

abuse of drugs, and specifically in this instance, the abuse of heroin.

I can assure you, Sir, that many of the reportable cases of death are due either to respiratory failure or overwhelming infections such as septicaemia, endocarditis, etc. This is but one example which reflects the inadequate educational program which is actually undertaken by the federal government. I do not intend to discuss the penal aspects of the non-medical use of drugs but, rather, I would like to develop the concept in terms of research, treatment and rehabilitation.

Let me say at the outset that I was concerned by statements made in the House on February 13 when a question was asked concerning the development of a national institute for alcoholism and drug abuse. On that day the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) indicated that his department must await the final report of the LeDain commission before action could be taken. I believe that such an institute should receive top priority and that this government has a responsibility to provide leadership in dealing with this problem which is national in scope.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Holmes: If I may, Sir, I would like to review briefly some of the background material that forms the framework for the development of a national institute for alcoholism and drug abuse. We know that following the interim report of the LeDain commission the Department of National Health and Welfare established the non-medical use of drugs directorate. Since 1968, the problem of drug abuse has accelerated, and continues to do so. I can assure you that this is the consensus of those at the federal level and those at the provincial level.

During this time we have seen the utilization of various drugs including marijuana, the hallucinogens, amphetamines, heroin and cocaine. More recently there has been greater experimentation, particularly by large numbers of young people, with alcohol, notably cheaper wines and beer. At present in Canada there exists a lack of organized information with two notable exceptions—the one I referred to earlier, namely, the Alcohol and Drug Addiction Foundation of Ontario, and the Narcotic Addiction Foundation of British Columbia.

We are all aware of the increasing cost of medical services and it therefore becomes imperative that we avoid costly duplication and fragmentation of our efforts. Instead, co-ordination of activities is desirable. It is in the context of this background that the concept of a national institute was born and I believe that enthusiasm, acceptance and co-operation can be found among the provinces and indeed among all those who are dealing with the problem of drug abuse.

In addition, there is a pressing need for an expert centre of scientific knowledge, technical information and professional advice to deal with this special health problem. This need is not likely to be met in the foreseeable future by the often isolated and fragmented approach of official provincial agencies, universities or the Department of National Health and Welfare. I believe that such an institute presupposes a union between the federal and provin-

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cial governments, official professional agencies, voluntary agencies, private enterprise and university expertise.

It is obvious that direct attempts in the past to develop problem solving programs at the federal level have not been successful. The difficulties appear to have been, and continue to be due to conflicts and confusion which arise when staffs and programs which ought to be primarily professional and scientific in their aims and methods come under misguided political direction and cumbersome bureaucratic control. Therefore, I believe that such an agency, which would be operationally independent and national in scope may be the only certain and satisfactory way of attracting and holding highly competent medical and social scientists and other critical professional disciplines that are needed to develop an effective long-term program.

It is clear to experts working in this field across the country that drug and alcohol abuse knows no conventional and no provincial boundaries, and it is therefore truly a national health problem. Because of lack of co-ordinated, well planned federal leadership the programs in some provinces, particularly the smaller provinces, are poorly financed and therefore fragmented in their approach and certainly cannot cope with the problem.

The need for centres of expert knowledge and advice in particular and specialized health problem areas has not been well met by the divisions or directorates that are harboured within the Department of National Health and Welfare. Such an institute would be a body or association of bodies authorized and financed under government legislation to be a national agency for research, development, education, training and information in this particular health science.

I believe it should be an agency independent of the government, free from bureaucratic controls but with its professional and scientific operation consistent with the public responsibilities and functions of the Department of National Health and Welfare. Many of the responsibilities of the present non-medical use of drugs directorate and of other agencies of the Department of National Health and Welfare could be undertaken by this new institute.

This does not imply that the directorate would not be involved, and indeed it would play a responsible role in the development of the program. In general, the directorate would be the federal government's bureau for underwriting in part the policies and operations of the national institute, and in addition would discharge those larger responsibilities in the fields of education, public information, mental health and social science research to bear upon the social, economic and cultural causes of all forms of social alienation as well as self-destructive behaviour.

The directorate, in the interests of speed and economy, should direct its activities in such a way as to avoid the unnecessary duplication of staff and facilities by utilizing the existing facilities, agencies, persons and resources to the fullest extent. The directorate would ensure the co-operation and involvement of directors of related programs at the federal and provincial levels, as well as professional and voluntary agencies, by active representation. In general terms, the institute would be responsible for research, development, education, training and accumulation synthesis, extraction and dissemination of