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by

HONORABLE HOMER CUMMINGS

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

Under the Auspices

of the

WORLD NARCOTIC DEFENSE ASSOCIATION

Thursday, March 21, 1935.

11:30 P. M. E. S. T.

Admiral Hobson, Ladies and Gentlemen:

For more than a hundred years the illicit use of narcotic drugs has been spreading over the earth like a malignant malady until, today, no land is free from this menace to the well-being of mankind.

In the underworld of our large cities there are innumerable drug addicts of both sexes, some of pitifully tender years, recruited from all walks of life, undergoing moral disintegration, neglecting their personal hygiene, and with vitality and resistance lowered, becoming active incubators and carriers of communicable diseases. They constitute an ever present peril to public health, public morals, and public safety. In this environment adolescent victims rub shoulders with confirmed addicts and the criminal classes. They come forth from their apprenticeship equipped with the technique of crime and, as gunmen and killers, are the ready instruments of racketeers and gangsters. Drug exploitation is a recognized factor in robberies and other crimes of violence and an integral part of the problem of lawlessness.

Both personally and as Attorney General, I am deeply interested in the enactment of the Uniform Narcotic Drug law. At present the narcotic laws of the various States are in a chaotic condition, preventing efficient use of the police power and thwarting cooperation with the efforts of the Federal Government. The Federal Government alone cannot reach this menace. Uniform legislation is vitally necessary.

The measure now pending before various Legislatures can be accepted with the utmost confidence. It was carefully prepared by a special committee of the Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State laws and presented

for revision at five successive annual meetings of the Conference. The final draft was approved in 1932 and, in October of that year, it was unanimously endorsed by the American Bar Association.

This event occurred at a most opportune time, following, as it did, six months after the United States had ratified the Geneva Narcotic Limitation Convention of 1931 and preceding by nine months the time when that treaty went into operation in the United States. This important treaty limits the total manufacture of narcotic drugs to the amounts required for medical and scientific purposes, strikes at illicit sources of supply and constitutes the very bulwark for the international warfare upon this common and hideous enemy of society. Moreover, the final draft of the Uniform State Law includes the provisions recommended by the responsible officials of our Federal Government as necessary for the fulfillment by our country of its obligations to the world under this Convention.

It will be recalled that President Roosevelt was among the first of our high public officials to recognize the seriousness of the narcotic drug evil, and its international character. Three years ago, while serving as Governor of the State of New York, he sent an urgent telegram to the World Narcotic Defense Association on the occasion of the observance of Narcotic Education Week, in which he emphasized the importance of ratifying the Geneva Limitation Convention and the imperative need of enacting the Uniform State Narcotic Law. I now have the pleasure of reading to you a personal message from him.

"THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

"March 21, 1935.

"My dear Admiral Hobson:

"When the present administration took office ten countries had ratified the Geneva Narcotic Limitation Convention. The United States was one of these ten. Between March fourth and April tenth, 1933, twenty other countries deposited their ratifications and the Treaty went into operation on July ninth, 1933. It was my privilege, as President, to proclaim, on that day, that this Treaty had become effective throughout the jurisdiction of the United States. Since then, nineteen additional ratifications have been deposited at Geneva and the Treaty has now become the basis of international accord on narcotics. Already its influence has produced a profound effect upon the supply and the distribution of illicit narcotic drugs.

"An imperative duty rests upon us as a people. Full effect can be given to the terms of the drug conventions only by supporting legislation enacted by the ratifying nations. In this country, Federal laws have already been passed. Under our dual form of Government, the power to enact an essential part of this legislation is possessed by the States and by them alone. The provisions necessary for the fulfillment of the duties thus vested in our several States, are incorporated in the draft of the Uniform State Narcotic Law now pending before the legislatures of many of our States. This draft was prepared with great care and has received the endorsement and approval of a large number of responsible organizations of the country, including the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association.

"While it was my privilege to proclaim that the Treaty of 1931 became operative in our country on July ninth, 1933, it is now the high privilege of the legislatures of the several States to give full effect to the beneficent terms of this Treaty by the enactment of suitable and uniform narcotic legislation. By so doing the legislatures will give to their own people far better protection than they now have against the ravages of the narcotic drug evil and at the same time they will strengthen the hands of the United States in its efforts to aid them and to further combat this evil abroad thru full cooperation between our country and other nations.

"On January first, 1933, only nine nations had registered their ratification of the Limitation Treaty. On January first, 1935, only nine States had adopted the Uniform State statute. As 1933 witnessed ratification of the Treaty by thirty-one additional nations, so may 1935 witness the adoption of the Uniform Drug Act by at least thirty-one more States, thereby placing interstate accord abreast of international accord, to the honor of the legislative bodies of our States and for the promotion of the welfare of our people and the peoples of other lands.

"Very sincerely yours,

(S) Franklin D. Roosevelt

"Admiral Richmond P. Hobson,
President, World Narcotic Defense Association,
The Army and Navy Club,
Washington, D. C."

In the Conference on Crime which I recently called to meet at Washington, action was taken to encourage the creation of centralized agencies for better police administration in the several states and for more efficient cooperation with the Department of Justice. It is highly important that when these agencies are organized the Uniform State Law should be upon the statute books of the States, so that the States and the Federal Government may more effectively function in the matter of law enforcement in the constantly widening field of crime caused by the use of narcotics.

NOW is the time for the adoption of this wholesome statute. I appeal to all good citizens and to all constructive agencies and organizations, Federal, State and local, public and private, to give their unqualified support to those who are laboring for this essential measure reform. It is the least they can do to enable us to fulfill our obligations abroad, and to free our country of the unspeakable consequences which inevitably follow the illicit use of narcotic drugs.