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Senate Hearings Expose
Problems of Alcoholism

WASHINGTON (BP)--The nation's efforts in the cure of alcoholism and the treatment of alcoholics took a beating at hearings conducted here by the Senate Special Subcommittee on Alcoholism and narcotics.

Sen. Harold E. Hughes (D., Iowa), chairman of the subcommittee, said in his opening statement: "We are infinitely proud that we have put men on the moon. But in our stomachs we are sick over the threat of drugs to our children and of the deteriorating effects of alcoholism on our society."

"Up to this point," the Senator declared, "federal action on both alcohol and drug abuse has been the puniest type of tokenism. In the areas where a dollar invested would yield the greatest returns in economic and human value legal tender, we have been unwilling to spend pin money."

Both Hughes and Sen. Ralph Yarborough (D., Tex.), chairman of the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee, took the Nixon administration to task for its recommendation to cut the \$4 million federal allocation for alcoholism community assistance grants.

"I think it is false economy to completely eliminate a program which would have made at least a beginning in trying to solve this serious and growing American problem," Yarborough said.

The three days of hearings featured some of the nation's leading medical, psychiatric professional and political experts on the problems of alcoholism. In the near future similar hearings will be conducted on Narcotics and drug abuse. Other hearings throughout the nation are projected on these problems.

Hughes said that the main objectives of his subcommittee are three-fold:

- (1) "To dramatize to the Congress and the public the magnitude and urgency of these problems,
- (2) "To develop new approaches to helping people in our society afflicted by alcoholism and drug abuse, and
- (3) "To develop legislation that is practical and that is on a realistic financial scale not previously dreamed of by this government."

In calling for open-mindedness to new approaches to alcoholism, Hughes said, "this means we cannot settle for window dressing. This means that we must disengage ourselves from the old ruts and prejudices of the past."

He charged that Americans "have fallen flat on our faces" in their response to and treatment of alcohol problems. "It is a national disgrace," he said.

"To begin with," Hughes continued, "I believe we have to begin calling things by their right names.

"We have too long taken a country club approach to a gutter problem.

"We are dealing with a dirty, vicious affliction.

"We have glossed it over in order to entice people to seek treatment without the pain of embarrassment."

The Senator then put his finger on the drinking practices of the American people. "Somehow the death grip that respectable social drinking has on our society must be broken," he said. "Perhaps the greatest single contributor to the growth of alcoholism in this country is the fashionable cocktail party," he charged.

Hughes hit the public apathy towards problem-drinking as "gutless and wishy-washy." He demanded that the politicians provide "tough, substantive action--not the conventional window-dressing we have been getting."

The subcommittee chairman then called on the professionals in the field of alcoholism to get together for a solution to the problem.

"In my opinion," he said, "one of the severe and ridiculous obstacles to getting anything done in the way of combatting alcoholism is the bullheadedness and fruitless wrangling among the various groups and professional disciplines working in the field...."

"The various groups who recognize alcoholism for what it is, and see the terrible cost it exacts from our society in human life, heart-sickness and economic waste, have no business working at cross purposes."

He then appealed, "we can unite effectively if we simply keep our eyes on the main objective--to save and help human beings."

Roger Egeberg, assistant secretary for health and scientific affairs in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, acknowledged "the worsening problem of chronic alcoholism in this country." He said that this "reflects the progressive failure of our health care system to meet the demands placed upon it."

Egeberg then pledged himself to work toward a national program to enlist every phase of the American society "in the battle against alcoholism."

Marvin A. Block of the American Medical Association declared that "alcoholism is the nation's worst drug problem."

"It has become so," he said, "because of centuries of use of alcohol by almost all cultures and through social acceptance."

Block quoted Henry Brill, chairman of the AMA Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, as saying that alcoholism is of the same nature as the abuse of drugs. Brill said that, in the aggregate, alcoholism has greater dimensions than drug abuse, accounts for a greater number of casualties, and requires more attention for its cure.

Other testimonies outlined the meager efforts throughout the nation toward caring for alcoholics, detailed the effects of alcohol in human life, and called for a massive federal, state and local program for solutions.

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Cattle Truck Used To Bus
Church Members To Assembly

7/30/69

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--People come to Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly here in all kinds of automobiles, buses and other vehicles, but a group of 22 church members from Kentucky earned the distinction of being the first to arrive in a cattle truck.

It may sound a little dehumanizing, but Troy Abell, pastor of the Dallasburg Baptist Church in Wheatley, Ky., said the people, many of them youth, liked the ride.

"We had enough cars, but not enough drivers," Abell explained. "We have access to a church bus, but the insurance wouldn't cover us, so we decided to drive the cattle truck."

"It's better than a bus," Abell exclaimed. "We sang songs and the young people played guitars all the way down here. We were on the road 11½ hours."

Next year, the church plans a longer drive in the cattle truck. "We plan to use the cattle truck to go to the Southern Baptist Convention in Denver and circle back to attend a conference at Glorieta Baptist Assembly in New Mexico," Abell said.

They're also hoping for a bigger "herd" next year.

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