

PUBLIC HEALTH

Wants Law on Pep Pills

► **ILLEGAL SALES** of amphetamine drugs, pep pills, to truck drivers and motorists are adding to the dangers of highway travel.

Reporting on efforts of the Food and Drug Administration to stop nonprescription sales since its crackdown last fall, Commissioner George P. Larrick said bootlegging stimulant pills had become a highly profitable racket. The Commissioner said:

"When we consider that the annual production of amphetamines is on the order of 63,000 pounds—enough to make approximately 5.6 billion 5-milligram tablets, or about 35 tablets for every man, woman and child in the country—it seems likely that a large part of the market for these drugs is through illicit channels."

Emphasizing that the FDA crackdown was not intended to interfere with the proper use of these drugs under medical supervision, Commissioner Larrick warned that unsupervised use "can result in excessive nervous stimulation, loss of desire for sleep, gastrointestinal disturbances, impairment of judgment, hallucinations and mental derangement. And the drugs may have adverse reactions in certain conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes."

PUBLIC HEALTH

Malaria Still a Problem

► **MALARIA** still exists in about 30% of the Americas, the Pan American Health Organization-World Health Organization has reported in Havana at the 12th annual meeting of the directing council of PAHO.

To date, WHO's efforts to blot out malaria in every corner of the world have freed nearly 53,000,000 persons from the threat of the disease in the Americas alone. Another 9,000,000 are in areas under surveillance to see if eradication methods have stamped out the disease.

Malaria is completely eradicated in Chile, the United States, Barbados, Martinique and Puerto Rico. Other countries have stopped the disease in isolated areas or large sections.

In Canada, Uruguay, the Bahamas, the Virgin Islands and several other islands, the disease never existed or has disappeared without eradication measures.

In more than 22% of the Americas area, eradication measures are in full swing. Houses are being sprayed with dieldrin and DDT to kill the 20 species of anopheles mosquitoes that carry malaria. In areas such as the Amazon Basin where houses have no walls, the natives are using salt with an antimalarial drug added.

National budget appropriations in 1960 for eradication programs have almost doubled in Colombia and Jamaica since 1958. Mexico, which is still spraying houses periodically, has the largest single anti-malaria budget for 1960—\$6,720,000.

The 8.6% of the Americas area not pres-

Since last fall when the FDA had more than 200 cases of illegal sales under investigation, 85 criminal prosecutions have been completed and 31 additional criminal prosecutions have been instituted. In eight separate actions, 1,837,000 tablets and capsules of amphetamine drugs were seized.

Commissioner Larrick said that 46 of the terminated cases and 12 of those still pending were brought against individuals and establishments not authorized to dispense dangerous drugs, but catering especially to truck drivers. These include truck stops and their operators, grocery stores and other peddlers.

The Commissioner said that circumstantial evidence linking the use of so-called "bennies," "pep pills," or "copilots" with fatal highway accidents has been provided by bottles found on drivers or hidden around the vehicle.

"Amphetamines can be bought wholesale for as little as \$2.00 per thousand tablets," he said. "They often sell for \$1.00 per dozen."

The need for legislation to strengthen the present Federal law is pointed up in the FDA report.

• Science News Letter, 78:148 September 3, 1960

ently engaged in eradication programs lies largely in Brazil, a vast country with more than its share of malaria problems because of the remote Amazon Basin and the country's size. Cuba has not started active spraying, but is making a preliminary survey, and Haiti's campaign was temporarily interrupted by economic difficulties.

• Science News Letter, 78:148 September 3, 1960

PUBLIC HEALTH

U. S. Not Among Nations Giving Medical Care

► **WITH** 127,000,000 Americans covered by some form of voluntary health insurance, the United States is notably absent from the list of 59 nations providing medical care under a more or less compulsory social insurance system.

Joseph F. Follman Jr., representing the Health Insurance Association of America, told the American Pharmaceutical Association in Washington, D. C., that the subject of Government medical care has been under consideration intermittently since 1927 when President Hoover appointed a committee on the costs of medical care.

Mr. Follman said the reason the U. S. has not enacted a medical care program is partly due to the high standards of medical care already given. Some of it is given by state and local communities, particularly to the needy.

More important perhaps is the existence of voluntary agencies and voluntary health insurance, he said.

But oddly enough, after 12 years of the National Health Service in Great Britain, voluntary health insurance has grown to the point where it covers some 25% of the population, Mr. Follman said.

"Membership in the British United Provident Association alone has increased over ten-fold since 1949."

The first known government insurance scheme became effective in Germany in 1883, Mr. Follman said.

All nations in Europe except Finland have some type of government health and maternity program.

• Science News Letter, 78:148 September 3, 1960

SCIENCE NEWS LETTER

VOL. 78 SEPTEMBER 3, 1960 NO. 10

Edited by WATSON DAVIS

The Weekly Summary of Current Science, published every Saturday by SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc., 1719 N St., N.W., Washington 6, D. C., NORTH 7-2255. Cable Address: SCIENSERV.

Subscription rates: 1 yr., \$5.50; 2 yrs., \$10.00; 3 yrs., \$14.50; ten or more copies in one package to one address, 7½ cents per copy per week; single copy, 15 cents, more than six months old, 25 cents. No charge for foreign postage.

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Printed in U.S.A. Second class postage paid at Washington, D. C. Established in mimeograph form March 13, 1922. Title registered as trademark, U. S. and Canadian Patent Offices. Indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Abridged Guide, and the Engineering Index. Member Audit Bureau of Circulation.

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