

Rapid Raise in Narcotic Traffic In State Should Spur Lawmakers

By VINCENT THOMAS
Assemblyman, 68th District

The "clouds of confusion" about narcotics control legislation are likely to be blown vigorously around again at our coming session. The "half-truths, semi-facts, rumors, and fantasies" which a joint legislative committee found to surround suppression of the illicit traffic may be dispelled by action on suggestions for improved and stronger laws which will be put before us.

For the past 10 years, the narcotics evil has grown like a weed in California, until now our state has the greatest problem in the nation. Legislative committee after committee has commented on rapid rate of increase. In 1955, total state felony arrests for narcotics violations were 7,313; in 1959, 12,155. During the first six months of 1960, they reached 6,957, as compared to 5,666 in the same months of the preceding year.

ALL OF THESE committee reports emphasized the danger of the narcotics traffic to youth, and the growing menace it creates in juvenile delinquency. While marijuana continues to be the principal cause of youthful vice, it frequently leads to addiction to more dangerous drugs, and the percentage of youth authority wards using them shows a significant rise.

Penalties under our California laws for narcotics violations were stepped up in 1953 and again in 1954, but the results have not been what was hoped for. Even though our laws provide stiffer penalties for repeated violations, our legislative investigations by both Senate and Assembly groups reveal that in a shockingly large proportion of cases, prior convictions are disregarded, so the criminals get the lighter sentences of first offenders.

OUR LAW enforcement offi-

cers have complained strongly that several State Supreme Court decisions interfere with adequate execution of anti-narcotics laws because they severely restrict the use of unidentified informers, and make more difficult the use of search warrants. Others support these decisions as necessary to protect citizens against unlawful searches of seizures, or being "framed" into conviction by enemies.

Recently, another exhaustive study of the various narcotics problems has been made, and the many specific recommendations based on its results will undoubtedly be introduced as bills at our forthcoming session. Others, too, have produced proposals for basic changes in the laws, so we will have a variety of alternatives to consider.

THE STUDY pins responsibility for cutting off the sources of narcotics squarely on the federal government. It cites the undisputed fact that 100 percent of the heroin used in the state comes from outside its borders. More than 90 percent of the marijuana also comes from outside. It discounts the supposed importance of "crime syndicates" in the narcotics traffic, pointing out that any car-owner can obtain a plentiful supply south of the border, and detection is difficult at the many border crossing places.

Subject to heavy criticism is the commonly accepted theory that the "addict-peddler" is a poor "victim", who should be treated more leniently than the non-addict seller. The report states bluntly, "WHEN THE addict peddler is removed from the streets of California, the narcotics traffic will be substantially eliminated."

A minimum prison sentence of 10 years with no parole is recommended for any adult convicted of selling narcotics to a minor. Generally, elimination of paroles before the legal minimum sentence is served is also proposed. Some relaxation of law covering searches and informers is also suggested, but legalization of wire tapping even in narcotics cases is opposed.

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- 2 packages lemon gelatin dessert
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- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon prepared mustard
- 2 cups cottage cheese
- 1 cup lemon juice
- 2 cups diced cooked ham
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 cup chopped green pepper
- 1 cup grated or chopped onion
- 1 cup pickle relish

Dissolve gelatin in boiling water. Chill until slightly thickened (about 15-20 minutes). Add remaining ingredients, then spoon into 2 quart loaf mold or loaf pan (9" x 5" x 3"). Chill until firm (about 2 hours). Serve on platter garnished with sliced peaches, apricots, or cranberry slices if desired. Makes 4 to 8 servings

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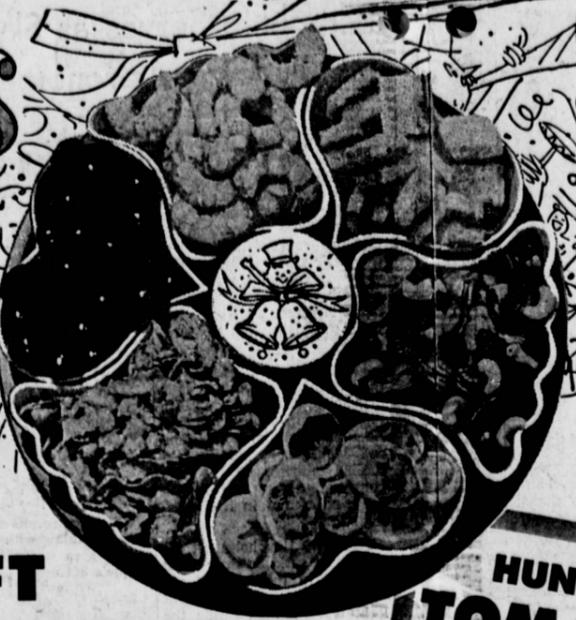
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