

Anti-Alcoholism Drive Turns To Educating Young

By ALINE MOSBY
United Press International
Paris — On the third floor of a faded examination on the left bank of the River Seine, a group of dedicated men and women have plotted a tactical shift in their "war." No more subway signs pleading with Frenchmen to stay sober. The new offensive.

The French government's eight-year-old anti-alcoholism campaign will be aimed at children and highway travelers.

The "High Committee for Study and Information on Alcoholism" has been fighting since its creation Nov. 15, 1954, for French people to drink less. The average person in France consumes 30.5 liters a liter is nearly a quart) of pure alcohol a year, compared to 14.2 in Italy, 9.3 in Great Britain and 9.4 in the United States.

The committee never has practiced prohibition in a country of great foods and wine. This would be impossible and a blow to mankind, members feel.

Instead their pitch is for moderation. "One liter of wine a day for heavy workers; 1/2 for sedentary workers; 1/3 for women, none for children until they are 14."

Has the committee's campaign been successful? "It's difficult to say," admitted a spokesman in an interview at committee headquarters. "We can't check exactly. It's a year in year out evolution. Our campaign may not show results for years."

But we must keep repeating it. It would be all lost in two or three years if we stopped, that is sure.

The committee can report some, but not necessarily conclusive, results from its campaign that began when former Premier Pierre Mendes France lifted a glass of milk to his lips.

Government statistics say consumption of wine and beer has dropped 10 per cent in recent years. Soft drink sales have zoomed 140 per cent. You can buy powdered milk now in cartons with spouts just like in the United States. And the new supermarkets even carry pasteurized, homogenized milk in cartons — an absolutely revolutionary sight to older Parisians.

Death Number Drops
The number of deaths from cirrhosis of the liver and alcoholism dropped from its peak of 20,279 in 1957-58 to 17,870 in 1960. However, deaths from alcoholism alone increased from 1,091 in 1960 to 1,186 in 1961.

The committee also feels that "by now people know about our campaign." In 1958, 89 per cent of a group polled said they were well aware of the modern, tasteful society signs that blanket France.

"People are used to the subway signs and don't notice them any more," the committee spokesman explained. "We have erected 300 signs on highways and changed our slogans."

The committee has succeeded in having legislation passed forbidding bars and wine shops in stadiums. A 1958 law provides one year in jail and a fine for drunk drivers. Bars around hospitals are headed for extinction," the committee says. Another law provides for free milk distribution in some schools.

But it's uphill all the way. The spokesman said, "The wine growers are furious with us." Some communities have been "reticent" about passing out milk.

One 1960 poll in Marseille showed what the committee is up against. Of 100 boys and girls, aged 14 and 15, 64 said they drank water with meals, 25 wine mixed with water, nine pure wine, 12 beer, 21 soft drinks. Two drank milk.

The committee's program includes a shower of pamphlets that say, for example, "Alcoholism kills more Frenchmen each year than tuberculosis and highway accidents put together." Children receive blotters and brochures telling how French inventors and scientists were sober men.

"Our aim is to educate French people to drink little and well," said the spokesman. "We hope wine growers will stop producing an enormous quantity and grow wines of quality and higher prices. And we hope people will learn that if they don't drink too much, and drink good wine, they won't be ill."

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Family Council

Editor's note: The Family Council consists of a judge, a psychiatrist, three clergymen, three editors and a women's editor. Each article is a summary of a family disagreement presented to the Council. The Council deals with problems, past and present, and social workers. Edited by Mrs. Anna Dwyer. (Copyright by General Features Corp.)

Carmela F. — Their old neighborhood is until for human habitation.
Lillian D. — To them it's Park Avenue and Paradise rolled into one.

Carmela F. — My parents have lived in the same apartment for 35 years. It's an old section of the Bronx, from which most of their neighbors had the good sense to move long ago. It used to be a comfortable residential neighborhood. It was a nice place for me and my sister to grow up in. But now it's become almost one hundred per cent commercial and industrial. Factories, lofts and warehouses have sprung up where apartment houses, two-family homes and private dwellings used to stand.
I want my folks to move. It's torture to visit them, amid the rubbish and smells. My children refuse to accompany me there. But my sister encourages our parents to stay put.

Lillian D. — Why disturb old people from their familiar surroundings? They don't see the block with the same eyes as we do. To them it's the garden-spot of the world and it spells Home Sweet Home. There's where they've planted their roots. Their few remaining neighbors are closer to them than blood relations. It would kill them to be cut off from such ancient friendships. One takes care of the other around there, better than is done in a family.
My parents don't want to move. And the only reason my sister keeps nagging about it is that she and her children find the trip to the old house distasteful. But about them? My parents may be living in what looks like a slum to Carmela and others, but it's heaven to them.

The Council: Transplantation is always traumatic to some degree — whether it's a rose bush, a skin graft or an urban renewal project. Basically one deals with an uprooting, a removal from the familiar milieu to a strange one which may be antagonistic and repelling. And, in the case of the aged parents of these women, the roots of a reburied so deep and the surroundings are so nutritive that relocation — especially since it isn't compulsory — would probably be permanently injurious.

If Carmela's folks had no choice, that is if a government bulldozer were roaring at the door asking them to make way for a new highway, then her arguments would help them make the best of a bad deal. They could be promised new friends, new furniture, more "company" coming to call. It would still be a sad move for them, but they'd accept it as inevitable and concentrate on whatever silver lined their cloud.

But as long as there's no outside reason for pulling up stakes, as long as the building is intact and permits a desirable standard of living for its inhabitants, we'd advise Carmela to come around to Lillian's way of thinking. Let these aged folk, really part of the halls and walls they occupy, live out the rest of their days in their familiar nooks. This is their haven, their Heaven on earth, even though it appears unappealing to Carmela and other reluctant visitors.

A report on relocation of elderly people was offered recently by the University of Chicago Medical School. It cited a sharp rise in the death rate over normal expectancy. Worse, it found an alarming increase in mortality among those aged who were merely anticipating a move—whether to a home for the aged, a hospital or another form of radical displacement. Dr. C. Knight Aldrich drew this conclusion from the study: "Don't relocate elderly people unless necessary." He adds that when it is necessary to dislodge them, psychological help to prepare them for the change can be lifesaving.

No, these aged parents get more than shelter from their old setting. They get prestige, continuity and a daily sense of "belonging."

CAT SHOTS MISTRESS
Averell Park, N.Y. — Mrs. Evelyn Zipkin, 46, was wounded in the knee Thursday night when her cat leaped over a loaded shotgun, sending a spray of pellets into the woman's leg. She was treated at a hospital and released. The cat last was seen heading for the woods.