

Book Reviews

is little record of this in the few footnotes provided. None of the secondary medical literature, much of it historical, is referred to, except the recent book on Tibetan medicine by Rechung Rinpoche which completely overshadows and replaces this one.

RICHARD J. BONNIE and CHARLES H. WHITEBREAD II, *The marihuana conviction. A history of marihuana prohibition in the United States*, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1974, 8vo, pp. xiv, 368, illus., \$12.50.

One of the outstanding problems of twentieth-century Western society has been, and still is, addiction to drugs of plant and chemical origin. This book deals with only one of them, and is apparently the first full-scale history of the use, abuse and prohibition of marihuana, also known as Indian hemp or *Cannabis sativa*, in the United States. It has a very long history and over the centuries has provided man with a tough fibre used to make rope, twine, and cloth, with an oil and bird-seed, and with a psychoactive agent used for medicinal, religious, and for intoxicant purposes. The modern problem relates to the last of these properties.

Marihuana was taken into the States early in the present century and since then a continual war has been waged against its addictive use. The extent of present-day involvement, a quarter-million persons arrested annually for marihuana violations and twenty-six millions having smoked it illegally, is a measure of the problem and the need for increasing vigilance. The authors trace this story in detail with careful documentation and judicious selecting from masses of material. Altogether it makes fascinating reading. But, more importantly, it presents the history of a social problem of outstanding significance. Although the actual drug may be less of a problem in this country, the underlying theme is the same as for other habit-forming agents. And also the historical approach, if carried out objectively as is the case with Professors Bonnie and Whitebread, is a most valuable one. As a contribution to the recent history of social medicine, welfare and legislation it deserves a wide audience.

GEOFFREY W. OXLEY, *Poor relief in England and Wales 1601–1834*, Newton Abbot, David & Charles, 1974, 8vo, pp. 159, £4.95.

The author's aim is to present an up-to-date survey of poor relief as it evolved from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, and he correctly argues that it can only be adequately comprehended when studied against the economic, social, political and other ingredients of its general background. This he carries out briefly and effectively with full documentation; the bibliography based on an extensive literature search is especially welcome and is the first of its kind. But, as Mr. Oxley points out, this study must be based on local records, so that more correctly the book is a survey of the history of poor relief in particular parishes. The fact that it operated locally means that the local factors determining its handling must be identified and investigated.

In addition, there is a section on methodology in poor relief research, a discussion of further work in this area and a description of the sources used in it. The book is, therefore, eminently suitable for those studying the social history of medicine, whether student or teacher. It provides an excellent introduction to an important topic and can be strongly recommended.