

Diversion prevents crime

by Donalee Moulton

With the crime rate reaching unprecedented highs, city residents looking for alternative solutions to the problem. Residents of Ward 5 and Ward 3, in conjunction with various social aid groups, have formed a joint steering committee to assess the situation. One solution to

the problem may be diversion, and the committee plans to implement such a program as soon as possible.

Diversion is more than merely a means of treating the problem; it is a means of prevention in many cases. Instead of placing a minor offender directly into the hands of

the law, a diversion member can be called upon to mediate between the victim and the offender. This saves first-time offenders from getting a criminal record and it could save many offenders from going back to jail. It is the opinion of many Ward 5 and Ward 3 residents that incarceration only serves to worsen the problem and if this action could be averted it would benefit the whole community.

In cases where a diversion mediator is called in, for instance in a shoplifting case or private dispute, it will be that person's responsibility to attempt a reconciliation between those involved. In essence, diversion will require co-operation and often compromise on the part of both parties concerned.

Currently, storeowners in the Gottingen St. area have expressed a growing concern over the rising incidents of crime and are open to suggestions. The police have agreed to accompany diversion members to shops to inform the owners when the project gets underway; they have not agreed, however, to lend any more of a hand than this and appear to have little faith in the project.

Diversion has been attempted in other Canadian cities with great success. In York, where a project is under way, they are reporting

recidivism rates of 20% (the usual rate is 80-90% recidivism when handled by police).

The steering committee here in Halifax intends to keep a record of its activities for future use in assessing the recidivism rate and the value of diversion. As well it intends to undertake an attitude survey involving people from judges to delinquents.

Presently the committee plans to run the diversion project on a volunteer basis with the exception of a co-ordinator who will be responsible for much of the running of the project. On March 20th a workshop will be held to train volunteers and introduce them to as many facets of the judicial system as is possible.

The steering committee has looked well into the future and are considering being on call 24 hours a day and expanding their number of full time paid employees. (Those professionals who are currently involved in the project are on temporary "loan" from such organizations as Black United Front, Welfare Rights, Legal Aid, New Options, and Big Brothers). They also see the time when they will be able to aid the offenders more directly by arranging for their stays at outdoor places, such as Pioneer Village.

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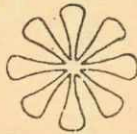


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New concept in family planning

by Lorna Muzzerall
Brian P. Duggan

Family planning is a concept that has arisen in the last few years. The rise in the cost of living as well as other socio-economic factors have presented many problems to those who want to raise a family, but not a large one. More and more people are turning to some method of birth control to help them cope with the situation. The people of Australia have been using a natural method of birth control that was discovered by Doctors John and Lyn Billings twenty years ago. This method is called either the Billings or the Ovulation method.

If you are like most people, you probably have not heard of this method. To most couples family planning is treated as a passe activity. The women must pop her daily pill while the man hopes that she does not forget. The Billings method of family planning is one where the couple must work together to make it work. By doing this the onus is not only on the woman, the success rate is achieved by the couple as a unit. The fact that both men and women have an important role brings the couple closer together and lets them communicate and discover who they are and what they mean to each other.

Probably the most appealing aspect of the Billings method is that it is natural birth control. This eliminates the necessity of taking the pill which, as some women have found out, can lead to uncomfortable side effects. The method is based on scientific knowledge which has been proven by the many years of work done by the Doctors Billings.

The most important point to

remember is that the method will not work unless both the man and the woman are involved.

This is not a contraceptive method but one in which all pregnancies can be planned, and in some instances of infertility it can help couples achieve pregnancies. Thus it works both ways.

Even though the Billings method was discovered twenty years ago in Australia, it has just come to Canada. The method is taught on a very personal basis and success has been reached in teaching it to the blind and to people in underdeveloped countries. The method is now being taught in Ontario and some local groups are now forming. They formed after an introductory lecture by a couple from Mississauga, Ontario. The reaction to this lecture was very encouraging and some Halifax couples are now testing the method for themselves.

Most of the problems that the organizers of these groups have encountered have been simply bad reactions by some people. Some think that it is just the rhythm method—it is not! Doctors do not have the time that it takes to teach the method, thus they do not recommend it. Drug companies who make great profits from pill sales have been trying to squelch the media from letting people know that there is an alternative to the almighty pill.

If this message has been received by interested people at Dalhousie, they can acquire more information at the Chaplain's Office in the S.U.B. or by phoning 454-8541 or 424-2288.

It is worth a try.

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