

"IN CANADA'S LARGEST CITY"

# "DRUG ADDICTION, PROSTITUTION"

"I'd rob my own mother to get money for a fix" - "I have"

(C.U.P) This is part of a conversation that took place this summer between two narcotics addicts and me. They had come to the newspaper where I was working because they could not get help anywhere else. Al and Mary (not their real names) had been turned away the night before from St. Joseph's Hospital when they asked for help in kicking their habit.

Ontario hospitals will not give medication to addicts who want to quit.

The addicts must go off the stuff -- their name for heroin -- "cold turkey" -- without the help of medicine.

Cold turkey is unspeakable agony.

All you want to do is die.

Gut-searing cramps tear at your insides; daggers of pain stab through your brain; the flicker of a match becomes a searchlight, burning your eyes.

They go somewhere where they can quit with the help of medication -- drugs like methadon and morphine.

Al and Mary came to the newspaper that night not to tell me a hard-luck story but to try to make newspaper readers more aware of the fact that addicts are humans with a disease -- not horrible dope fiends who kill and maim to feed their habit.

People who take some rare mid-East drugs act like that, said Al, but narcotics addicts can't.

## TACITURN

Most are such quiet and taciturn types that they wouldn't harm a fly.

They feel an uncanny sympathy for all things leading, what to them, is a normal life.

And when they get so sick -- in need of drugs -- that they might in desperation resort to violence, they are physically incapable of it.

Al, Mary and I spent more than eight hours together that night.

He is 29, has no job and has been an addict since he was 19.

Mary lives with Al sometimes. The rest of the time she stays with men as a prostitute.

"I'm not the best of all

possible girl friends," she says.

"After all, who wants a seven - months - pregnant prostitute dope addict for a daughter-in-law?"

## THIRD CHILD

Her first, born when she was 16, was the only legitimate child she has had.

Her husband, who married her when she was 15, left on her 17th birthday.

Mary started taking dope when a "friend" introduced her to it.

The friend, as she later found out, was only using Mary to make enough money to support her own habit.

She would buy enough drugs for two, cut Mary's by three-quarters, then sell it to her for full price.

The rest of the money she made through prostitution.

Mary is 19. The child she is carrying will be her third.

Mary was hooked after six months.

"I didn't really know what I was getting into, but it seemed like an interesting thing to try."

## CHINATOWN

Mary left her home in a small Ontario town when she was 14, and moved to Toronto, where she soon gravitated to the Chinatown area of Elizabeth St.

She was working as a waitress when she was introduced to heroin, but soon had to find other ways of making enough money to buy drugs.

At the time, heroin was selling for \$5 a cap, and four caps made up a good day's supply.

Today, it costs \$15, and six caps a day are needed because the quality has gone down.

Mary got her first trick (customer) as a prostitute when she was 15.

As a virgin, she got \$100 for the night.

But prostitutes, like used cars, depreciate quickly.

The next night, she was worth only \$15 a trick.

## SAME PRICE

She gets that price because at 19 she is still a good-looking girl with long, natural blonde hair, a well-developed body and a turned up nose that looks like Debbie Reynold's.

She hides her pregnancy

well, until the customer gets into the room with her.

Then he sees, and she has to try to talk him out of what he came for, while she still keeps the money he paid her.

If he insists, she has intercourse with him anyway.

Her child, when born, will be a narcotics addict.

It will, like her other two children, have to go through withdrawal pains and symptoms before it becomes a ward of the Children's Aid Society.

Soon, Mary won't be able to go out on the streets.

So Al, who steals now to support his own habit, will have to steal to support hers as well.

## MERCHANDISE

He now steals about \$300 worth of merchandise every day, most of it from large downtown department stores.

On days when he or one of his friends can get a car, they take their business out of town.

To support Mary's habit as well as his own he will have to steal goods worth \$600 every day -- more on Saturdays because the habit goes on every day. Al started on narcotics 10 years ago when a girl friend, who had then just started herself, introduced him to morphine.

From morphine it was a short move to cocaine and heroin.

A writer, he has sold stories to The Montrealer magazine and has written for many trade publications.

## LEFT SCHOOL

He left high school in Grade 12 so he could steal to support his habit.

He has been in prison six times since his 19th birthday.

The next time he is convicted on a narcotics charge, he will go to Kingston penitentiary for five years.

As I talked to Al and Mary, they grew nervous and jumpy; their eyes watered and they started to stare at corners of the room.

They needed a fix.

They offered to take me with them to show me how

easy it is to buy drugs in Toronto.

We went to a corner in downtown Toronto, where we parked the car.

Al waited inside while Mary and I walked to the restaurant where the connection was to be made.

To avoid suspicion, I was to be Mary's trick for the night.

We walked into the restaurant, took a seat in the back, and waited about 10 minutes until a lesbian came in.

She raised her eyebrows at Mary, who nodded and followed her to a basement washroom, where the narcotics and money passed hands.

Mary came back with the heroin, wrapped in aluminum foil, in her mouth.

Later, I watched Al and Mary prepare the narcotics for injection.

Into a teaspoon, Al placed one cap of heroin and two caps of water.

He heated the spoon with a match until the heroin dissolved, then sucked it up into the eyedropper attached to the hypodermic needle.

## NEEDLE

Then he squeezed a handkerchief around his arm to make the veins stand out, jabbed the needle directly into a vein.

His arms and hands were badly scarred, as were Mary's with needle wounds.

After Mary had taken a fix herself, they put more water in the spoon, heated it again, and took another injection of the water.

They were making sure they had got all the heroin from the spoon.

After they had taken the heroin they became more calm and composed, willing to talk.

But another day was coming, and with it another craving for heroin.

They came that night asking for help.

There was no help for them.

I've since heard they are getting help from a sympathetic suburban doctor.

IF THEY haven't, Al will be back stealing today, and Mary will be back on Jarvis St. tonight.