

Still No. 1 drug problem

ALCOHOLISM

By SHELLEY WOOD

Alcoholism is probably as old as alcohol, but in recent years the extent of the social problem it presents has been pushed out of public view by concern over the high incidence of narcotics experimentation. In the meantime, the abuse of alcohol has continued to rise and to increase also among females and teen-agers. Now, officials are beginning to acknowledge that California's number-one drug problem is still alcoholism. What has made the difference is a change in attitude: State agencies, the Legislature and even the police are moving away from treating alcoholics as criminals or degenerates and accepting instead the view that alcoholism is America's most untreated treatable disease.

Yet, this change in attitude hasn't been as far-reaching as it will apparently have to be in order to address the problem squarely statewide. Despite the fact that public drunkenness has been officially decriminalized and that rehabilitation efforts are being beefed up with some success, anti-alcoholism programs aren't always working out the way planners had hoped.

One of 12 Californians . . .

At least one million Californians — one of every 12 over the age of 20 — suffer from alcoholism. Few of these people fit the usual stereotype of the skid-row down-and-outer. In fact, public inebriates comprise only about four percent of the alcoholic population. The problem drinkers look on the surface pretty much like everyone else but while they remain undetected the scope of their problem spreads. As it does, California government and business lose at least \$400 million annually in lost wages — and probably a good deal more than that.

Even more critical is the cost to the alcoholics themselves. Although as a cause of death alcoholism still ranks tenth in California, the number of fatalities due to alcoholism among those aged 35 to 64 has risen sharply. Taking this figure into account, alcohol becomes the fourth major health threat in this productive age group. It is surpassed only by heart disease, cancer and mental illness. Even worse, recent studies indicate that drinking drivers are involved in at least one-third of all California highway traffic fatalities and in 20 percent of all injury accidents.

Drunkenness decriminalized

The first big official turn-around in the approach to alcoholism took place in 1971, when the Legislature passed Senator George Deukmejian's bill to decriminalize drunkenness. Although its implementation

California's problem drinkers

Total Population	19,953,134
Population Over 20	12,251,431
Problem Drinkers	1,151,760
Arrests for Public Intoxication	254,877
Arrests for Drunk Driving	199,174

Source: Office of Alcohol Program Management

has been much less than widespread, the possibility now exists for counties to stop "the revolving door" court process of repeated jail sentences for public drunks with no effort at treatment of their drinking problem. Enactment also constituted a decision by the state to treat public drunkenness as an illness, instead of as a crime, it being thought that the law would provide an impetus for establishing a statewide network of centers to receive and treat people with an alcohol dependency.

Under this law, counties can eliminate public drunkenness as a crime. Instead of arresting a person found inebriated in public, a civil procedure can be followed; under it, an officer can take an inebriate into protective custody and place him in a local health facility for up to 72 hours. After detoxification there, the person is released but encouraged to seek further medical treatment, if necessary. The catch, however, is that drunkenness can only be decriminalized where detoxification centers have been established. And the funds for constructing them have so far been made available only in seven of the state's 58 counties — San Diego, Santa Barbara, Sacramento, Monterey, Santa Clara, San Mateo and San Joaquin. No funds have yet gone to the two counties with the highest incidence of drunkenness arrests: Los Angeles and San Francisco.

'Detox' centers

One of these detoxification facilities is in Sacramento, where it is called the Community Alcoholism Rehabilitation Center. Although unique in being the state's only privately run "detox" center, Sacramento's suffers from the same kinds of problems that beset the others. Despite its 70 beds (six for women) the center usually is full every night — in fact, by 4 o'clock in the afternoon — coincidentally, the start of the so-called happy hour of cut-rate cocktails at local bars. If any "happy hour" reveler is picked up, therefore, the chances are that there'll be no room at the center and he will be taken to the county jail, booked and taken before a judge. (Sacramento County authorities say that five to 30 people a night are thus jailed.)

Detoxification centers have come in for their share of criticism. Detractors point out that they are at best stop-gap measures that may allow the inebriate to sober up safely yet don't attack causes of drunkenness. These

The author, a student at the University of California at Davis and a Journal intern, wrote on the Legislature's Sergeants-at-arms in the February issue.



critics see danger in spending too much time on and devoting too many resources to the public inebriate, whom they see as only the most conspicuous aspect of the problem, the tip of the iceberg; the working alcoholics are much less evident. Since maintaining a detox center is expensive and deals with only a fraction of the problem (and at that only in a superficial way), critics argue that it merely removes obnoxious drunks from store fronts, an expensive form of community sanitation.

Supporters of the detoxification centers concede that the facilities are inadequate, but they also contend that they were not intended to correct defects in the individual or society. The present centers are only the first step toward establishment of long-term facilities where alcoholics can be housed away from the influence of their cronies while participating in recovery programs. Meanwhile, the few existing detox centers provide needed hot meals, medical treatment, beds and a chance, at least, for the alcoholic to try to recapture a measure of individual dignity.

Police attitude

Related to decriminalization is the changed outlook of those who often have the most contact with alcoholics — law-enforcement personnel. According to Dick Iglehart of the California Peace Officers' Association, the police would "love to be rid of the criminalistic approach to public drunkenness. For the police to pick up these people is an administrative hassle," he explained. "If there were some way to avoid it, they would." Iglehart, who represents California law-enforcement officers' interests in Sacramento, believes that detoxification centers are becoming more widely accepted by the police for the practical reason that drunks ought not to be increasing the jail population. Penalties for drunkenness do not deter the chronic public drunk, he observed, and the process of jailing inebriates just drains funds needed elsewhere.

A health problem as extensive and costly as alcoholism must be dealt with on a large scale. So far, the nature of alcoholism and how society views it seem to have precluded such a major state effort [see box]. A loosely connected series of treatment programs have existed for some time, but only recently has attention been directed toward the problem from the outside. The consequence of this concern has been an increase in the size, scope and number of programs financed or supervised by the state.

Detoxification centers are just one of many ways of treating alcoholism. Responsibility for coordinating anti-alcoholism efforts lies in the state Office of Alcohol Program Management, created by the Legislature in 1970 to consolidate the activities of 13 state agencies concerned with one aspect or another of alcoholism. Operating with a budget of about \$37 million, the Office

of Alcohol Program Management administers the funds and is developing a state alcoholism plan to satisfy federal requirements while planning guides to aid the counties; in other words, it is supposed to hold the present system together.

The office operates through the county alcoholism programs. These in turn have responsibility for local planning, consultation, grant review, and for providing alcoholism services. Money is focused on the counties in the belief, which is prevalent in other areas of health care, that it is best to treat the patient close to home. Currently, 19 counties have clearly identifiable alcohol treatment programs in which the primary focus is on the alcoholic. However, all counties are treating alcoholics in their regular Short-Doyle programs, which are funded 90 percent by the state and 10 percent by the counties.

The state's primary role is not to establish the actual alcoholism programs, but to coordinate what Director Loran Archer of the Office of Alcohol Program Management calls the "alcohol system". It is within this system that the alcoholic could find the kind of help most compatible with his needs. The major components of this system of direct assistance are:

Alcoholics Anonymous. Probably the best known of all alcoholism-abuse programs, AA is not funded by the state, but depends on the endeavors of its alcoholic members to help themselves.

Out-patient clinics. Offering such techniques as group therapy and counseling to alcoholics, 19 clinics now operate throughout the state.

Recovery houses. The more than 200 of these facilities provide residential arrangements for alcoholics who need to be in a semi-protective atmosphere. Recovery houses, staffed by non-drinking alcoholics, only recently became recipients of public funding.

Detoxification centers. These serve as entry points into the system for those typically not a part of society's mainstream.

Toll-free telephone number. By calling (800) 372-6450, a person can receive information about available alcohol-treatment programs. The service is sponsored by the state alcoholism office.

The Department of Rehabilitation. Only one of many state agencies involved in alcohol-abuse programs, rehabilitation offers vocational training to those classified as handicapped by alcoholism.

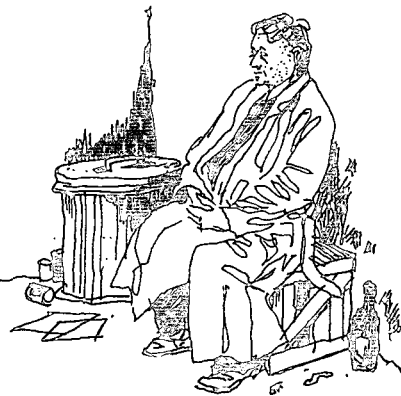
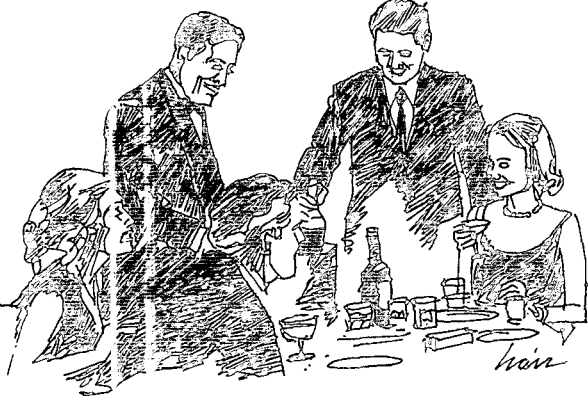
Alcoholic state workers

Which of these approaches is most effective depends upon whom one is trying to reach. Detox centers, for example, are suited to down-and-outers, while clinics are better for the working alcoholic. The state has thus shied away from trying to devise one program to take in everyone — an orientation that also prevents creation of a non-duplicative and coordinated approach.

Where alcoholism is greatest

County	Total Population	Number Problem Drinkers	%
1. San Francisco	715,674	145,325	20
2. Sierra	2,365	280	12.2
3. Calaveras	13,585	1,330	9.7
4. Tuolumne	22,169	2,060	9.3
5. Lake	19,548	1,780	9.1

Source: Office of Alcohol Program Management



The Office of Alcohol Program Management has begun a program to help alcoholic state workers. The California State Employees Association estimates that there may be as many as 5,000 state employees in the Sacramento area alone with drinking problems. As recently as five years ago, these employees would have been subject to dismissal were their alcoholism discovered. However, under the State Employee Alcoholism Program, alcoholics no longer need fear for their jobs if they do seek treatment. State departments are encouraged to find ways to help alcoholic employees.

Some success

The major obstacle to coherence faced by the state is the lack of definitive information. No one knows precisely how many alcoholics there are, how they break down by race, sex, and income, or even how many are actually being treated. This problem stems from inadequacies in the methods used for compiling statistics, and it has hampered the delivery of services and allowed local groups to escape the kind of control that might draw them into a coordinated system. The concentration of programs at the local level enables services to be close to the alcoholic's daily life, and leaves room to tailor treatment to the individual; but it also prevents offering a uniform level of service in the state.

In spite of the administration and operational problems, however, Archer remains optimistic. "If I could get the same return on stock that this office gets on its rate of success with alcoholics, I could retire," he declared. Much of Archer's optimism stems from a study of 2,000 individuals who had gone through alcoholism programs. When analysts compared how much the subjects were earning before treatment and 18 months later, the increased amount of taxes they now contributed was found to exceed the cost of their treatment. (This finding does not include such indirect savings as the need for fewer hospital beds and decreased family problems.)

Half loaf

Passage last year of SB 204, the so-called alcoholism rehabilitation bill, also cheers Archer. Sponsored by Senator Arlen Gregorio, the measure came under strong attack by the liquor industry because of provisions that would have raised the tax on alcoholic beverages to subsidize increased alcohol-abuse programs. Proponents of the legislation claimed that, since liquor obviously contributes to alcoholism and the industry profits from selling alcoholic beverages, it should share the cost of solving the problems alcohol consumption creates. Gregorio argued that alcoholic beverages are taxed less in California but cost more than in many other states. His bill proposed that what he termed as windfall profits now enjoyed by the industry go instead to the state's general fund. The liquor industry countered with the argument that "the state doesn't assess the automobile industry for


funds to curb reckless driving, so why should it single out the alcoholic beverage industry?"

This kind of reasoning aided in the removal of the taxation section of the bill. After numerous other slices, the state was lucky to get \$9 million allocated over an 18-month period for local programs combating alcoholism. Although it's too soon to measure its effect, this money, combined with \$2.4 million from the federal government, has given maneuvering room for programs and a new mechanism to determine what facilities are needed. Counties are now required to set priorities and establish an alcoholism-treatment plan.

Apparently undaunted by his lack of total success, Gregorio tried again this session. He introduced legislation to tax the liquor industry and allocate money from the general fund for alcoholism programs to yield an additional \$13 million in 1975-76 and \$15 million in 1976-77. Gregorio correctly predicted that his bill, SB 1497, wouldn't pass this year, but he added that it will, eventually. (Gregorio estimated that perhaps 10 percent of his colleagues in the Legislature are problem drinkers.)

The officials who would administer these potential funds agree that some sort of additional tax on liquor will be necessary, as well as other steps designed to reduce liquor consumption. They place a lot of faith in the power of advertising against over-indulgence to counter liquor-industry promotions. They also look to a change in state interest in the problem. People who deal with the cost of alcoholism, in terms of lives and dollars lost, consider that funds now devoted to treating alcoholism are a drop in the bucket. They add that the state must clarify its position on alcoholism in relation to its encouragement of, say, the wine industry. [See "Mission improbable: squeezing more revenue out of grapes", *CJ*, March 1974, p. 97.]

Just what the future holds for alcohol-abuse programs in California is not yet apparent. But certain factors make it impossible to return to the days when a state senator could publicly characterize an alcoholic as being "... generally speaking, a disreputable person put into this position by his own weakness." Alcoholism is too widespread to be ignored, and it is on the rise among those previously less affected — women and teen-agers. The traditionally accepted male-female alcoholism ratio of 5 to 1 is falling, and teen-agers drink more, proportionally, than do adults.

The two biggest deficiencies in current attempts to treat the problem seem to be inadequate funding and stop-gap programs. More far-reaching approaches must be sought — such as alcoholism insurance to cover the high cost of treating alcoholics' alcohol-related illnesses. To adopt such a program, however, would require facing squarely the alcoholism problem's true dimensions in a society in which this form of drug abuse is widespread. This remains to be done. 

Watergate's effect on student political leaders

BY ELLEN POLGAR

The California campus atmosphere is quiet these days. Do students share the national mood of helplessness? Has Watergate discouraged student activists who may have planned on political careers? To the contrary, campus leaders now appear more determined to correct what they see as the evils of the present political system.

Interviews with 20 students whose campus activities reflected a strong inclination toward political careers indicate that these are the problems most affecting current views and their plans for the future:

- Misuse of constitutional power by the executive branch of government, coupled with an unassertive Congress.
- Manipulation of the law by politicians to benefit their own financial or political status.
- Private funds influencing election campaigns.
- The ability of business interests to influence public policy-making.

Although most of the students were registered Democrats, the Republicans among them also felt strongly about the misuse of executive power and the lack of assertiveness by Congress. Joe Piasta, a law student at the University of San Francisco who worked as a regional coordinator for the Committee to Re-elect the President, was especially critical of the "inordinate efforts" of the committee to raise funds. Indeed, most of the students expressed concern about the ease with which the committee raised a staggering amount of money.

To some students, Watergate kindled a new interest in the Constitution and the separation-of-powers concept it sets forth. Declared Jon Klar, a UCLA law student and active Democrat: "Congress is weak because there are too many factions. They are not unified under strong leadership." Added Jim Parrinello, student body president at the University of San Francisco law school: "The Nixon administration has wrested that (congressional) power by impoundment of funds and in Vietnam and Cambodia. This can be remedied if Congress will assert itself." The students also felt that a great number of legislators shrink from taking a firm stand on such issues as campaign reform, in part because they engage in just the kinds of activities exposed by Watergate.

Klar was skeptical about reforming the tax structure in the wake of President Nixon's income-tax disclosures because congressmen also benefit from a system so complicated that Klar felt that only the rich could take advantage of its complexities. Lee Altschuler, co-president of the Associated Students of the University of California at Berkeley, emphasized that a key lesson of Watergate is that "white-collar crime is just as dangerous as blue-collar crime; it is more insidious."

"It's hard to compete without bread, and it's hard to be your own person without somebody else's bread," Bill Winslow, president of UCLA's Graduate Council, remarked dryly. Most of the students felt that public financing of political campaigns is the best solution of-

The author, a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, is pursuing studies in the field of public policy.

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

This is the panel of 20 students interviewed for the accompanying article:

UC-Berkeley. Mike Aguirre, Lee Altschuler, Pete Birdsall, Linda Greene, Jon Twitchell.

University of San Francisco. Bob Julian, Jim Parrinello, Joe Piasta, Don Sebastiani.

UCLA. Jon Klar, Mark Waldman, Suz Rosen, Bill Winslow.

UC-Santa Cruz. Lance Bayer, Eric Peterson, Nancy Phillips, Linda Slayton.

University of Santa Clara. Bill Everhart.

UC-San Diego. Tom Leanse.

Stanford. Luis Buhler.

ferred thus far, but a vocal minority of three advocated only a more thorough system of disclosing campaign contributions. At the extreme is Mark Waldman, UCLA law school student body president: "In a way, the corporations' giving large amounts of money to a candidate does the same as giving it back to the mainstream of public life. For instance, it buys media time."

The problem that provoked the deepest expression of concern was the ability of big business to influence public policy-makers. "I see more strongly than before Watergate the superiority of corporations and big industry over government," said Parrinello. "This has motivated me to go into government, to be unafraid to rock the boat." Mike Aguirre, co-president of the Berkeley associated students, expressed the consensus opinion: "Decisions that are made by corporate management may affect a community or the nation more fundamentally than any government policy. Unlike governmental policy decisions, which eventually are subjected to the democratic process, corporate power is vested in the hands of the board of directors." This, he continued, suggests that society must put up with corporate abuses of power that may generate immediate benefits to shareholders but at the ultimate expense of the nation's quality of life.

Most of the students saw an overriding benefit to Watergate — the fact that people are becoming more inquisitive about their government. Mark Waldman, president of the student bar association at UCLA, thought that congressmen are running scared in the face of this year's elections. "Very soon, the politicians will realize that they have to get the people's trust," he said. These student leaders agreed that citizens must become more politically involved. Of the 20 participants:

- Seventeen said they plan to work toward this end.
- Six are now in law school preparing to specialize in the fields of civil liberties, the environment, consumer protection, or to work within established agencies to enforce corporate social responsibility.
- Seven undergraduates plan to enter law school.
- Eight expressed a desire to seek public office.
- Four will prefer to work behind the scenes for politicians.

Thus, far from turning these politically oriented student leaders away from public life, Watergate has apparently strengthened their intentions to pursue political careers.