

Alcoholism Cure: Too Popular

Atlanta—(RNS)—In Georgia, alcoholism is regarded by law to be an illness. Thus a "certified" alcoholic picked up by police should be treated, not jailed.

But the practice is causing widespread problems, particularly in Atlanta. There are not enough medical facilities to treat the city's alcoholics.

Atlanta's problem is compounded, according to a report by The Wall Street Journal, because it is one of the few cities which follow the law faithfully. The alcoholic who makes a nuisance of himself isn't thrown into a drunk tank — but there is practically no place to take him for treatment.

The Georgia Supreme Court last July handed down the ruling classifying alcoholism as illness rather than crime. The Wall Street Journal's correspondent, Richard R. Leger, focused on the situation here, although he noted similar problems with drunkenness in other areas.

Mr. Leger explained that "courts in only a few cities besides Atlanta are treating chronic alcoholics as sick persons rather than criminals." Arrests, he said, continue.

Despite local attempts to follow the court ruling, drunkenness currently comprises 55 percent of all Atlanta arrests. Under the law, drunks are not considered "chronic alcoholics until they have been examined and declared so by a physician."

Drunkenness Not Alcoholism
The distinction made between drunkenness and alcoholism is pointed out by Howard Clinebell, Jr., a professor of pastoral counseling at the School of Theology, Claremont, Calif., and a clergyman who has spent his life dealing with the alcohol problem.

In a revised and enlarged edition of his Understanding and Counseling the Alcoholic, issued in late January by Abingdon Press, Dr. Clinebell wrote: "All alcoholism is attended by drunkenness, but not all drunkenness is indicative of alcoholism. Alcoholism and drunkenness are not synonymous."

According to Mr. Leger's report, this distinction is maintained in Atlanta's attempt to carry out the implications of the decision that alcoholism is a sickness.

"Public officials say only about 200 of Atlanta's estimated 50,000 to 75,000 alcoholics so far have been certified as chronic drunks," he wrote. "Many... can't afford to be examined by private physicians and can't get free examinations at public health facilities."

Certification of a person as an alcoholic, he said, has not always had helpful results, largely because public clinics do not have space for treatment and there is little public money for rehabilitation.

Mr. Leger said that other cities treating alcoholics as ill persons were finding treatment facilities "swamped."

He cited Washington, D.C., where more than 4,000 persons are officially alcoholics and immune from jail sentences.

Following a federal appellate court decision in Richmond, Va., in 1966, which overruled charges of public intoxication against two men, courts in the District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland and the Carolinas have been required to count chronic alcoholics among the ill.

Utter Chaos for Washington
The resulting situation in Washington was "utter chaos," a health official told Mr. Leger. More hospital facilities for alcoholics have been opened in most of the states affected.

Mr. Leger cited Dr. Leslie J. Borbely of Spence State Hospital, West Virginia, as approving the new court approach to alcoholism. "I can't prove it with statistics yet, but I'm certain that when an alcoholic leaves the state hospital he generally stays sober a lot longer than if he has been turned loose from jail," Dr. Borbely said.

It is estimated by the American Medical Association that there are 5 to 6.5 million alcoholics in the U.S. The AMA considers alcoholism one of the nation's major medical problems.

The AMA, Mr. Leger noted, defines an alcoholic as one whose "preoccupation with alcohol and loss of control over its consumption" usually leads him to drink until he becomes intoxicated.

In his book, Dr. Clinebell offers a similar definition: "An alcoholic is anyone whose drinking interferes frequently or continuously with any of his important life adjustments and interpersonal relationships."

Supreme Court Clarification
The issue of a nationwide approach to the alcoholic, and to treatment, Mr. Leger said, expects to find some clarification in the Spring through the U.S. Supreme Court.

It is anticipated that in March the high court will hear an Austin, Tex. case of a man convicted in 1967 of intoxication. He was convicted of a misdemeanor, the Journal said, after a physician had testified that he was a chronic alcoholic.

The American Civil Liberties Union, the Methodist Board of Christian Social Concerns, and other organizations, the case was appealed to the Supreme Court.

Mr. Leger indicated that a spokesman for the American Psychiatric Association stated that his organization feels the Court will rule that alcoholism is an illness "for which a person can't be imprisoned."

Surveying current alcoholism treatment services, the federally financed Cooperative Commission on the Study of Alcoholism reported last fall: "The gap will require a substantial for the problem drinker and the need for such services is great. To overcome this gap will require a substantial investment of personnel and money."

Even in the states affected by the Richmond appellate court ruling, Mr. Leger said, "most chronic alcoholics still go to jail because they cannot afford to hire physicians and lawyers." Attorney Peter B. Hutt, one of those involved in the Texas appeal to the Supreme Court, says: "But once the Supreme Court rules, it will be entirely different. A lot of public defenders around the country will take up the issue."

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From Negro Priests

Blunt Advice on Race
Chicago—(NC)—The seven Negro priests working full time in parishes of the Chicago archdiocese have condemned the Church's "enlightened paternalism" toward black people, and proposed a 10-point plan to give the Church a new role in the Negro community.

Their proposals, they quickly added, "may be too little and too late," and are "only minimal steps toward erasing the present image of the Catholic Church in the black community, the image of a white Church unrelated to the needs of the black community for identity and power."

Signers of the statement were four diocesan priests: Fathers Kenneth Brigham, George Clements, Rollins Lambert and Richard Wheatley, and three Divine Word Missionaries: Father Louis Burrell, S.V.D., Victor Butler, S.V.D. and Lawrence Thornton, S.V.D.

They said the Church's attitude toward black people (they use the word "Negro" only once in 2½ pages) has been until recently one of enlightened paternalism: enlightened "because the Church's work among them was genuinely aimed at the betterment of the condition, spiritual and sometimes temporal, of the people," paternalism that black people had no genuine contribution to make to the life of the Church in Chicago, that they were beneficiaries and that they would remain so indefinitely.

They called it a "great mistake" for the Church to hesitate in supporting militant black leaders who are "whether we like it or not de facto in touch with the grass roots of the black community."

They charged that "the white power structure, which exists in the Church as well as in secular society, has found it easier to deal only with docile, agreeable, middle-aged black leaders."

"It has failed to realize that the power center has moved away from these men, and that the development of black Americans will be along lines far more unsettling to white people and to traditional religious structures."

They also criticized the Chicago archdiocese for largely ignoring the advice of Negro priests in forming policy affecting the black community.

"Many black people are disillusioned about the lack of leadership from the Catholic Church, since it claims to be the one, true, universal, divine Church."

Baptist Chaplains Enter Industry

Little Rock, Ark.—(RNS)—The Arkansas Baptist Convention launched a program of industrial chaplaincy in Arkansas at a series of regional conferences which brought together 94 Arkansas industrial and business leaders and 106 clergymen.

Within a short time Arkansas will become the first state in the Southern Baptist Convention to maintain a full-time chaplains' director. The Home Mission Board will provide half of the funds to finance the program in its initial stages. A major responsibility of this associate in the Missions Department will be to assist in setting up industrial chaplaincies.

The Rev. Lowell Sodeman, director of industrial chaplaincy for the Home Mission Board, explained to businessmen and clergy that numerous industries have chaplains in recognition of the fact that an employee's spiritual and emotional needs have a bearing on all that he does.

Salem, N.C., explained his work as being that of a minister to the "church at work," supplementing the regular ministry of the church at worship.

"Often the frustrated employee, no good to himself or the company, needs someone to listen to his problem. Often his problems are more deeply imbedded. Always there is the need for spiritual help. Too often, however, the employee does not have a church nor a minister to whom he can go."

Chaplain Homer Good of Hensley Freight Lines in Winston-Salem, N.C., explained his work as being that of a minister to the "church at work," supplementing the regular ministry of the church at worship.

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