

ALCOHOL AND HEALTH

There can be no question that the toll exacted from our society by alcoholism is intolerable, declared Elliot L. Richardson, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, as he sent the first annual report "Alcohol and Health" to Congress. He called alcohol the most abused drug in the United States today and urged that alcoholic persons no longer be treated as criminals.

The comprehensive report was prepared by the new National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, a component of HEW's Health Services and Mental Health Administration.

Among the findings of the report:

- Nine million Americans are alcohol abusers and alcoholic individuals, almost 10 percent of the Nation's work force.

- Alcohol plays a major role in half the highway fatalities in the United States, and each year costs thousands of lives.

- Public intoxication accounts for one-third of all arrests reported annually.

- Among American Indians, alcoholism is at an epidemic level, more than twice the national average.

- Alcoholism is an illness or disease which requires rehabilitation through a broad range of health and social services.

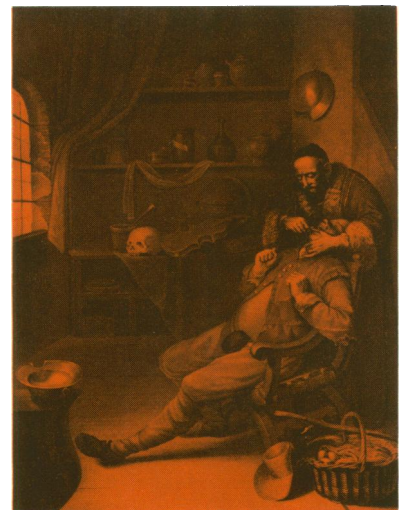
- Present programs dealing with alcohol abuse and alcoholism are accorded a low priority and are unrelated to most of the health and social resources within communities.

- Establishment of modern public-health oriented facilities to deal with intoxicated persons will free law enforcement agencies from being overburdened by a large population of ill people.

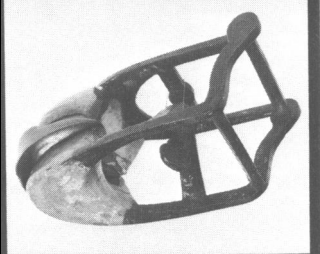
- The criminal law is not an appropriate device for preventing or controlling health problems. To deal with alcoholic persons as criminals because they appear in public when intoxicated is unproductive and wasteful of human resources.

Secretary Richardson stressed HEW's multiple role in mobilizing the nation's resources to deal with the alcohol problem. He pledged the Department's support to State and community alcohol abuse programs, as well as to medical and social research efforts. He also emphasized the need for the Federal Government to set the example of a new attitude toward alcoholism as an illness.

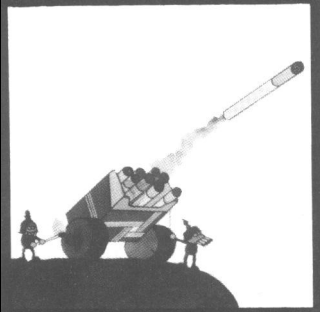
Cover—"L'Arracheur de Dents" by 17th century artist Gerard Dou. Original engraving in color by A. Kesler. The past of the dentistry profession and the advances it has achieved are themes of the dental exhibit of the Smithsonian Institution. Article on the exhibit and reference collection begins on page 291.



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