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TIME

Friday, Jul. 20, 1962

Crime: The Untouchables

Compared with most federal outfits, the Bureau of Narcotics is a midget. It operates with only about 300 agents, spends a piddling \$4,400,000 a year. Yet it has a punch that far belies its size—and that punch has made it one of the most controversial organizations in Government. The controversy is over the bureau's insistence, in its relentless and efficient pursuit of narcotics pushers and lawbreaking addicts, that narcotics is chiefly a law-enforcement problem—a view often criticized by doctors and others who believe that addicts ought to be treated as patients instead of criminals.

Most of the recent controversy has swirled around Federal Narcotics Commissioner Harry J. Anslinger, 70, who retired fortnight ago after serving as the bureau's head since it was established in 1930. Anslinger was widely criticized for his inflexible enforcement policies, was dubbed "The Untouchable" by his critics. But his departure from the scene ends neither the controversy nor his policies. Last week Anslinger's duties were taken over by his deputy, Henry L. Giordano, 48, a tough enforcement officer since 1941 and an Anslinger protege who agrees with most of his old boss's views. Says Giordano: "We're in favor of increased rehabilitation, and always have been. But that doesn't mean we have to be any easier on the pushers."

Under the Baby. To the bureau, enforcement is the key to solving the narcotics problem. Some 46,000 known addicts illegally buy heroin in the U.S., many of them from pushers. The Chinese Communists wax rich by exporting large amounts of heroin to the free world, much of which ends up in the U.S. To combat the traffic in narcotics, the bureau's agents work under cover, infiltrate gangs, even act as couriers between criminals. Often they have to shoot it out with narcotics racketeers. They have to watch for dope in some of the most unlikely places—hidden in compartments of imported cars, in ice bags, cans of bean sprouts, jewelry cases, the brassieres of airline hostesses. Only last week, narcotics cops in Manhattan arrested a woman pusher who was sitting on a park bench, rocking her baby in a carriage. Under the baby's mattress was a supply of heroin that the pusher was selling to customers who paused to chuck the baby under the chin.

Because of its vigilance, the bureau has considerably arrested addiction and narcotics racketeering over the years. In 1930, when Anslinger was named head of the newly formed bureau, one out of every 1,070 Americans was an addict; today, the proportion is one in 4,000. Thanks also to Anslinger's strict enforcement philosophy, addiction in youngsters—once a terrifying trend—has been severely curtailed. By cracking down unmercifully on pushers who found ready markets among young people (and by pressing through Congress in 1956 an optional death penalty for pushers who sell narcotics to minors), the bureau

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has helped to drop the number of addicts under 21 from 131 out of 1,000 in 1954 to 38 in 1,000 today. U.S. parents, who helplessly feared only a few years ago that many of their children were destined to become addicts through exposure to illegal narcotics, no longer have to consider narcotics a major worry.

Hardened Criminals. Despite occasional newspaper accounts of the ill-starred pusher who was forced into his illegal activity by helpless addiction, many pushers are hardened criminal types who make a big profit for themselves while spreading addiction. The bureau's critics hold no brief for the big-shot racketeers or their small-time henchmen who do the actual pushing, but they insist that some sort of post-hospital psychiatric care—and small doses of drugs when necessary—would not only cure many addicts permanently but put an end to the profitable smuggling trade. As things stand now, efforts to rehabilitate addicts have not been very successful: as many as 90% of those treated in two federal hospitals fall back again on dope. Everyone agrees that more hospitals and more psychiatrists would help, but until they come, the Narcotics Bureau feels that its main contribution is to make narcotics as hard as possible to obtain.

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