Narcotics Study In Schools Poses Legal Problem

By VINCENT THOMAS
Assemblyman, 68th District

A proposal for an educational program in the public schools on the dangers of narcotics made at a recent legislative hearing in Sacramento drew less than enthusiastic support from many expert witnesses. The joint meeting of the Senate interim committee on narcotics and the subcommittee on narcotics of the Assembly public health committee received testimony from psychiatrists, educators, police and correctional authorities.

Most witnesses agreed that adolescent narcotics addiction is a growing problem in California as well as the whole nation, and that its dangers are still greatly underemphasized. They were also in accord that addiction is a psychiatric and medical problem, and selling narcotics is still primarily a concern of law enforcement agencies.

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PSYCHIATRIC GROUPS who were represented at the two-day hearing united in supporting a suggestion for a 3 year pilot study of adolescent narcotics addiction, despite the many years of medical experience in coping with it. Present long range treatment programs are not very successful, they declared.

Few addicts are really cured of the habit, probably because few want to be. They hoped the pilot study might develop information concerning the basic reasons for acquiring the habit, and so help the discovery of effective treatment measures.

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THE LEGISLATIVE group was informed that 16 appears to be the most vulnerable age for experimentation which leads to addiction. Therefore, junior high school is the proper level at which to direct educational efforts. Because a sizeable proportion, possibly 20 per cent, of adolescents might have their curiosity aroused to the point of trying them if educational efforts on the dangers of narcotics are emphasized, it was strongly urged that such efforts be kept unemotional.

Actual facts should be stressed, it was recommended, but they should not be magnified or made frightening.

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WITNESSES ALSO reported that through the State education law now requires that instruction in the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and narcotics be given in all schools, it does not appear to be too effective. A total of only one and a half hours are devoted to the narcotics problem, the legislators were told. Several educators commented that before a program to educate students is begun, the teachers who will give the instruction need to be properly indoctrinated.

Still another recommendation was submitted at the hearing. The legislators were urged to propose the establishment of an independent study commission with adequate representation of all interested groups to develop and sponsor an educational program for adolescents on the dangers of narcotics. Such a formal body would be more effective than dependence upon voluntary cooperation between the various interests, it was declared.

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SPOKESMEN FOR one large fraternal organization reported that its members are circulating petitions all over California calling for the legislature to enact stiffer penalties on narcotic selling. Three-quarters of a million signatures have already been obtained, it was stated.

It was indicated that the Senate Assembly committees will continue to cooperate in their study of the narcotics evil.

New Regulations Limit Traffic on School Grounds

Policy adopted recently limits traffic on school property to vehicles owned by the school district, in special cases authorization will be made to other parties.

Among the special requirements are: observance of a five-mile per hour speed limit; the cessation of traffic during class breaks; the use of lanes specifically marked for vehicles.

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IN ADDITION, parked vehicles are required to be left with the brake set and gears left in the accepted "park" position.

No backing will be permitted without a person positioned to observe the back of the vehicle.

The regulations further require observance of all posted regulations as to speeds, stops, and directions and observance of indicated markings for parking.

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IN THE EVENT of danger to a vehicle or property of the District, the vehicle shall not be moved from the scene of such accident until a representative of the District has been contacted and proper reports made or information necessary for proper reporting has been obtained.

Owners of vehicles which, through commercial operations are authorized to be on school grounds at various times, shall submit evidence of adequate liability insurance coverage.

Those areas on school grounds which have been provided for the purpose of parking, either for the general public, the students, or school employees, are specifically excluded from these rules and regulations, and each such space shall be controlled by posted regulations applicable to each space.

BACKYARD BASKETBALL can be a source of healthful fun for the entire family, but they should be correctly placed for maximum enjoyment.

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