

SECTION ON COMMERCIAL INTERESTS, AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION

POSSIBILITY OF A NATIONAL LINE OF NON-SECRETS, TO BE
PREPARED BY THE INDIVIDUAL, BUT WITH COMMON
OWNERSHIP OF COPYRIGHTED LABELS.*

FIRST PAPER.

BY D. N. ROBIN.

The question of a line of non-secrets has been considered by many druggists, and it is a serious matter.

There are now more than thirty-six non-secret lines on the market; there are many thousands of dollars invested in these lines by various manufacturers—it requires considerable capital to place on the market a non-secret line.

Of the many large non-secret lines which we have on the market to-day I will mention the (*A*) line, which is sold in about five thousand drug stores; (*B*) line, sold in about fifteen thousand drug stores; (*C*) line, sold in about seventy-five percent of the drug stores; (*D*) line, which may be found in various stores, etc.

The (*A*) line we must all admit is the most popular one; the (*B*) line is of a coöperative membership plan; the (*C*) line is manufactured by a pharmaceutical house.

If a non-secret line were proposed we would have to consider first, a popular coined name, and in this instance it is not a case of "What is in a name?"; here a name means considerable. But suppose we did find a good name, what then—how could we get the public to immediately become acquainted with the new name and the new line? Where would the money come from that would be necessary to start a new non-secret line? Both from a financial and a practical standpoint, a national, non-secret line would not be advisable, for the following reason:

Since we must admit that the druggists who sell the (*A*) line are among the leading successful business men in the profession, then the fifteen thousand members of the (*B*) line come next. These men already have considerable money invested in non-secret lines and depend upon the volume of business for profit both in the store and on the stock in the company. It would hardly be probable that these men, who number more than 20,000, would take kindly, and give their support to a new non-secret line.

If a national non-secret line were advocated by national associations such as the American Pharmaceutical Association or the National Association of Retail Druggists, with the entire profession of pharmacists back of it, why, eventually, the general public would be using such a line exclusively and the druggists would lose considerable money by having a lot of non-secret remedies on their shelves as dead stock, and unfortunately they are encumbered with a number of non-secret and various other remedies on their shelves as dead stock now.

We already have enough national non-secret lines. The druggists are showing their preference for their particular line or lines and pushing it or them as hard as they can.

* Read before the Section on Commercial Interests. This article and the succeeding one by Theodore D. Wetterstroem were written in response to a query propounded by the Section.

My proposition is this: That instead of considering a national non-secret line, if the American Pharmaceutical Association wishes to actually be of assistance to the retail drug business, it consider a *commission*, to be known as a committee on non-secret and other preparations, prepared by druggists actually engaged in the retail drug business at the time they offer a preparation or preparations to the commission for sale by other druggists; and the preparation or preparations must have copyrighted labels before they can be considered.

Suppose John Doe in Philadelphia has been putting up a preparation under a copyright label. We will say for a number of years his patrons have been using this preparation and have found it satisfactory. John Doe, in order to place it on the market, would first be compelled to create a demand for it in, say Chicago, New York, and elsewhere, which would require considerable money. Not knowing whether the expenditure would justify the receipts, John Doe spends a little money on cartons, labels, etc., and sells a few packages or bottles over his counter, when he probably has as meritorious an article as one that is largely advertised.

Now supposing John Doe were to send a sample of his preparation to the A.Ph.A. Commission and a fee of \$5.00; the commission would investigate the preparation and give a report through the JOURNAL of its findings, as is done by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*; only in this case, if the commission upon investigation found that a preparation submitted had no merit, or was imperfect, the person who submitted the article would be briefly notified of the fact. If John Doe's preparation was accepted and the notice should appear officially in the JOURNAL, a further notice could be added, that the same could be purchased of John Doe, whose address is ———, or if John Doe so states to the commission, the preparation may be bought through the jobber.

Without exaggeration I can state that more than three thousand druggists are at the present writing putting up one or more preparations under a copyright label. These run from hair tonic to corn cures, etc. If these three thousand druggists could be interested in the plan as outlined, and each one send in his preparation with the fee of \$5.00 for each preparation, the commission would have \$15,000 with which to start work on. The American Pharmaceutical Association would not have to invest a cent in the work.

The proposition that the druggists would have to see, would be that they could secure articles of known formula and articles that were passed on by a commission of the Association. That in itself would be a good advertisement to the public, for even now the public imagine when they purchase an article which has on the label, "Guaranteed under the Pure Food and Drug Law," that the government guarantees the article.

And let me add right here very emphatically that any druggist who would mistrust his fellow druggist, by thinking that if he were to submit his formula, some other druggist would steal it and make something similar, if I were on the commission I would immediately vote to have such article turned down. For while there are a very few unscrupulous persons in the drug business, I believe that ninety-nine percent are trustworthy and reliable.

In Conclusion.—If the American Pharmaceutical Association does consider such a commission, after a very short period they will derive considerable benefit therefrom; also the three thousand or more druggists who are at the present time trying to put various articles on the market would be gainers by such commission.

It is about time that we as druggists consider our fellow workers and reciprocate with them in more ways than by boosting an "X. Y. Z." non-secret line, or

other such mercenary coöperation. Why not give the John Doe Company an opportunity to buy larger quantities of bottles, or cans, or labels, etc. He cannot do so now, but if John Doe's preparation was guaranteed by the commission and the other druggists all pushed it, he could buy his materials, containers, etc., in larger quantities, and so, by getting better prices himself, could offer larger discounts.

Then again, if you buy a nostrum from some unknown manufacturer and find that it is worthless, you are the loser; but if you buy John Doe's preparation, the commission has his formula, prices and discounts, and they know where John Doe is.

Don't you think that this theory, if worked out along the lines suggested, would in a few years be the means of eliminating the so-called dead stock found in the average drug store?

SECOND PAPER.*

BY THEODORE D. WETTERSTROEM.

This subject should appeal to every live pharmacist. To my mind, when properly worked out it is the salvation of the retail pharmacist. We have tried in a legal way to control the selling price of patent medicines to make a reasonable profit, and we have tried to restrict the sale of drugs to the registered pharmacist. Each time up we get a slap in the face, but we keep on hoping that experience will teach us how to put our dreams across.

A plan was presented at the last convention of the Ohio State Pharmaceutical Association by the Chairman of the Propaganda Committee which looks good to me.

In justice to the public the formulas selected should contain no narcotic drugs, and in justice to the physician no formulas should be recommended which seek to remove troubles which require special medical skill. The line of preparations should be confined to household remedies, toilet articles, remedies for the ills of the lower animals, and technical purposes. The formulas should be such as will require no added expense in their production, that can readily be made from stock on hand.

I have full faith in the members of our organization in that they will comply with the price and quantity conditions. A detail man having power to examine, correct, or make public in our official organ will have the same effect as any law now covering the sale of drugs.

To create a demand for these preparations the same tactics that were used for promoting the patent medicines can be employed, with the added pride in offering a preparation of our own make. This puts the line beyond any competition.

Many a druggist has had success in putting up a few preparations under his own name and has often wished to extend his efforts to other preparations but the enormous outlay of cash for containers, labels, etc., to start with has checked him. I believe this comes within the province of association work and can be made self-sustaining.

To be able to say that these preparations are made by yourself and from formulas approved by the association will be the big selling point which the grocery and the department store will not have.

* Presented to the Section on Commercial Interests, A. Ph. A., San Francisco meeting.