

COÖPERATION BETWEEN STATE MEDICAL AND PHARMACY
BOARDS—DRUG COMMISSIONERS ACTING UNDER THEIR
JOINT AUTHORITY AND SUPERVISION.*

BY E. H. THIESING.

Provision No. 8, as submitted by the Voluntary Conference for Drafting Modern Laws Pertaining to Pharmacy, has been of very great interest to me. It seems to contain food for much earnest thought. It would open up the way for mutual and better understanding between Medicine and Pharmacy, and it carries the possibility of speedy and satisfactory results along that line.

As I understand this provision, it proposes that the enforcement of all laws pertaining to the distribution, sale and use of drugs shall be subject to the control and supervision of the State Medical and Pharmacy Boards, jointly. I note particularly that the authority to be vested shall be equal in every respect, so that the power of one board shall not be greater than that of the other. The provision includes, that, under the joint authority of the two boards, there shall be created the office of a Drug Commissioner, with whom shall directly rest the enforcement of all of the laws in question.

Of course, in any discussion of such a proposal at this time, it will serve no purpose to regard details of operation; it will serve no particular purpose now to consider possible limitations and restrictions; nor will it serve a particular purpose to dwell upon ways and means. The real question is as to whether it is advantageous and in public interest to have medical boards and pharmacy boards joined in the enforcement of drug laws. Considering only for the present that one particular question, it does not seem possible that the contrary may be argued with any show of reason, though, of course, I am not unmindful of the fact that many whose interests are primarily centered in the advancement of pharmacy strongly urge that the enforcement of all drug laws should be in the hands of pharmacists.

Looking at the matter from the viewpoint of the public interest primarily, and that of medicine and pharmacy in so far as they serve the general public, it must be admitted that State Boards of medicine and of pharmacy are intended purely to be representative of the public in their relation to medicine and pharmacy. They constitute the official public representatives. They owe their existence to the fact that public supervision is necessary, and because it has been recognized that proper public supervision can be exercised only by those who have been specially fitted and qualified, that is, by those who follow the callings in question. It seems to me that entire public concern in the distribution, sale and use of drugs is centered in having proper control and supervision by those who for that purpose have been selected to represent the public. Control and supervision by the medical board alone, if such might even be contemplated, must immediately appear to be incomplete and insufficient, because medical men are not trained in the manufacture of drugs, nor do they have thorough knowledge regarding practical details which concern their keeping, purity, distribution and sale. On the other hand, pharmacists, as such, lack qualifications which are properly found with the medical men, and which are equally essential in a particular, efficient and correct

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enforcement of drug laws. By combining the knowledge of both professions to the common end of proper control and supervision over the drugs, we bring together all who are specially adapted for the exercise of this public function.

Different expedients have been adopted in different states for the proper enforcement of drug laws. In some states supervisory power seems to be in the hands of medical men, usually as they constitute boards of health; in other states, the supervisory power rests more or less vaguely with boards of pharmacy; while in still other states the supervisory power is as far removed from its correct place as is the farm and cow shed from the hospital and pharmacy. Where supervisory power is in the hands of medical men, there is great opportunity for the exercise of prejudice and injustice, sure to result in friction and discord, and weighed down with a load of suspicion.

Where the enforcement is with pharmacists, in whose hands it no doubt more correctly should rest, there is equal opportunity for discord, because so many medical men do practice pharmacy, whether right or wrong. Where the enforcement rests with those who neither represent medicine or pharmacy, it presents opportunity not only for discord and real public harm, but is made the plaything of politicians who look for political advantage. With few, if any, exceptions the enforcement of the drug laws is not carried on to best serve the public welfare, in which both medicine and pharmacy are so vitally interested. Let medicine and pharmacy join in the exercise of this function which so peculiarly belongs to them and really compensating results will be produced.

Looking beyond the primary purpose which must underlie all law and its enforcement, that is, the general public welfare, the most wholesome possibilities may be found for a more harmonious working together. Unity of action, mutual understanding, that is, a better understanding between physician and pharmacist, can not now be secured by the coöperation and getting together of the individual members of the profession; many little things, and big ones, too, tend to prevent that, but through the understanding of individual representatives, there may be such needed understanding secured for those who make up the entire professions. Conditions now exist which do not give opportunity for bringing together in any manner the larger part of the two professions. Good-will and the creation of confidence in each other by individuals of the two professions, instead of tending toward a widening circle, rather work for even greater isolation. What pharmacy needs to-day and what the public needs, because of the needs of pharmacy in this respect, is a thorough-going, harmonious coöperation and understanding with medicine; and any method which will serve to bring closer together the official representatives of medicine and pharmacy is bound to reflect upon the two professions as a whole. Correct tactful approachment to go beyond the individual and the individual sphere can be opened up only as between the leaders of the two professions, and admittedly such leaders, such real representatives must largely be found in the representative colleges and in the respective official boards. **Bring together** the representatives of medicine and representatives of pharmacy as they constitute the respective state boards, and wonderful progress will have been made toward that mutual understanding and respect which now is so greatly lacking.

I earnestly bespeak a most thorough consideration for the proposition to join State Medical and Pharmacy Boards in the enforcement of drug laws.
