

EDITORIAL

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CONSERVATIVE CONSERVATION OF DRUGS.

ALL the members of the American Pharmaceutical Association are willing conservators of foods as well as drugs, and differences of opinion relative to methods of conservation have no bearing whatever upon their attitude in this propaganda.

The question of conservation is related to that of supply and demand; what may have implied a saving before, now may rightfully be considered as wasteful. Lack of supply and an increased demand occasioned by war conditions have compelled enforced conservation of nearly all commodities, of service, of help, of health, in fact, it is of general, paramount importance.

As pharmacists, our problem is to conserve drugs and in that connection we are brought into coöperation or conflict with those who have great need for some of the articles necessary in the preparation of medicines, notably sugar,¹ glycerin and alcohol.

In a recent Government report it was estimated that if a saving of 25 percent of sugar was made there would be sufficient supply. Conservation should first be directed to unnecessary consumption of the article to be conserved, and it would seem that the saving indicated is possible when the large quantity of candy consumed is considered with the excessive amount of sugar dispensed in soda fountain beverages. The increased demand for confections does not date back many years. It is safe to say that candy is not an absolute necessity, therefore let those who insist on the luxury pay an advanced price and the manufacturers cut down the quantity of their production. It is essential that business be conserved as well as products.

Cane sugar is necessary for soda fountain beverages, but the syrup, as dispensed, can be diluted, and glucose added if necessary for body. It is presumed that such a syrup will more readily ferment than a concentrated sugar syrup and it may also be true that, especially if the fact is known to the patron, the beverage will not be quite as pleasing to the palate of the modern connoisseur. But these are times when everyone can afford to assume a part in conservation. The soda fountain business should not unnecessarily be interfered with; it has grown to large proportions and in many ways contributes to other industries.

¹ Frank C. Lowry, of the Federal Sugar Refining Company, estimates the present sugar balance at 3,451,572 tons. On the basis of 1917 consumption for the U. S., from now until the end of this year, 2,867,349 tons will be needed, indicating a surplus of 584,223 tons. Crop yields may fall below Mr. Lowry's estimate and more may be required by countries relying on the U. S. for supply; on the other hand, the conservation ideas, now more strongly impressed, will have a tendency to reduce the consumption of sugar.

These two lines are mentioned in connection with the conservation of sugar because of the large amount required by them and, the opportunity obtains, without great or disastrous disadvantage of conserving the greater part of the 25 percent sugar deficiency alluded to. The amount of sugar used in officials is relatively small and it seems inadvisable to seek its conservation in that connection except in so far as prescription practice is concerned. The physician can in many instances discontinue the prescribing of vehicles containing sugar.

Glycerin conservation is a matter of more serious importance or at least may become so. There is still the possibility for increasing the output but there is opportunity for eliminating glycerin from some preparations. The conserving of a quarter pound of glycerin daily in 50,000 stores and manufacturing plants would make available several tons of glycerin each day. Unfortunately we have no definite information from the Government at hand as to the amount required for its needs. However, here again it would seem that conservation should not be made by altering present formulas of the U. S. P. and N. F. except in a few instances, perhaps. Glycerin sales over the counter and in non-official preparations should be discouraged and physicians encouraged to exclude glycerin from prescriptions, unless essential thereto.

There are comparatively few preparations of the official standards wherein alcohol is not necessary; however, there are formulas of elixirs in the National Formulary that should be modified, for example, elixir of potassium acetate and lithium salicylate, even if the shortage or higher cost of alcohol did not enter. In this connection the paper by Dr. Horatio C. Wood, Jr., pp. 344-347, April issue of the JOURNAL, should be given careful consideration. Aside from such conservation, physicians should be prevailed upon to prescribe extracts instead of fluidextracts and tinctures when in their opinion advisable which can not invariably be the case.

The paper by Ambrose Hunsberger, pp. 349-353 in April number of the JOURNAL, offers most excellent suggestions and that his conclusions are well founded is voiced by the hearty approbation of quite a number of practitioners and, if the approval is given by these, there is no reasonable doubt that the same propaganda can be successfully promoted elsewhere.

So in our opinion conservation is possible without extensive disturbance of the official standards; radical changes are not advocated. There is, however, a possibility of giving recognition to some drugs that can be employed instead of those now official, and it is this thought that prompted the editorial of the January issue, p. 11.

E. G. E.

CONSERVATION OF HELP.

AS all other activities, the drug business is now disturbed over the matter of help. This presents a serious problem because experienced employees are required and the laws of States and Government demand that pharmacists be

qualified by training and education, notwithstanding that this fact is largely ignored when they enter Army service—a rather anomalous condition. But the situation confronts us and a discussion of the important subject is in order.

Many stores manufacture comparatively few preparations and the prescription department is unprofitable if a pharmacist must be employed. The trade of these stores is largely in merchandise that any clerk, man or woman, can sell without long training or at least without education in pharmacy. Ideas that would not be offered during normal times are permissible under present conditions; relief must be sought. Here then is one suggestion: do away with pharmacy in these stores altogether and permit such patronage to go to other stores. A number of years ago the writer proposed such plan to three druggists of a small city. As a result one of the stores assumed the pharmaceutical work and discontinued selling certain lines of merchandise. The arrangement worked well for a time, but as the present exigency did not then exist and there being changes in the firms, the plan was discontinued. Consolidation of stores or partnerships would make such arrangements practicable. Another plan is to adopt the department store idea in the larger establishments, assigning pharmaceutical duties exclusively to registered men. This will permit of employing women as clerks and conserve the number of qualified pharmacists who, of course, must also have supervision of the merchandise sales that could be construed as coming under pharmacy law regulations.

It is true that soon colleges of pharmacy will graduate their students, but many of these will immediately enter the service and so those available for positions will be rather limited in number. The colleges of pharmacy should make strong efforts to matriculate more women. It is safe to say that the question of help will become worse before the situation is materially improved. E. G. E.

THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE U. S. ARMY SHOULD AVAIL ITSELF OF THE GREATER POSSIBILITIES OF AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICE.

AT the first meeting of the Philadelphia Branch, A. Ph. A., following the declaration of war, a War Aid Committee was appointed, and in May (1917) resolutions that had been adopted by the Branch were directed to President Wilson, Governor Brumbaugh, Mayor Smith and to various pharmaceutical associations. A brief outline was given of work which pharmacists could cooperate in and included these suggestions:

“Continuous display of posters; distribution of literature; interpreting to prospective recruits the different branches of the Service; enrollment of recruits; dissemination of information, orders and proclamations; fostering intensive production of foodstuffs in rural communities; receiving donations for forwarding to central distributing points; furnishing reports of disloyal conduct, suspicious actions, etc.;

control of the sale of potentially dangerous chemicals, such as chlorates, nitrates, etc."

The Committee felt safe in pledging the best efforts of every pharmacist in the United States to uphold the nation in its determination to assert American rights under any and all conditions.

A number of schools of pharmacy at once, by consent of the student body, pledged their services to the country; the American Pharmaceutical Association and its branches, as well as all other related organizations, offered their coöperation and services; the American Conference of Pharmaceutical Faculties extended the facilities of the affiliated institutions; the U. S. Pharmacopoeia Revision Committee and National Formulary Committee are at work considering conservation of articles required by the Government, and of drugs; branches of the American Pharmaceutical Association are giving much study to the subject.

We might go into detail relative to work accomplished; however, this is not the purpose. One intention is to direct attention to all the offers of the resolutions, many of which were afterward adopted by the Government, but for example, the suggestion relative to explosives was not utilized until quite recently. Surely, this is testimony that pharmacists are competent to plan and devise.

There are departments of the Government where the advice of pharmacists would have in the past saved considerable trouble, annoyance and expense. Doubtless the Medical Supply Department of the Army has profited by the advice of pharmacists, for a decided improvement is evident; the glaring errors which were shown in the official List of Staple Medical and Surgical Supplies published by the Medical Department of the U. S. Army have been corrected.

The American Medical Association, representing 80,000 physicians, is on record as favoring a properly organized pharmaceutical corps, and from opinions of medical men in various localities, in fact throughout the country, such provision for the Medical Department of the Army is strongly advocated, even though not urged to the extent of displeasing the officials. The proposal is indorsed by all pharmaceutical organizations, comprising memberships of nearly 50,000—all of them good citizens, entitled to a hearing. So many young pharmacists are now enlisted that it has produced a serious shortage of dispensers and has largely reduced the number of students in colleges of pharmacy. Some of the enlisted pharmacists have had to dispose of their stores at financial sacrifice. In all of this a patriotic spirit has been shown. But they do ask, Why is the importance of pharmaceutical service not given the recognition it deserves in the Army?

Besides clinical laboratory work, dispensing and medical aid, there are many non-medical duties that pharmacists can perform and thereby relieve the doctors to that extent which implies, that a lesser number of them will be required for the Army. It is becoming a serious question, whether a sufficient number of medical

men can be enlisted without drawing too largely from those needed at home. We refer to an abstract from the paper by Ambrose Hunsberger, printed on p. 320 of the April issue.

There is no doubt that the Army dispensary service has been improved, but there have been instances of dispensing by inexperienced men, even though pharmacists were then in the same cantonment.

European nations avail themselves of organized pharmaceutical service and have words of praise for its efficiency.

The following repeated question is relevant: "Would the Medical Department of the U. S. Army be more or less efficient with an organized corps of trained pharmacists than under the present system?" And another that we can also answer only in one way namely, "Are not soldiers, as far as possible under war conditions, entitled to the same or related attention that is deemed essential in civil life of medical practice which embraces efficient pharmaceutical service?"

The response to the efforts of the American Pharmaceutical Association for a pharmaceutical corps in past years has been "that such organization was unnecessary in peace time;" now we have war and the installation is considered inexpedient. The Irishman, in *Handy Andy*, has been quoted by a contemporary, "who did not thatch the roof of a church in fair weather because it was not necessary and could not do so while it was raining."

"It is just as reprehensible to waste talent as material. It is the property of the citizenship, and citizens are entitled to its conservation and the protection it affords." This was not said of pharmacy but it is applicable to it.

An axiom of Democracy says: "The whole people is wiser than any group or man in it. Its judgment is safer, surer." The question of the right pharmaceutical service is a broad one: it is not of an individual case or opinion but one to be asked of thousands of physicians, of tens of thousands of parents and sons, "Should the best that is in pharmacy and pharmacists be made available?"

The advice of pharmacists on matters that their training qualifies them to give should be made use of and also their services whenever necessary; to do otherwise, necessarily involves needless expenditure and avoidable inconvenience, and constitutes an injustice to the public. Why seek to assign and qualify medical men for pharmaceutical duties when they are already burdened with their own? Why are pharmacy and pharmacists of less importance in military service than in civil life? The Medical Department of the U. S. Army should avail itself of the greater possibilities of American pharmaceutical service, because our soldiers are entitled to the protection such service affords.

E. G. E.
