

Drugs In County: Crisis Situation

(First of a six-part series)

By **BILL NEUBAUER**
Sentinel Staff Writer

The Santa Cruz County drug scene has degenerated from "bad" to "worse."

No one is reaching for the panic button, but governmental, law enforcement, welfare, medical, school and rehabilitation officials say flatly a countywide drug abuse control plan is needed promptly to avert a crisis.

The county has no plan now, according to Supervisors Henry

Mello, Ralph Sanson and Philip Harry.

"Insofar as a plan is concerned," Sanson said, "we are flat on our backs."

Nor does the county have strong programs for combatting drug traffic, rehabilitating drug addicts and drug dependents, or educating students and adults on the personal and social calamities which can result from drug abuse.

Indeed, under the weight of demonstrably increased drug

traffic and drug abuse, the weak programs the county does have are breaking down.

In the law-enforcement field, for example, both the district attorney's office and the sheriff's office are incapable of combatting drug traffic on other than an intermittent or selective basis.

District Attorney Peter Chang said of his office's investigative efforts:

"We do investigate when we can. We have on our staff a fulltime man to correlate our

efforts with local, state and federal agencies. We ran a 17-week program about a year and a half ago and indicted 39 persons. But every investigator we have now is involved with crimes of violence.

"To set up a program takes considerable manpower and time. You begin with an informer. You have to check his reliability. Then you must bring in an undercover agent to get in tight with a seller and to make a buy. Throughout this you need three cars for surveillance and

from 10 to 15 persons for 24-hour coverage.

"We don't have this manpower. But say we got more people. We would need another lawyer, who would be kept busy drafting perhaps five search warrants a week. To make a sustained program feasible we would need help from the state Bureau of Narcotics to get a professionally trained agent to make buys. They are not that available. In fact, the state budget has been cut so ridiculously they

(Continued on Page 6)

Santa Cruz Sentinel

116th Year—No. 48

SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 28, 1971

84 Pages

15 Cents

Weather

MONTEREY BAY AREA — Partly cloudy through Monday. Continued cool. Overnight lows in 30s. Highs low 50s. Small craft warnings for northwesterly wind 20 to 35 mph.

Temperatures for 24 hours ending at 8 a.m. Saturday: High 57, low 32. For period ending at 5 p.m. Saturday: High 54, low 32.

Drugs In County: A Crisis Situation

(Continued from Page 1)

have only two chemists north of Santa Barbara County to analyze materials. We have to send materials to a firm in Salinas at a cost of over \$1000 per month.

"The Federal Bureau of Narcotics has no one to send down to us, assuming we got a program going.

"We are working, but on a selective basis aimed at the big pusher through investigation of individual, isolated cases rather than through a program."

Cost and manpower problems also hamper the sheriff's office, according to Undersheriff Paul Tara and Detective Sgt. James Marston.

"We are not big enough to handle the problem," Tara said. "I think we could use a fulltime narcotics specialist. We don't have the manpower now. We are constantly backlogged on investigations. Because our men are professionals, they don't just work an eight-hour day, either, to protect the public. They work long hours, a lot of overtime on their own. But I agree the board of supervisors has a money problem. You can raise taxes just so much. But I think the people the supervisors represent are going to have to ask themselves this question: Can we afford not to have more people so we can better enforce the laws?"

Said Sgt. Marston, "The loss of possible narcotics activity is frustrating to me, but there isn't a thing I can do about it. If you can cut the traffic you can cut the effects of drugs locally. As things are now, we can't cope with the drug problem. We don't have the manpower to set up a narcotics bureau with a detail. Violent crimes are so high now we are not working other than incidentally on the drug traffic. If we had six men to work only on this, we could make a dent in the traffic. As it is, most of our arrests now involve drugs only incidentally. That is, the drug thing comes out when arrests have been made for other offenses. This

gets at users, mostly, not dealers, who are the big problem." Marston said drug traffic in the county is third or fourth highest in the northern part of the state. Chang said the traffic goes up and down and "there's a lot of it" just now.

Supervisor Harry said he had always understood the sheriff's office has a fulltime man on narcotics work, but added, "If they don't have a fulltime man, they should have one."

But Harry, Sanson and Mello concur that law enforcement is one means through which the county drug problems must be solved. Along with Supervisors George Cress and Dan Forbus, they have appointed Dr. Richard

Svihus, county health officers, the county's coordinator for drug abuse control.

Under a plan outline developed by Svihus, the county will hire a program coordinator to enlist the support and coordinate the work of all county, school and private agencies now involved in drug abuse prevention and control.

In the planning stage are a methadone treatment center and other units for aiding addicts to control or "kick" habits which prevent normal function in society.

"As far as I am concerned," Dr. Svihus said, "we are in a crisis situation now."