

EDITORIAL

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HIGHER ASSOCIATION DUES.

BY the time this number of the JOURNAL reaches the members of the American Pharmaceutical Association they will have expressed their views regarding the advance in annual Association dues. The same subject, for like reasons, is under consideration in Great Britain, and the increase in dues is the same as proposed in the referendum ballot sent out by the American Pharmaceutical Association. The necessity for larger annual assessments seems to be generally agreed to. Formal presentation of excuses and reasons for the contemplated advance was deemed superfluous; the issue should have been met several years ago. All the members are advised relative to the higher costs of publication; the question was simply one of determining the wishes of the members by vote, as to whether the Association should continue its publications and extend its services.

The JOURNAL is the product of the members, and so they are in position to value its publication. The Year Book, as the "Report on the Progress of Pharmacy" for many years, and thereafter as the annual volume, has proved its worth to pharmacists. The higher dues can hardly be considered in the light of an advance but, more reasonably, as an adjustment with the purchasing value of the dollar, and also with the higher cost level of publication and paper, which will not be materially abated for several years.

Doubtless, the question was carefully studied by the members and, therefore, the result of the vote will express their wishes for the guidance of the Council.

E. G. E.

THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE PROHIBITION LAW.

COMMISSIONER JOHN. F. KRAMER is quoted as saying that "we must have a healthy public sentiment to succeed with prohibition enforcement. * * * To what extent can a thousand men—that is the number we have—police 110,000,000 people?" Coincident with this statement is the announcement that a new official has been appointed to take charge of "the border department" of the prohibition squad, which looks after Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. That border is nearly 1,800 miles in length.

The liquor question is at present not one of rights or wrongs of the law; of the wisdom, or lack of it, in prohibition; but whether defiance of laws will be permitted, or whether they should be generally respected. The law-defying business is a cold-blooded proposition—to make money quickly.

It is said, Mr. Kramer has admitted, that some of his agents have fallen under suspicion of being disloyal to the law they were sworn to enforce. This may be true, for the temptations are great; those engaged in the unlawful business are in a position and willing to offer a big price for those who can offer temporary immunity against prosecution. The difficulties that beset the enforcement of the law are great, and the Commissioner and his force should be given every assistance possible; he certainly has the support of the drug trade.

The interest of pharmacists in the enforcement, aside from that as loyal citizens, is to keep the profession as clean and free as possible from those who would besmirch its good name. There is continued reflection in the public press which is unfair to druggists, for they have spoken in no uncertain terms of denunciation against those who are willing to engage in illegal liquor traffic, under the guise of dispensing it as medicine.

E. G. E.

THE BUSINESS OF THE RETAIL PHARMACIST.

DURING the past few years the system of doing business, both in buying and selling, has in many respects differed from that in normal times. There was little resistance to the tendency toward higher prices, and not much complaint while every division shared in the profits. Retrenchment must be guarded and pessimism not mistaken for conservatism during the adjustment period now at hand. The inflation of prices was largely possible because the public, participating in the profits, was willing to pay the prices demanded. Now a spirit of organized resistance is developing, and we might as well face the facts, that prices will be brought down, and some of the indulgences we have more recently grown to believe were indispensable necessities of life will again be transferred into the category of luxuries.

Most pharmacists are engaged in merchandizing, in fact, their greater volume of sales is derived from sundry articles, fountain beverages, etc., hence they will be affected by the scaling downward of prices and more conservative buying. The *New York Commercial*, in a recent editorial on the subject, said in part:

“There may be many who will assume that the retailers can afford to stand some loss because of large profits made in the past, which may seem plausible enough as a theory, but which is not sound from the economic standpoint. The assumption should be that so far as an active business is concerned, past profits represent money already expended. Any other theory would mean that no business man is sure of what he has already earned, and cannot invest it or spend it for fear that in some future period he may be called upon to pay some of it back to make up losses for that period.

“If, as in the present instance, there is a widespread revision of prices, it may result in failures and a general disruption of trade which will react upon the community at large. Naturally the attitude of retailers will be to sell the goods they have on hand or have contracted for at a price that will at least not show a loss.

They are going to find themselves in a difficult position, for they may not be able to maintain prices on any such basis. In any event, the ultimate consumer must not expect too much at the outset."

There was little scientific buying during the past four or five years; the time for its application is here, and under some handicaps of which those in the drug business are cognizant. With all of that, there is no justification for a period of commercial depression, as some would have us believe; the expanding business of the years referred to has been of such proportions that any reaction looms large by comparison.

E. G. E.

OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT WORK, BUREAU OF CHEMISTRY,
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

ON his request, Dr. Carl L. Alsberg has been authorized to organize a new office in the Bureau of Chemistry which will link up science with industry and promises to extend the usefulness of the Bureau to the public. Discoveries in the laboratories have not been fully utilized, because the commercial possibilities were not presented to those in position to promote them.

A service is contemplated which will not only bring discoveries of the Bureau to the attention of investors, but inform manufacturers relative to the sources and availability of raw material supply needed in their manufactures, construction plans of plants and laboratories, improvements of machinery, costs of production and market demands for products. There is then the other important thought—industrial plants have after years of experience been successful in converting "waste" material into useful products, sometimes more valuable than that which first engaged the manufacturers. Such investigations will doubtless concern the new department and add materially to the productiveness of industries. The work for the present, it is stated, will be confined to discoveries originating in the Bureau. Though the chemist may be trained in the details of his profession, knows the value of his process or discovery, he is not always prepared "to launch them on the sea of business." This new office is to serve as such agency, and the opportunities which in the past have been neglected will be utilized and made productive. The move is one that promises great things for invention, science and business.

The Office of Development Work is organized under the direction of David J. Price, through whose activities in reducing grain dust explosions millions of dollars' worth of foodstuffs have been saved during the past few years. The Bureau of Chemistry has done potential work, and this is in line with the competency of those who have directed its affairs, and it is timely to say that they should receive more encouragement from the Government than they have been given. No department has served the people more competently and efficiently. E. G. E.

WORLD TRADE, PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF CRUDE BOTANICAL DRUGS.

THE U. S. Tariff Commission in a recent report discusses the probable future of American drug cultivation and in connection therewith the world trade, production and consumption of crude botanical drugs. Heretofore little attention has been given American crude drugs in these reports, and the one just issued is made interesting by the historical references, and valuable by listing imports, exports and prices of quite a number of foreign and domestic drugs. Parts of the report are quoted.

"The superstitious *materia medica* of the past reached out into unknown corners of the earth for unknown products which derived their chief value from the mystery of their origin. The search for drugs and spices was not the least of the spurs that led to the discovery of the New World. Thousands of plant species have had more or less medicinal vogue. Even now when scientific tests have discarded hosts of valueless medicinals, there is hardly a country which does not furnish some commercial medicinal supply.

"The domestic crude drug industry is of comparatively recent origin. Before the war a few native drugs, such as ginseng, cascara sagrada, and goldenseal, were grown on a commercial scale, but in general there was little or no competition between American crude drugs and those produced abroad. Foreign botanicals were not cultivated here either because of unsuitable climate or because our agriculture could not compete with wild or even cultivated materials produced elsewhere by the cheapest classes of labor.

"During the war renewed interest in drug cultivation was manifested in the allied countries. An especially notable feature was the rapid growth of the industry in Japan. There it has been fostered by very favorable climatic conditions, by cheap skilled agricultural labor, and, to some extent at least, by governmental aid. The newly founded Japanese chemical industries have also become prominent in the manufacture of a number of plant alkaloids and extracts. Present reports indicate that Japan in the future will be an important source of botanical drugs.

"In general, botanical drugs require a high degree of agricultural and technical skill and experience, valuable land, some special appliances, and a class of labor which is more expensive in this country than abroad. The industry is further limited by liability to insect and disease damage and by comparatively small demand. These exacting requirements have been met in the cases of certain drugs, such as belladonna and digitalis, and because of high prices and the absence of foreign competition their cultivation has been commercially successful."

The report urges that American industry be aided and consideration given to the advisability of promoting and continuing the cultivation of the indispensable drugs which have been successfully produced under American climatic, labor and economic conditions. It is pointed out that while the aggregate value of drug production is small, its importance to the public health cannot be overestimated; that the botanical drugs cannot be wholly replaced by synthetic medicinals, nor can their production be immediately stimulated and secured in emergency as is the case with most of the manufactured products.

E. G. E.