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WORKING CONDITIONS IN RETAIL PHARMACY.*

BY WORTLEY F. RUDD.

It is common knowledge that by and large they are frequently intolerable. The subject has been talked to death for generations but to date little has been done to correct much of the evil in them.

If you had for a generation or two sat in a pharmacy dean's office and watched enthusiastic, rosy cheek, ambitious fellows as they graduate, pass the board and go into retail pharmacy, and had made yourself sufficiently interested in their affairs so that they come back to visit and talk things over with you from time to time, you would know what is much on my mind in this connection. Even at the end of the first year their step is a bit slower, some of the color has gone and with it some of their enthusiasm. On their second and third and subsequent visits these changes are more pronounced, and we see these men showing signs of settling down in the company of thousands of cadaverous, complaining, non-coöperative and critical men that fret out their very souls as clerks and proprietors in drug stores all over the nation.

I should preface what I am going to say by stating that I do not belong to that group that believes there is anything whatever inherent in the retail drug business, as such, that justifies in any sense many of the working conditions that do exist. But generally speaking, many of them are bad and somebody somewhere, and at sometime, must make a beginning in a study of the causes that have brought about these conditions and offer practical suggestions for changes.

Certainly the writer has no thought that he is a pioneer in this field. You and I have heard long and earnest disquisitions on the subject and have gone home and

* Read before the Section on Education and Legislation, A. Ph. A., New York meeting, 1937.

done nothing about it. The reminder comes so often, however, as we visit among the stores and talk with our friends about it, that we are constrained to present the whole matter again to some organized group that might be able to do something to help this large group of public health servants.

At the beginning of the present century pharmaceutical education and pharmaceutical legislation occupied the center of the stage whenever pharmacists gathered in convention. Something was done and done vigorously about both of these, and the results are known everywhere. Only four states, I believe, are left that do not now require all who become registered pharmacists to be college graduates, and in just two years more the minimum training of those who may ask to be examined for registered pharmacist's license will be the bachelor of science degree awarded only after four years of college work, and yet we still send our graduates out to working conditions that in many instances are little less than barbarous and do nothing to remedy them.

I am going to be bold enough to assume the rôle of prophet in this connection. In those states where there is a fair balance between the demand and supply of registered pharmacists as regulated by the output of the colleges from year to year, the number of drug stores will remain more or less stationary for a few years. After that, drug stores per population should and most probably will decrease, offering one hope as we see it of a natural surcease from the tragic cut-throat policies that are so prevalent to-day. In the meantime, hours of work by both proprietors and clerks in such states will almost certainly be curtailed. However "service-minded" the young men and women who go into pharmacy will be, they are not likely to submit to the gruelling requirements of the 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 or 11:00 P.M. shifts operating in many stores at the present time and which, in nearly every instance, bear no relation whatever to the actual needs of the community either for health service or to the economic safety of the business involved.

Are we who assume the rôle of leadership in educational matters willing to stand by and see all the good we do by bringing into pharmacy well-trained enthusiastic men and women largely nullified because nobody has the courage to lead a militant crusade for the adoption of working conditions that at least admit of some of the ordinary recreation and family, social and community obligations that men and women must assume if they are in a real sense to be worth-while citizens of the community in which they live and rear their families?

Optimists are rather rare among men and women who have worked under such conditions over a considerable period of years. It has taken a toll of nervous energy, sense of humor, enthusiasm and hopefulness that often leaves the victims stranded and all to no good purpose, as every one here will freely though regretfully admit.

The problem immediately before American Retail Pharmacy is what is to be done to improve these conditions. That there are too many stores has been said so frequently that to repeat it here is indeed trite, but it must be said and said again until something is done about it. That the hours are too long is an equally hackneyed subject. It, too, must be discussed fully and frankly until somebody does something to improve them. Now by whom, and where, and how are these changes to be brought about?

Discussing first the number of stores. There is probably not a man in retail pharmacy in America who down in his heart believes that except in new territory,

health considerations—the only *raison d'être* for them at all—will demand that another pharmacy be opened in this country while you and I live. Of course there are pressure groups who care not a tinker's damn for anything except more avenues for the distribution of their products, and who are therefore willing to sponsor new stores where they are not needed and even at considerable economic risk. But in the last analysis they have not the slightest interest in the health-service features of the profession and thus constitute a distinct menace to the improvement of American Pharmacy.

Here we should consider well who constitutes these pressure groups, as often they are "Wolves in sheep's clothing," and so well disguised that the most intelligent are sometimes fooled by them. Wholesalers and manufacturers may belong to pressure groups, and how often do we find that health service considerations have little place in their programs. In fact, trained pharmacists are relatively few in number in many such organizations. This condition should have due consideration by the Section on Education and Legislation.

Indirectly, colleges of pharmacy in instances contribute to the opening of far more pharmacies than the public welfare demands. It is hardly necessary to say to you that in any state where there are more colleges of pharmacy than are needed, the supply of registered pharmacists and therefore potential proprietors will inevitably increase store competition and degrade working conditions. Thus, the colleges whose sole function should be to elevate pharmacy, sometime belong to the most reprehensible group and become responsible for much of the evil we see in it to-day.

Who will have the courage to face this issue squarely and persist in the fight to cut down the enrollment of competitive institutions to a point limited only by the public's need for men, and not by the need of the colleges for students? This is a serious problem and must be met. We believe such a campaign may result in the elimination of some of our schools of pharmacy. If the public good is at stake they should be eliminated, and peace to their ashes!

What a difference it would make, if, beginning now, the manufacture, jobbing and retail distribution of all drug products were entirely in the hands of graduate registered pharmacists. What do you think would be the effect upon the pharmacies of the country in the next few years if this were true? And that a great many of these functions are in the hands of mere tradesmen constitutes a great menace to pharmacy which most pharmaceutical groups hesitate to talk about too freely or too loud for fear of its effect upon the volume of distribution of much, perhaps, that should not be distributed anyway. But somebody should say, and continue to say that eventually trained pharmacists and they alone should manufacture and distribute products that constitute the armamentarium in all fights against disease. Perhaps the place to initiate this movement is in the Section on Education and Legislation. I therefore wish to offer the following resolution to be discussed here, and then sent to the Resolutions Committee of the House of Delegates:

WHEREAS, the manufacture, jobbing and retail distribution of all drug products is closely related to the prevention, relief and cure of disease, and as such is fundamentally a public health service,

Therefore be it resolved, by the Section on Education and Legislation that we go on record as favoring the general plan of having all functions as listed above in the hands of registered phar-

macists only, just as rapidly as this can be brought about without disrupting the industry. Further,

Be it resolved, that we favor legislation similar to that already enacted in Maryland and Virginia requiring that the manufacture and packaging of drugs, medicines, toilet articles, dentifrices and cosmetics be under the immediate supervision of a registered pharmacist or some other person approved by the Board of Pharmacy. And further,

Be it resolved, that the labels of all drug products of all kinds carry the statement that their manufacture be done under the supervision of such registered pharmacist or other qualified person.

The first two of these will, of course, require legislation to make them operative. The second objective, however, it seems to us may be brought about by the moral suasion implied by the passage of similar resolutions by all of the health service pharmaceutical organizations of the country.

What shall we say about working conditions in many stores? That some of these are intolerable, unnecessary, uneconomic and often even dangerous to public health, will hardly be questioned. They are a cancer eating at the very vitals of one of the most necessary parts of the whole health program, and yet we do little to remedy them. I am unqualifiedly opposed to the unionization of professionally trained men for the accomplishment of changes in conditions such as the ones referred to above. Pharmacy degrades itself when it must resort to such methods of improvement, but unless improvement does come, just as surely as the sun shines we will be confronted by a problem that may even smother what public health consciousness has developed in the profession by demanding higher educational and personal qualifications of its entrants.

With this in mind, I wish to offer for your consideration a third resolution to be passed on to the Resolutions Committee of the House of Delegates:

WHEREAS, many of the demands made upon the time, energy, health, patience and family welfare of those responsible for the health service work of pharmacy as now conducted in a great many pharmacies bears little relation to the obligations of the profession to the public, or to the economic safety of the business, and

WHEREAS, we view with alarm the resentment there is now or may grow up against unreasonable working conditions in the profession,

Therefore be it resolved, that the Section on Education and Legislation recommend to the House of Delegates and through it to the state associations affiliated with it, that this subject have a prominent place on the programs of them all at their next annual meetings.

THE NUMBER OF GRADUATES AND REGISTERED PHARMACISTS NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN THE PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL AT THE PROPER LEVEL.*

BY E. F. KELLY.

The invitation of the secretary of the Section to prepare this paper was accepted not because it was thought that the question involved could be solved at this time, but in the hope that something might be contributed toward its eventual solution.

An adequate personnel, neither too small nor too large, is a necessary feature of any service and especially so of a health profession. If the personnel is either too small or too large, the service tends to break down on account of lowered standards on the one hand to attract more practitioners and on the other to accommo-

* Section on Education and Legislation, A. PH. A., New York meeting, 1937.