

HEROIN:



Photo by G. F. Johnson

The Profitable Plague

By Bill King

Heroin addiction afflicts, by conservative estimates, 600,000 nationally; at least 20 per cent of those addicted are teenagers. It is the primary cause of death for people between the ages of 18 and 35, surpassing deaths caused by cancer, suicide and accidents.

Heroin is a major cause of crime. In Detroit alone \$1 million a day is stolen to support heroin habits. Nationally, that figure surpasses \$3 billion a year.

Over 20 per cent of the Recorder's Court docket consists of possession of narcotics, primarily heroin, and between 68 and 80 per cent of that docket consists of heroin related crimes.

For those of us who are daily affected by it and who pay dearly for it, heroin is an epidemic, but unlike cholera, yellow fever or diphtheria, it is one of the most successful and most profitable businesses in the American economy.

What is a plague for the majority of us is pure profit for a select few. For example, ten kilos (22 pounds) of opium purchased from the hill tribesmen in Laos costs about \$300. Once it is processed into heroin, imported and diluted, it will be sold in our community for about \$300,000.

In 1971, about \$5.5 billion of heroin was brought into the United States, making heroin one of the largest consumer imports in our economy. It is paid for almost entirely out of the pockets of people who have never, and probably will never, snort it, shoot it up or come into contact with it in any way. We pay the dealers and their backers with money, tv sets, stereos and clothes stolen from us, (and with higher prices and insurance rates — Joe Hudson doesn't pay for stolen merchandise out of his pocket). In addition, we pay the fences who convert our stolen goods into cash at 25 to 50 cents on the dollar.

Taxpayers Pay Costs

On top of the direct costs of heroin industry, we bear other, astronomical, indirect costs — both economical and social. We, the taxpayers, pay for the increased costs of the criminal judicial system that are a result of the increase in crime caused by the presence of heroin in our community. In a July, 1972 study of victimless crime, done for Governor Miliken, the Advisory Committee of the Office of Drug Abuse and Alcoholism reported that in 1971 in the City of Detroit, it cost \$759 for the arrest of each person charged with possession of narcotics. It was estimated that each arrest requires the expenditure of 81 police hours.

The study did not include the costs of pre-trial

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detention, prosecution and post-conviction disposition (incarceration, parole, or probation) for Detroit, but did estimate that in 1971 \$9,390,300 was expended in Wayne County and \$18,221,311 statewide for the total process of dealing with crimes of possession of narcotics.

Nationally, we taxpayers financially support huge expenditures for federal agencies, programs and studies that allegedly have acted against the heroin epidemic and the heroin industry. The FBI and the Treasury Department have traditionally dealt with various aspects of the heroin problem. We now have the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD). Another fairly recent addition to the federal bureaucracy, the Law Enforcement Assistance Agency (LEAA), spends millions annually on the "drug problem." For example, the study explained earlier was funded by LEAA; also, from 1972 to April, 1973, the city of Detroit received \$271,663 for drug addiction rehabilitation and \$99,732 for a program in the "Detroit Jail," known to Detroiters as the Wayne County Jail.

The federal spending doesn't stop there. On March 22, 1972, Congress made a single appropriation of \$1.7 billion to Nixon's Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention, (emphasis added), to administer government controlled methadone maintenance centers. Other millions have been spent by the federal government on various studies and committees.

The total amount that we have to pay every year as a result of the presence of the heroin epidemic and industry in our communities far exceeds the street value of that heroin. What do we get in return for our money which others spend on heroin? It's clear that our involuntary investments in the heroin industry will not be used to curtail the epidemic, to make our homes, streets and schools safer. On the contrary, our money is being reinvested in the industry in the form of payoffs, bribes and kickbacks to corrupt politicians and police which allows it to operate and expand with greater immunity.

How has the heroin epidemic grown to such huge proportions? Just before the turn of the century, in

1898, heroin was introduced into this country as a legal commodity designed to replace usage of morphine. By 1910 it was becoming apparent that heroin was seven times more addictive than morphine. In 1914, in response to growing heroin addiction, Congress passed the Harrison Narcotics Act which made the sale and use of opiates illegal, but which made absolutely no provisions for the cure and treatment of those already addicted.

Addicts were forced to turn to illegal suppliers of heroin to satisfy their cravings. Many doctors and local governments, understanding the crisis created by the Harrison Act, set up clinics which either maintained addicts or helped them to withdraw gradually. The response of the federal government was a major crack-down on this rational and humane approach to the problem. Thirty thousand doctors were arrested and prosecuted and 3,300 were imprisoned!

Since 1914 (when the federal government created the conditions in which the heroin epidemic and industry could grow and flourish) until just a few years ago, the government's attitude towards heroin was one of neglect. It was felt that heroin was only a problem in the black community and since the black community was fairly isolated from the white community, it wasn't really "our" problem. In addition, there was enough profit in heroin to be spread around to federal, state and local law enforcement personnel, to customs agents and to the transportation industries.

Now it is clear that the epidemic has no racial boundaries and that the industry happily collects contributions from all neighborhoods — both city and suburban — and because heroin affects and enrages a majority of the population, the government gives the appearance of acting on the problem. And "acting" is the appropriate description of the government's response.

U. S. Aids Heroin Growers

While the President and other federal officials are running a hard line on heroin, millions of dollars in foreign aid are being poured into nations which grow opium and process it into heroin. In fact, every country which is involved in the heroin industry is the recipient of large amounts of economic and/or military aid from the United States. The most blatant example of this is the U. S. involvement in Southeast Asia (See: "The New Opium War," Ramparts, May, 1971).

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Pusher!



This photo of Richard Herrold, Detroit Police Officer was taken at the Focus Hope Carnival in 1971. At the time he was functioning as an undercover agent. Early this year, he was suspended from the DPD for his involvement in narcotics trafficking after his business as a heroin dealer became known. He has been responsible for sabotaging police investigations into heroin traffic in the 10th Precinct.

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The vast majority of the opium is grown by the Meo tribe in the Fertile Triangle of northwestern Burma, northern Thailand, and Laos. The United States has successfully enlisted the services of the Meo tribe as mercenaries against the peoples' struggles in Cambodia and Laos. Thus the Meo growers retain control over their only crop—opium—with American arms and CIA training. In return for their services as mercenaries, the United States provides transportation for the opium in planes and helicopters from the military base at Long Cheng in Laos. Long Cheng, built by the CIA in 1962 during the Geneva Accords, is a secret base 80 miles northeast of Vientiane. American journalists have reported seeing raw opium for sale there as well as it being used as a pick up point on the way to being processed. The CIA-owned Xieng Khouang Airlines is actively involved in transportation of opium.

Tax Dollars Wasted

While Nixon and other government officials are promising programs to end the heroin epidemic and industry, our tax dollars are being poured into projects which have modernized transportation techniques used in exporting opium and have made it much more efficient and productive. The money spent improving the heroin industry is spent efficiently and productively; the money spent to "solve" the problem here at home is squandered on studies or bureaucratic programs that absorb more money in their administration than they spend on the problem itself.

Here in Detroit, home of about 5 per cent of the nation's addicts, we spend millions of dollars in local, county, state and federal funds, enforcing laws against heroin. Those millions are spent in the arrest, prosecution and punishment of addicts. The end result is that we take a small portion of the addict population out of circulation for short periods of

time and then return them to the streets where they continue to exist as addicts. Meanwhile pushers and their financiers live and operate in our community with impunity and immunity, spreading their plague and reaping their profits.

While Police Commissioner John Nichols proclaims the purity of his department and praises the work of STRESS, we find that the longtime kingpin of the West side heroin trade, Henry Marzette, gained his apprenticeship in the Detroit Police Department. We find also that this apprenticeship program is quite productive. Twenty-two officers from the Tenth Precinct have been indicted for their participation in the heroin traffic; and we are told (as if we had to be) that this is only the tip of the iceberg. We learn that our police force, our "protectors of liberty," have used the fight against heroin as an excuse to murder, maim and illegally harass innocent citizens. What has become almost a daily occurrence in Detroit recently made the national news when two Illinois families were mistakenly raided and physically abused by federal narcotics agents.

In addition to our forced contributions to the heroin industry, our political "representatives" waste more of our money. Money that is spent to fight the problem is paid to those who are a part of the industry. (What ever happened to the \$99,723 LEAA grant for a jail drug program in the Wayne County Jail?)

Corrupt Politicians

The lessons of Watergate cannot be isolated at the local level corruption is more pervasive. The bankruptcy of our elected and appointed officials, their self-serving actions and policies very clearly contribute to the heroin problem.

We must understand that programs designed to "fight" heroin are usually frauds, for example, what do methadone maintenance programs have to do with drug prevention. We must understand that the ultimate solution of the problem must come from us. Heroin addiction is only serving to pacify the population. We must face the problem, face its real causes and be willing to organize ourselves for action and for power if we want to cure the epidemic and destroy the industry.

Currently underway is a petition drive to continue the Citizen's Grand Jury investigations and indictments into heroin trafficking as well as collusion with officials in government. For additional information, contact:

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