

## DEALING WITH DRUG-ADDICTED INMATES

Editor -- Your editorial, ``Solving Drug Epidemic in Nation's Prisons`` (Sunday, February 22) is correct, inmates who get drug treatment have lower recidivism rates than those who don't. It is pure fiction to believe that a person who has been incarcerated will leave custody, without treatment, clean and sober and will thereafter remain so.

Repeated Rand Corporation studies had demonstrated that treatment is seven time more effective, dollar for dollar, than our country's police interdiction policy, which is and has been our number one method employed in the ``War on Drugs.'' This policy will continue as long as legislators are convinced that this is the policy of choice of American voters. It is time to convince policymakers otherwise.

Why wait for a person to go to state prison to begin treatment? We must assess the substance abuse use of arrestees and offer appropriate treatment immediately. Treatment need not always be costly. I have seen miracles performed by using AA, NA and twelve-step type programs with some addicts. Forced or required treatment works too! Why is it then that not all custody facilities provide such treatment three times a day, seven days a week? Those in the criminal justice system: police, prosecution, judges, probation, parole and corrections must be trained how to be effective in dealing with the abusing offender. Pregnant abusing inmates have special needs that must be addressed.

We must focus and make a commitment to devote significant resources toward prevention which must start very early. ``Just say no'' must be replaced by truth and honesty.

Required structured treatment is our only hope for long-term sobriety both for the addict and our communities. We have the knowledge, skill, and ability to make a difference. The question is: Will we, and if so, when?

Judge **Eugene M. Hyman**

Superior Court

San Jose