

of his parents home by an addict supporting his habit, to the ten (10) year old selling drugs on the street corner and to the gang problems in our city. If there were not a demand for illegal drugs there would be no need for a supplier. We believe that the future of our city depends on how effective we are in dealing with the drug problems within our boundaries. It is our recommendation, our plea, to the leaders of this city and it's citizens that we devise a plan to put a stop to this growing problem. It will not be easy but it must be done, and cost cannot be a factor.

The Honorable General Sessions Judge Leon Ruben visited the Grand Jury to explain how cases flow through the system. It was somewhat disturbing to learn that General Sessions Judges do not have the authority to sentence a suspect pleading guilty to a felony in their courtroom. It seems senseless to continue their journey through the already overcrowded court system after this admission. It would seem worthwhile to empower at least one (1) division of General Sessions Court to handle cases of this nature. We realize that this will require action by our State Legislature, and perhaps add some further qualifications to this General sessions Division. However, we feel it would be prudent to create such a court. We therefore recommend to this Court that they seek assistance from the appropriate authority to determine the effectiveness of such a court and to take the necessary steps toward its creation.

Perhaps another use for this special General Sessions Court might be to decide minor crimes such as, but not limited to, shoplifting. We realize the serious problem minor crimes like these and believe the guilty should be punished. We believe a court such as this might provide a more efficient way of dealing with these crimes as well as freeing precious time in the criminal court process for more serious cases and the repeat

offenders.

Also appearing before the Grand Jury was the Honorable Sheriff Gayle Ray. The Sheriff shared some interesting thoughts on alternative sentencing for first time non-violent offenders. Their punishment would be more severe than the current form of community service but would not include incarceration. We feel this is a good idea but would urge the courts to be very discreet in it's use and that it never be used in any case where illegal drugs are involved.

We did express several concerns to Sheriff Ray stemming from our visit to the detention facility at the Justice Center. The major concerns were:

1. The inmates seem to have almost unlimited use of the phone. While there are rules to be followed, it appears there is no effective way of policing them. We heard one instance of an inmate conducting his drug operation while in jail and were informed there were other such incidences. It was anonymously reported to this Grand Jury, and it's probability confirmed by a sheriff's deputy, that an accused murderer spent over five (5) hours in a phone interview with Channel 5 News. The sheriff informed us that a new phone system, soon to be installed, will correct this problem. We hope that the next Grand Jury will investigate it's effectiveness.

2. The sub-contracting of the food services for all the detention facilities seems unnecessary. All the labor is provided by the inmates with the exception of a few administrative positions which were a part of the Sheriff's staff until a layoff in the department. While the Sheriff did offer an explanation, we fail to see how a savings to taxpayers could be accomplished in this sub-contracting.

3. We were very disturbed at the uncleanness of the facility, especially the first and the second floors. It was totally unacceptable. We were also informed by an employee that there was a continuing problem with elevators breakdowns. The Sheriff informed us that these problems were being corrected. This should also be investigated by the next Grand jury.

We also visited the new Correctional Work Center in South Nashville. It was much cleaner and in better condition. We commend the Sheriff and her staff for keeping it that way.

A visit to the Riverbend Maximum Security Prison proved to be an educational experience for each of us. It was very clean and well kept. There were a few different opinions among us about how good the prisoners were treated. None of us, however, had a desire to stay. It's far from the "Country Club" atmosphere of popular public belief.

While the wisdom of continuing to spend the absorbent amount of money being spent to renovate an out dated and inadequate building, like our Metro Courthouse is questionable, we are glad to see these renovations take place if this facility is to remain in operation.

While visiting the Police Academy we watched as an officer worked with his police dog. It is impressive to see the way these dogs respond to the officers command and the obvious usefulness they provide.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED THIS THE 19TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER 1997.

C. Michael Allen
C. Michael Allen, Grand Jury Foreman

<i>Billie Jean Bates</i>	<i>Madelene E. Carlton</i>
<i>Lois E. McQuinn</i>	<i>Reulene S. Coleman</i>
<i>George Beene</i>	<i>Whitlatch</i>
<i>Teresa Doherty</i>	<i>Ed H. Baker</i>
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