

Alcohol/drugs— reactions mixed

By Mary Kay Roth

The possibility of combining the state alcoholism and drug services has caused a variety of reactions.

The mixed responses were a result of Gov. J.J. Exon's bill proposing to merge the Nebraska Commission on Drugs and the Department of Institution's (UPI) alcoholism division.

The resulting united department would take away the drug commission's review powers of grants and make it advisory, as is the current alcoholism division. The new advisory commission would be made up of 20 appointed members—10 from each area.

Bill Atterberry, acting director of the alcoholism division, said the bill would not bring many changes to his division because they already serve in an advisory capacity.

Remain separate

Although some degree of cooperation would be necessary, Atterberry said, the departments basically would remain separate.

"As a public agency, our mission is to accept any legislation passed—and go with it," he said.

Atterberry pointed out that many states already have merged their alcoholism and drug divisions, "with no significant problems."

There appears to be federal pressure for closer relationships between alcoholism, drug abuse and mental health, he stated, because of the many dual addictions he said. For example, many alcoholics also suffer drug and mental health problems.

Jeff Kushner, executive director of the Nebraska Commission on Drugs, agreed that combining the drug abuse and alcoholism divisions would be a positive move.

But he objected to the methods of the merger outlined in the proposal.

Take away power

Kushner said the bill would take away the drug commission's executive powers and make it an advisory group under the DPI. This move could threaten citizen participation that the drug commission now depends on, he added.

"Now we're getting thousands of dollars worth of expertise without paying for it," Kushner said. He was referring to the 20-member citizen committee and three other groups made up of 80 volunteers.

If the drug commission becomes advisory, Kushner said, "The citizens would only be advising the advisory." This lack of substantial power will probably cause citizens to lose interest and drop out, he explained.

The bill would not economize, he speculated, it would only cost more money to make up for the lost volunteer manpower.

Same objections

Bob Adams, executive director of the Lincoln Council on Alcoholism and Drugs (LCAD) listed some of the same objections.

He said the bill presented a danger of losing the present "heavy citizen involvement". This loss would cause more expenses and less efficiency, Adams added.

He also said the bill as written was never discussed with either the alcoholism or drug agency personnel.

Adams, however, stressed that the idea of combining the alcoholism and drug divisions was possible, since his agency combines them at the local level.

"We're the only agency in the state that has successfully accomplished the combination," he said.

He recommended the present bill be researched further to find a satisfactory solution.

Counter objections

William Hoppner, a member of Exon's legal staff who worked with the bill, countered some of the objections.

Although he agreed the drug commission would become an advisory staff, he said citizens would not lose their present powers.

He pointed to several other divisions under the DPI, which had advisory decision-making committees—the welfare, alcoholism and highway divisions.

"We listen to these advisory committees, and go along with their decisions many times," Hoppner stated.

He also said that although the Exon administration had not talked over the exact wording of the bill with the alcoholism and drug departments, the concept has been discussed.

"It just seemed as if combining both divisions would result in economies and efficiencies for all concerned," Hoppner explained.

ARP is here

Complete selection of ARP's keyboard synthesizers only at Sound City Music. Lincoln's exclusive ARP dealer.



144 S. 19th

475-4321

If You Like LEVI'S® You'll Love KING OF JEANS

Come on down,
under Douglas 3
and pick from the
largest selection of
Levi's Jeans
in Lincoln

LEVI'S® Blue Denim Bells

LEVI'S® Big Bells

LEVI'S® Boot cut Flares

LEVI'S® Corduroy Bells

LEVI'S® Big Bell Corduroys

LEVI'S® Brush Denim Bells

LEVI'S® Straight-leg Jeans

LEVI'S® Shirts

LEVI'S® Jackets

Whatever type
of Jean you
want, We Have

"The Home of LEVI'S®"

KING OF JEANS

Under Douglas 3 at 13th & P



The Naked Grape
1127 "P" Street

Pre-Spring Special
Get them now & save
Shirt of the week Reg. \$8.00
this week only \$5.55
All cotton tank tops for men
& women with colorful
hand-embroidered stitching.
BankAmericard,
Mastercharge, & lay
aways welcome.
Now how much
easier can we make
it?

