

National Institute of Mental Health. During World War II, as secretary of the Committee on Food Habits of the National Research Council, I developed the relationship between the human sciences and the field of nutrition. I have also had some experience with the field of the specific training given to detail men, by pharmaceutical companies, and with the relationship between Government and industrial practice as chairman, 1967-69, of the Committee on Science in the Promotion of Human Welfare of the American Association for the Advance of Science, and as a member of the board of directors of the Scientists' Institute for Public Information.

Specifically, I have combined intensive anthropological research in eight different primitive cultures, with the study of our own culture, and I am assuming you have asked me here not to give detailed opinions about particular drugs, for instance, but to try to place the use of psychotropic drugs within the wider context of our society.

Senator NELSON. Yes.

Dr. MEAD. I think that our concern about psychotropic drugs, although it is part of our concern about any overuse—whether it is overuse that affects health or overuse that affects the budget of the consumer who has a limited amount of money to spend—crosses a great many other elements in our culture.

You will notice that in those excerpts that you read from previous testimony, what people were talking about were primarily moral problems, and moral problems related to health rather than specific side effects that affected, say, some organ of the body in a disadvantageous way. The overuse in addition to all the points that you have stressed here, disproportionate use of particular prescription drugs, is being questioned in terms of our moral and religious tradition and it has to be understood within this context.

If we look at the Christian tradition from which this country originally arose, we have two lines. We have the Roman Catholic tradition, and also Middle Eastern religions, this was a tradition of monasticism in which a few people did the abstaining for the entire community. There were hermits and anchorites, monks and nuns. They disciplined the flesh, they abstained from all indulgences, and their rigorous religious observances were believed to help the rest of the community who were allowed to have a good many festivals and live a rather different type of life, and the rest of the communities subsidized them. This was particularly characteristic of many countries that have remained relatively poor.

We also have, as part of our tradition, what is called the Puritan ethic, in which we democratically attempted to spread the practices of abstinence, sobriety and the postponement of all gratifications, hopefully to heaven or at least until a man got rich, throughout the entire population. The Puritan tradition, which has been a very important one in our country, was remarkably successful in promoting economic development and the Industrial Revolution, also includes a very strong bias against any chemical of any sort which alters mood, makes life seem less difficult than it is, puts one to sleep when one is kept awake by worries, relaxes one when one should stay tense, and so forth.