set up to deal with offenders under these laws—work colonies as rehabilitation and remotivation centres.

Edmonton's finest

by Charles Lunch

"The finest of the finest" said police chief Will Lousapew as he awarded merit badges for ticketing above and beyond the call of duty to five members of the city radar patrol at the annual police games here Thursday.

Officers Spiro Whitey, Wendal Crane Painter, and Sampson Sears received their awards as the Police Weismuller, Markel Smithchuk, Pipe Band played such stirring tunes as "Hickory-Dickery Dock," "Three Blind Mice," and "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."

Sergeant Spiro Whitey received his "courage in stopping a speeder under difficult conditions" merit badge.

He was operating as a camouflaged radar trap in which he was disguised, operating a "knife sharpener" (actually his radar set mounted on a tripod). In rushing out to flag down a speeding car Whitey tripped on the wire of his own radar trap and broke his ankle. In spite of his pain, he crawled out onto the road, stopped

the car and wrote up a ticket before expiring.

His wife accepted the post-humous award.

Wendal Meismuller's record involved somewhat the same type of incident as Spiro Whitey. While issuing a summons to the owner of a 1967 Lincoln Continental, he adopted the standard police procedure of propping the right foot up on the front bumper of the offender's car and using his knee as a support to write out the ticket. However, half way through the ceremony of writing it in the deliberately slow, methodical police style, Wendal's heavy boot slipped off the shiny bumper and he fell on the star-shaped hood ornament puncturing his sphincter. He "bit the bullet" though, as they say in Police Academy, and grimly clung to consciousness long enough to complete the ticket.

His wife accepted the post-humous award.

Markel Smithchuk was decorated literally for "bravery under fire."

In the act of issuing a parking tag to an offender's car left overtime in front of the Royal Bank on 101st and Jasper, he was caught in the crossfire of bandits backing out of the bank. Though pedestrians lay flattened on the ground, Smithchuk courageously continued to write up the tag with bullets flying all around him.

His wife accepted the post-humous award.

Crane Painter is the officer who showed the city officials that there was speeding under their very noses and they didn't know it. What we mean is that Painter is the first officer to set up his radar trap in the underground parking garage at Centennial Library. Some of the offenders took evasive action on being "netted" in the garage, and Crane Painter pursued them around the garage at speeds up to 90 miles per hour. "A few people were hurt, one or two fatally, but I think we've stamped out speeding in the garage, chief," said Painter.

Sampson Sears, the next officer to be decorated, had disguised himself as a school crossing guard to apprehend safety cross-walk violators. He would push school children into the cross-walks suddenly in the path of speeding cars, and if they couldn't stop in time (most couldn't) he'd apprehend them. "They sure was mighty surprised when what they thought to be a feeble ole crossin' guard fooled 'em and turned out to be one of Edmonton's Finest," said Sears. When asked about the danger to the occupants of the cross-walk, Sears replied—"Well, as they taught us in the Police Academy—you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs!"

The chief at one point interrupted the formal part of the ceremony to show the police commissioner, mayor, civic officials, dignitaries and the audience that these five officers received awards not only because of their bravery but because of their intelligence, too. This was demonstrated by a

display of their ability to answer the standard police "Numbers Recognition Test" questions. (Reading numbers and the makes of cars off hub caps and trunks, indispensable to police work in writing out parking and speeding tickets.)

The chief switched to a jocular vein for a moment by asking Sergeant Whitey, "The big hand is at six and the little hand is at three, what time is it, Whitey?" "Three-thirty sir!" was the reply. "Right, that's why you're a sergeant."

The Edmonton Police Pipe Band continued the ceremonies with the sprightly operatic aria "Three Blind Mice," a number they had recently mastered in their repertoire.

Several officers who were having a noisy game of "Simple Simon Says" at the back of the audience were admonished by Chief Lousapew to be quiet and to put their hands behind their backs and face the front. The ceremony then closed with no untoward incidents.