

# Youths Express Views On Drugs, Few Adults Listen

By BILL NEUBAUER  
Sentinel Staff Writer

Dozens of students sacrificed their evening to give their views on drug abuse problems during panel discussions with adults in various SLV High School classrooms Wednesday night. But despite publicity given the meeting by the Ad Hoc Steering Committee on Drug Abuse, only about 50 adults were sufficiently interested in the youths' views to show up, ask questions and listen.

Some of the listening was highly worthwhile.

One student said: "Drugs are part of life and will be around all the time. Making something illegal isn't going to make it go away. The problem cannot be solved legally because it is not a legal problem. It has to be approached through study and understanding."

Another student said, "People should be allowed to decide for themselves on using marijuana. It has been used for thousands of years with no harmful effects. It isn't physically addictive. It might be psychologically addictive for some people because there is always someone

with a lack of security. Some indulge in alcohol, others smoke cigarettes.

Under panel ground rules, adults were limited to asking questions and were not permitted to debate a given answer with a panelist. It was pointed out that criticism of the panelists would be unwarranted, regardless of an answer given, because the students had agreed as a community service to answer questions candidly and honestly.

In one panel discussion attended by this reporter, the panelists were Rick Scott, Lisa Longmire, Frank Johnson, Beth Fogel, Susie O'Connor and Kathy Stanley. The students came well prepared. No question was evaded. At times they exhibited a beautiful tact and objectivity.

The gist of some questions and answers included:

Q.—What is the difference between hashish and Marijuana?

A.—Hashish is the most concentrated form of the drug. They take the top of the plant and dry it. It is more expensive because it is more potent. It

is widely used in India, where marijuana is considered a low form of the drug. India prefers the more refined forms. Actually, the United States is far behind other nations in the use of marijuana.

Q.—What is the main motivating factor behind youth's smoking of marijuana?

A.—Kicks, curiosity. It is more pleasurable than some other things. In school it is generally tried first out of curiosity. Then, once tried, it is used for pleasure. Some feel it makes them more alert.

Q.—Do teenagers have dope problems?

A.—For some there are problems, but not for others. Kids have dope parties, booze parties. Some kids can't handle it, just as some adults can't handle booze.

Q.—Do some youths refrain from trying marijuanan out of fear?

A.—Some. They wouldn't know what to expect and so they would be afraid. Most who are afraid are not acquainted with anyone who smoked marijuana.

Q.—Are a big number

afraid?

A.—A small number.

Q.—Would you say the larger percentage of parents are unaware their children are using drugs?

A.—That would be difficult to say, but I think not. Some parents don't want to think about their children using drugs.

If the kids are heavy users, their parents know. Others don't want to believe it about their kids after they have heard through the grapevine, the telephone, that they are using drugs.

Q.—Are the parents really fooled if their kids use drugs?

A.—That depends on the teenagers involved. Some of the kids are scared of their parents finding out and try very hard not to let them know.

Q.—Don't the majority of the youths realize parents are scared stiff?

A.—They know that some parents are, but they can't understand it. It isn't a medical problem. Studies don't show that marijuana is harmful. Why the panic?

Another panelist added: Parents don't know that the mari-

juana use isn't that bad for you. They are misinformed by the news media. The news media oversimplifies.

Q.—Do marijuana smokers go deeper and deeper into it and go on to use harder drugs, as is claimed?

A.—That sounds like away out. It is said that if you smoke marijuana you will go on to harder drugs. It's away of trying to prevent the kids from using marijuana.

Q.—What if the law is changed. Would it increase use of marijuana?

A.—It probably wouldn't make much difference. If people want to use marijuana, they can get it. Most parents break the law if they drive after drinking or do other things. But they still do it.

Q.—Does use of drugs run to certain types?

A.—No. Just anybody uses them.

Q.—Apparently teenagers think marijuana smoking is harmless. How about speed or LSD?

A.—They think they may be more harmful, but that isn't a big problem here at the

school.

Q.—What hard drugs are used most here?

A.—Reds, speed, but they're not used much.

Q.—What about the chemical makeup of marijuana? Some may be able to handle it, but maybe the bodies of some can't handle it?

A.—The U.S. synthesized marijuana and got some people high. But even if it is synthesized it has not been found to have anything harmful in it.

Q.—What about the effects on a person of being high?

A.—People have the wrong idea about that. Insofar as control over actions and reactions is concerned, there is a big difference between being high and being drunk. A drunk has no control. If you are high, you sit down and talk. You're physically quiet. The drunks make fools of themselves.

Q.—Well, if marijuana were made legal like alcohol—I suppose you would not okay serving a highball in the locker room. Do you think if marijuana were made legal it belongs in our schools?

A.—No. You don't have any real concentration if you smoke it. It's a form of relaxation.

Q.—If parents found a drug on a child and wanted to get to the person who supplied it, would youths protect the pusher when the parents are trying to eliminate the problems?

A.—The kids know that selling or using marijuana is illegal. It would depend on how badly the kids would want to get out of the trouble. Some would fink, some would not.

Q.—Why do the kids use drugs? Is it rebellion, revenge, I don't understand.

A.—It reflects curiosity basically, I think. Some have psychological problems at home, but I think for them it is half that and half curiosity.

For some kids there is a communication barrier at home. Parents are afraid to find answers for their children. Some parents talk to their kids too late. They should be freer with each other. They should go to each other with open minds.

Q.—If marijuana were legal, would you favor letting junior high students use it, too?

A.—No. They would be too young to know how to control it.

Q.—Do you buy it when you hear a representative of the sheriff's office say that most users of marijuana go on to harder drugs?

A.—No, not really.

But in another panel discussion, students differed on the question of whether marijuana users go on to harder drugs. One student said none of the users he knew had gone on to use of harder drugs, while another student said that 75 per cent of the users he knew did go on to harder drugs.

Mrs. Gay Standish, a candidate for election to the SLV Unified School District governing board, said of the meeting:

"It was a tremendous opportunity for youth to express themselves and for us to listen. I came away feeling pretty good inside. I was sorry more adults didn't attend. At the next meeting the debate between the students and adults should be interesting and informative."

The debate is set for May 6.