



Department of Justice

1276

REMARKS

BY

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAMSEY CLARK

before the

NATIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL
ON DRUG ABUSE EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

WASHINGTON, D. C.

JULY 22, 1968

We in the Department of Justice are indebted to all of you for your participation in this endeavor to control the use of dangerous drugs.

In approaching the problems of drug abuse, it is well to view them in context with our times. Change is the fundamental fact of these times. If we could measure, we would certainly find that we have witnessed more change in the essential way that people live in the first two-thirds of this century than in history theretofore. If this is startling, consider that we may expect to see more changes in the last one-third of the century than we have witnessed during the first two-thirds.

Marshal McLuhan points out that man has confined more space in his architectural design in the past 30 years than in the previous six milleniums. This touches on the two great dynamics producing our sweeping and accelerating change: population increase, and science and technology.

Who in 1900 dreamed of television, much less its incalculable effect on our lives today. The horseless carriage was barely known, yet today we have more of them on the highways than we had people in 1900. Science has probably doubled our knowledge of the physical world with each passing decade. Young people who were graduated this spring with Ph.D.'s in physics or chemistry will in 32 years be confronted with a field of basic knowledge eight times greater than that known to the most advanced researchers and teachers today.

OVER

In 1900, we were 76 million predominantly rural people. Only 20 percent lived in urban areas of 50,000 or more. Today, we are 200 million, with 80 percent in urban areas exceeding 50,000. Too often, the identity of the individual is completely lost in the vastness of the city.

If Will and Ariel Durant were to continue with The Story of Civilization, they might title the volume covering our time, "The Age of Anxiety."

It is within this context that we must work at the problems of drug abuse, along with every other social, scientific and governmental problem. To protect ourselves from injury through drug abuse, we must move generally and comprehensively, with the best possible coordination, along three lines: research, education and enforcement. Failure in any of the three will mean failure in our ultimate purpose to achieve a healthy, happy, stable society permitting each of us as an individual to develop as fully as we can and will.

The Department of Justice is anxious to be a vital part of this comprehensive approach. A greater opportunity for progress results from consolidation into the Department of the Bureau of Narcotics and the Bureau of Drug Abuse Control. We are determined to see that our efforts in research and education, as well as in enforcement, are vastly expanded.

In research, we seek to know the truth: to accurately evaluate. We must make every effort to assure that the dangerous drug--the drug that can cause brain damage or genetic transmutation, or otherwise injure people--is identified, hopefully before any human use. That is no easy task. It requires a vast expenditure of our best scientific capability. It requires an initiative and foresight rarely exercised in an area where pecuniary profit will not be a motive. We know of the great damage that chemistry misapplied to the human body can do, just as we know the wonders it can work in terms of health. We must know the difference.

Having found the truth about a drug through research, the next task is to make the truth known. Our young people will not accept the easy answer and will not believe an old wives' tale. They must be given the truth, clearly demonstrated. If education begins in misapprehension, misunderstanding, or misinformation, it will not succeed among our bright, well-educated and skeptical young people. Education is our greatest industry--involving more than a fourth of our total population as administrators, teachers or students--and it is perhaps our greatest hope. It was in 1920 that H. G. Wells wrote that civilization is in a race between education and catastrophe. Recalling that race, we realize the essentiality of knowing and teaching the facts about drug abuse.

Our chief target in education must be youth. They can best be reached generally through educational and social institutions. But educational efforts must also involve the medical profession, law enforcement, the drug industry--pharmacists, distributors and retailers. If we can work together and give every American an opportunity to know the truth about narcotics and dangerous drugs, we will vastly improve the quality of life in 20th century America. We count on your help.

Enforcement is a major part of the picture. This, too, requires research. It is questionable whether laws can be enforced when they are based on principles as to which there is vast disagreement. You cannot enforce laws that people do not accept. Enforcement must be based on facts--proven facts translated into public law that recognizes the drugs that medical science demonstrates to be dangerous, prohibiting what must be prohibited for the health and safety of our people.

Law enforcement must be effective. This will demand professional training and understanding. The new Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs offers a great opportunity. It combines some 300 agents from the Bureau of Narcotics and 300 from the Bureau of Drug Abuse Control into an agency for which we seek 800 agents. The 800 will, in effect, be more than double the old 600, for duplication will be eliminated. Heretofore, nine out of 10 seizures of LSD, in one bureau's jurisdiction, would also produce marijuana, in the jurisdiction of the other. Together they promise effective enforcement.

Drug abuse is a major element in crime in America today. Some 40 percent of the arrests made by the Bureau of Drug Abuse Control for LSD offenses involved persons with criminal records. Police Commissioner Howard Leary of New York estimates that narcotics is his chief law enforcement problem.

We can expect science to develop more than 100 new potentially dangerous drugs within the next decade. Their control is a great challenge. We must know that research and education and law enforcement are working as one for a common purpose--the health and stability of the American citizen; his opportunity to know the truth, to protect himself and add to the public safety; and his chance to fulfill his individual promise that will be lost if he falls into the abusive use of dangerous drugs..