

ALCOHOLISM, A Real Problem

A drunk talking to an alcoholic one day said, "I believe I'll go down to Hollywood to nite, get tanked up, and really enjoy myself." The alcoholic replied, "I'm going down to Hollywood to get loaded, but I dread it." With this distinction in mind, we will proceed to discuss various aspects of alcoholism, alcoholics, and alcohol.

Why does one become an alcoholic? People who have studied alcoholism, have been alcoholics and who work with alcoholics, say that those who end up being alcoholics, suffer from a very early age, an acute sense of insecurity. This insecurity may take forms of being insecure with one's capacity to compete with others, academically, socially, and otherwise it is a basic unacceptance of self, a personality disorder which leaves the person in a state of constant fear of not being able to cope with the many tasks of life. A person of this type begins gradually to use alcohol as a sort of prop to make him the man he really wants to be. Once he begins drinking, given that his insecurity remains acute, he gradually drifts unknowingly into the condition of being an alcoholic. The person starts out using liquor to make himself somebody else because he doesn't like his real self. As he comes to rely on alcohol more and more he also begins to hate the image of that somebody he is when intoxicated. Now he does not like himself drunk or sober so he drinks like an alcoholic going down to Hollywood with dread.

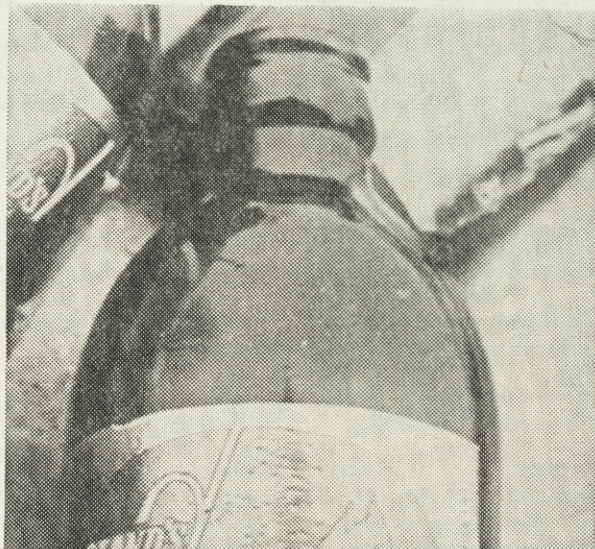
It is fortunate that in this day we are beginning to regard alcoholism as a form of physical, mental, and spiritual illness. This change in attitude had made it possible that institutions set up to help the alcoholic solve his or her problems. In no way is the recognition of alcoholism as a form of mental illness treated by these institutions as an excuse for relieving the alcoholic of the responsibility for his present condition. It merely makes possible a more mature, charitable and adequate treatment of the alcoholic's problem.

The treatment of alcoholics, on P.E.I. at least, takes on a two-fold procedure. In cases where alcoholics are first taken to Riverside Hospital, they are put on sedatives and given the necessary medical attention if required. When the person is in the condition such that he can eat and rest comfortably, he may go out to the Halfway House, should he so desire.

Treatment at the Halfway House primarily takes the form of counselling by men skilled in that capacity, and by a form of group therapy. It must be noted here that group therapy has probably the most significant role to play in helping the alcoholic solve his problems. When these people discuss informally and openly their problems and failures they come to realize that they are not alone with their problems. In this setting they experience an atmosphere of acceptance, kindness, and stability --- probably an atmosphere they have never felt for years. This sort of setting does much to improve and elevate the spirits of men who have felt nothing but despair, discouragement, and self-hatred for too many years. In fact, the Manager of the Halfway House says that they are achieving a 50% success

with the people they are trying to help. Even the ones who fail after they leave the institution come back knowing that they will be accepted again and will receive more help.

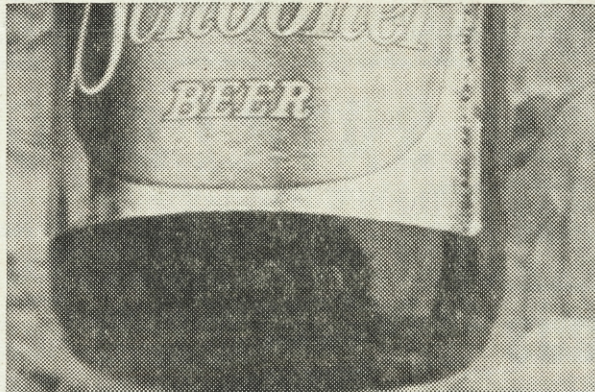
To bring the situation down to a more concrete level, we may ask ourselves why so many students on this campus, and others as well, resort to an excessive use of alcohol. One answer,



quite in line with the type of severely insecure person who might become an alcoholic, would be the basic state of insecurity which naturally attends adolescence. At this stage in life one is neither a child nor an adult, though he has the



desire to attain the goals and ends proper to adults. Given that this is a period of rebellion, a period when we want to get things without delay, which is perfectly natural to youth, we



sometimes tend to choose the wrong means to that end. One such means used widely around here is alcohol, other places it is LSD, pot and what-have-you.

Another cause for resorting to alcohol particularly on campus, and elsewhere, would be a lack of healthy personality development. We all grew up, and I'm not just speaking of P.E.I.,

when sex was a dirty word and the threat of Hell hung low over the heads of those who dared think or mention it. We also grew up in the days when you were constantly called stupid if you could not learn arithmetic or spellings from the ear-pulling, hand-strapping, sadists we sometimes had as teachers. We were also called the stupid ones if we could not hitch a horse, make a bed, run an errand, etc. Given nothing in the way of healthy sex education and being constantly compared to a smarter brother or sister, how could one possibly reach adolescence without serious feelings of inadequacy. Living in such a situation it is easy to find alcohol a useful prop for making life bearable.

To throw more fat on the fire, we are now living in an age when due to a constant state of war and threat of annihilation, and lack of a healthy philosophy of life, life has become meaningless and empty. Man basically seeks happiness. When the state of the world seems to be denying the possibility of man ever achieving this happiness, both society and the individual break down. On the level of the individual, he tends to see himself as worthy of carnal license which guarantees him the right to pursue pleasure at any cost. With this situation, and it has happened before, several times in history, the use of alcohol can become a prop for enabling us to face a life which seems apparently meaningless.

How is alcohol accepted in other countries? The French, Italians, and Jews, at least, seem to have a basic respect for alcohol. This is probably due to a lack of fresh water supplies in those countries. You either had to live with it or be killed by it. It's also possible that, because Europeans are more interested in quality rather than quantity, than a good taste for liquor becomes a refinement rather than a vice. It's often been said that Americans visiting Europe are surprised to find so few drunken men as compared to home. This is not to say Europe never produced a drunk, but there is one point of interest in this regard. Alcoholism in parts of Europe is a terrific scandal whereas in America it is more of a natural and accepted thing.

In America because of the puritan background, lack of refinement, emphasis on quantity rather than quality, we have reduced the fine art of drinking to a means whereby the government waters down our liquor to a form of slop, which they in turn tax heavily because it is what they call a luxury item. Anyone who has ever drunk any of our beer or rum would never call it a luxury item.

Will alcoholism ever be solved? With the work of Allied Youth Clubs, Alcoholics Anonymous, institutions like the Halfway House, and the general education of the ordinary citizen, it is believed that alcoholism will be brought under control. There will probably always be some alcoholics with us but we must learn to condemn the sin and not so much the sinner. We might learn something from Christ here when he said, "Judge not, lest ye be judged."

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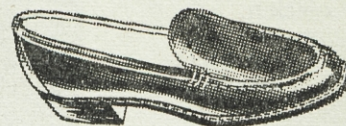
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