

REPORT OF THE GRAND JURY
FOR APRIL TERM, 1997

to

The Honorable J. Randall Wyatt, Jr.
Judge, Division II, Criminal Court
Davidson County, Tennessee

The Term of Office for this Grand Jury began Monday, April 7, 1997, and concluded on Friday, June 27, 1997. Scheduled meeting days were Monday, Tuesday, and Friday each week.

The Grand Jury heard over 710 cases during the term.

The Grand Jury is very concerned about drug related crimes, repeat offenders, incest and sexual battery, overcrowding in our penal systems and the frustration involved with the "revolving door" — particularly those associated with theft, assault and drug related activity.

There were defendants who had several cases to appear before us in which they were involved. This raises the issue of tolerance. Is there a way to remedy this?

The Metro Police Department is to be commended for its commitment and in apprehending those who are involved in drug activity. It became quite evident that the volume of illicit activity penetrating our neighborhoods and impacting the quality of life for every citizen in the community merits more than just cursory attention.

It also became evident that every member felt varying degrees of frustration — particularly when the same defendant would be involved in numerous cases.

We can't offer remedies to the problems, but we can suggest that more funds be appropriated and that pressure be sustained in drug enforcement.

We have all grown during our tenure as members of the Grand Jury.

Each member of the Grand Jury was asked to submit some concerns to be included in this report. Following is a succinct list of concerns:

- Surprise that approx. 80 percent of the cases involved illegal drugs or alcohol and the disregard exhibited for the criminal justice system by many of the accused.
- Concern expressed by some police officials about the need to have single entry, multiple query.
- Because of the numerous drug cases involving crack cocaine, the question

was raised regarding whether the rest of the community is being neglected.

The example given — "It's easier to repeatedly raid a crack house than to track down drug dealers in a high school."

• Several members of the Grand Jury felt the need to have a more detailed introduction to the Tennessee Code, as well as a need to understand how the criminal justice system works, both on paper and in practice.

We applaud members of the Metropolitan Police Department, the District Attorney's office for the professional and thorough manner in which they prepare the cases, their willingness to explain and clarify, and the obvious dedication to their jobs.

Although we cannot mention everyone, there are three persons in particular who worked with us and helped us tremendously — Mr. James Utley, Ms. Sandra Mullins and Ms. Georgia Smith. Their support was invaluable.

We would especially like to thank Judge J. Randall Wyatt Jr. and District Attorney General Torry Johnson for their assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

Adrienne T. Latham, Foreperson