

**From Our Readers**

EDITORS NOTE: The Las Vegas Voice will publish your opinion on any subject - praise - complaints - questions - or answers. We do reserve the right to edit, and your letter must be signed with a valid address and phone number for verification prior to publication. We want your letters! At your written request your name can be withheld.

Dear Editor:

What are the effects of alcohol on an unborn baby?

The answer to this and other crucial questions about drinking during pregnancy can be found in the new March of Dimes pamphlet, "When You Drink, Your Unborn Baby Does, Too."

Suspicion that alcoholism during pregnancy harms the unborn goes back a long way. Now there is strong research evidence that women who drink heavily during pregnancy actually

who drink heavily during pregnancy actually do run an increased risk of having children with birth defects.

Studies show that many children born to women who drank excessively while pregnant have a pattern of physical and mental defects. This is called "fetal alcohol syndrome."

The March of Dimes mission is protection of the unborn and the newborn from birth defects. In an effort to achieve this goal, the voluntary health agency supports medical service, research, community service, and professional and public health education programs.

March of Dimes public health education aims to tell the public what they can do to prevent birth defects. Fetal alcohol syndrome is a tragedy. An even worse tragedy is that it doesn't have to happen. It is clearly a birth defect that can be prevented.

Sincerely,  
Patricia O'Connell

*The Las Vegas Voice  
has IMPACT!*

**NCAA**

Threatens Probation of Oklahoma Sooners

A newspaper in Oklahoma says that NCAA has recommended changes in football ticket policies at the University of Oklahoma that allowed players to sell their own tickets for profit. It is not unusual for players to sell their own tickets.

A source said that "the NCAA has recommended that OU take internal action to prevent abuse of its player ticket policies and to initiate a review of some coaches recruiting practices."

An unnamed source was quoted as saying the NCAA "recommendations are believed to specifically include a sharp reduction or virtual elimination of player tickets, including the practice of providing entire season's tickets in advance."

This action follows a NCAA investigation of OU begun in September 1976, stating players sold their own tickets at inflated prices, through their coaches.

We feel that all schools participating in NCAA should drop out and start their own organization.

**Judicial System**

The Grand Jury system was installed as one of the checks and balances of our judicial system. It was initiated to allow a group of peers of the accused to hear evidence of probable cause to pursue prosecution. That simply means that the evidence against the accused is analyzed and from that scrutiny, a decision made on the strength of the evidence, as to whether the person should be sent for trial.

The same function is served by arraignment in some prosecutions.

When the grand jury decides that on the basis of the evidence, there is sufficient reason to question the guilt or innocence of the person or persons involved, it issues what is called an indictment. An indictment may involve one count or question of guilt or several.

The Grand Jury was initiated to protect citizens from unjust harassment and undue calls to trial based on petty grievances or poorly devised evidence. Its intention was the protection of rights and reputation of the supposedly guilty.

Through the years the inherent intent of the Grand Jury, one of the most solid cornerstones of our system of jurisprudence, has been subverted and now the Grand Jury is all too often used as a political hatchet.

Part of the abuse of the Grand Jury system is based on a public misconception of what an indictment really is. Many, many people in our society believe that a Grand Jury indictment is tantamount to guilt, which is far from the truth.

Let us make the point through a simple example. Let us say that a coconut cream pie is stolen and eaten by someone in a fraternity house. One member of the fraternity is discovered with the pie in his mustache and on his fingers. The owner of the pie accuses him of stealing the pie.

A review board (Grand Jury) is a part of the grievance system in the house. The supposed pie thief is brought before the group, not to determine guilt but the possibility of his being the thief. The evidence of the pie traces is considered strong enough evidence that he may have eaten the pie. It is then determined that he could have eaten the pie. So he is bound over to the judicial board of the house to have the evidence against him judged while at the same time allowing him to establish his defense.

In the course of his appearance before the judicial board it is determined that he found the empty pie pan and scooped up the remains with his fingers and licked it off, a habit he developed as a child. He is not guilty of stealing the pie.

Were that simple example to be magnified to a more grave crime, either civic or criminal, the grievance committee would have served the same function as the Grand Jury. As you saw, the evidence of the pie traces was certainly sufficient to take the case the next step to the judicial board. That is like indicting a person and taking them to trial.

You also saw that though the evidence against the fraternity brother seemed overwhelming, he was eventually proven not guilty.

Because so many people believe that an indictment is a declaration of guilt, the Grand Jury indictment has become a potent political weapon to hatchet people and to beat them down with the stigma of guilt when in fact guilt has not been proven.

This abuse of the intent of the Grand Jury System manifests itself in many forms. Controversial people and unpopular people in the black community and other communities are brought before Grand Juries to embarrass them and bring them down a few notches. One political party uses the Grand Jury system to paint the stigma of dishonesty on the other. One power group in a county uses the system to question the propriety of their adversaries in their private or public lives. The possible guilt of famous people or those from powerful families are often pursued through the Grand Jury system rather than by simple arraignment.

We are seeing the prostitution of the Grand Jury system, often as a tool of vengeance. Like so many other things in our society, this subverting of the system is often directed at blacks and members of the black community.

NNPA Black Press

of America

Fresh from a confrontation with President Jimmy Carter over the staggeringly high level of unemployment among blacks, members of the Congressional Black Caucus are beginning a weekly column for newspapers belonging to the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA)--Black Press of America.

Their columns, written in weekly rotation under the title "Congressional Black Caucus Reports to the People," will cover the many facets of the legislative activities of Capitol Hill as they relate to Black Americans.

"Thus, for the first time in history," says Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, president of the NNPA, "the Black community will have access to the national legislative perspectives of all 16 black members of the House of Representatives."

The first four columns will be written by the officers of the Caucus -- Rep. Parren J. Mitchell of Baltimore, the dynamic chairman; Rep. Shirley Chisholm, New York, vice chairman; Rep. Ronald V. Dellums, California, secretary; and Rep. Cardiss Collins, Illinois, treasurer. See Mitchell's column on page 12.

The other members of the Caucus will write their columns in alphabetical order: Representatives Yvonne B. Burke, California; William L. Clay, Missouri; John Conyers, Jr., and Charles C. Diggs, Michigan; Walter E. Fauntroy, District of Columbia; Harold E. Ford, Tennessee; Augustus F. Hawkins, California; Barbara Jordan, Texas; Ralph H. Metcalfe, Illinois; Robert N. C. Nix, Pennsylvania; Charles B. Rangel, New York; and Louis Stokes, Ohio. Each member of the Caucus will write a column every 16 weeks.

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