

Businessman Writes About Alcoholism

905 O'Connor Rd.
Fairbanks, Alaska
Feb. 16, 1966

Dear Sir,

Several statements were made in the News-Miner which I would like to quote, and ask some questions concerning. On Jan. 12, 1966 the following statement under an article entitled "Recommendations Made in Hearing" "2. Authorization for a statewide survey and study of alcoholism as a serious mental health problem in Alaska."

"Although the Mental Health Act of Alaska specifically excludes alcoholism from the responsibility of the Division of Mental Health, a large percentage of cases treated by social workers in our state result in some manner from alcoholism," a memorandum presented to the legislators says."

3. "That action be taken on all of the findings and recommendations . . ."

On Feb. 12, 1966 a statement was made as follows: "The minister pointed out that the Governor's Committee on Mental Health Planning found that alcoholism is the major MENTAL health problem in Alaska."

I am deeply concerned that a move to place alcoholism under the Alaska Mental Health Act is now in progress and could do great harm to a complex disease involving many factors, and it is well known that the cures from psychiatric treatment are almost nil. However this is not my real concern. The real concern is that if alcoholism is ever placed under the Mental Health Act then dire consequences could result. Alcoholics could be sent to the Alaska Psychiatric Institute on the recommendation of certain authorities. When this becomes a reality then alcoholics who had different political views could also be sent to the Institute by the same authorities. The stigma attached to the alcoholic in all cases is bad enough to offset any so-called cure. The alcoholic would be branded not only an alcoholic but also a mental case.

So therefore, I object to this phrase "mental" when applied to alcoholics.

Sincerely,

Clifton H. Cundy

A Fairbanks Businessman