

7/23/80

DRUG ABUSE: THE NATIONAL CRISIS
article for The Michigan Chronicle
by
The Hon. Geo. W. Crockett, Jr.

Under the Reagan Administration, the major urban areas of our country have suffered a continuing withdrawal of Federal support for jobs, health care, housing and other vital needs. Detroit, with its heavy dependence on the auto industry, has been particularly hard hit, and many of the 200,000 autoworkers laid off in the 1970s are still out of a job. Our jobless rate among young people remains alarmingly high -- tragically high among non white youths.

The social consequences of a depressed and neglected urban population are widespread and devastating. Besides the rise in crime and violence, too many of our young people have grown up in an atmosphere of squalor and decay, with no jobs to look forward to, little motivation and the urge to seek an easy way out.

One consequence of this large scale social disorganization is the rapidly increasing importation, use and sale of drugs.

Detroit figures relating to heroin and cocaine usage are frightening. In 1985, there were 214 heroin-related deaths, well above the three-year average of 133. Cocaine arrests have increased by 26 percent since 1983, and admissions to drug treatment programs for coke users have increased from 187 in 1982-83 to 478 in 1984-85.

Back in 1974, as chief Judge of Detroit's Recorders Court, I urged my colleagues on that court to invoke Michigan's unique crime-fighting technique, reserved for unusual criminal situations, to empanel a one-man Grand Jury to ferret out and prosecute the ring-leaders of the growing drug traffic. The public response to this proposal was

hon. Geo. W. Crockett, Jr.

p. 2

overwhelmingly positive, but the two daily newspapers, after initially endorsing it, then rejected the idea, and the Attorney General failed to act.

In my travels with the House of Representatives Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, I have had the opportunity to study the drug crisis internationally, as well as nationally. I have travelled to sources of supply in Pakistan, Burma, Thailand and other exporting areas.

I am convinced that present U.S. policy, which allocates enormous sums to try to curtail the growth of poppy plants and the importation of heroin and cocaine flowing from the "Golden Triangle", thence to Turkey and finally to the U.S., is wasteful, wrong and ineffective. While the Reagan administration is concentrating on foreign growers and exporters, little is being done to curtail and abolish the American market. We need to give more -- much more -- financial support to state and local drug abuse treatment and prevention programs.

To achieve these objectives, I am working as a co-sponsor for the passage in the House of Representatives of two important measures: the "State and Local Narcotics Abuse and Control Assistance Act," and the "Drug Abuse Education Act of 1986."

The assistance measure would authorize \$750 million annually for the next five years to assist state and local governments in narcotics enforcement and drug abuse treatment and prevention activities.

The education bill would establish a program of Federal grants

Drug Abuse Article

Hon. Geo. W. Crockett, Jr.

p. 3

to the states for providing drug abuse education in grades from Kindergarten to the 12th.

Death at a young age is tragic. But death caused by or contributed to by drugs is truly a tragedy, because it can and should be prevented. We must educate and work together to eliminate the drug menace.