

## Public scrutiny makes DARE trainers 'mad'

Alabama anti-DARE activist Judy Mclemore and a friend secured permission to attend a training session for DARE officers, and soon discovered that the officer subjected to this training has a very fragile sense of identity, easily threatened. Sergeant Osmer, who had spoken to Mclemore before the training session, told her that "anyone who didn't like the DARE program was his 'enemy' and if anyone messed with the DARE program 'it will make me mad.' "

Mclemore and her colleague requested to see a copy of the DARE training manual being studied by the officers (which, according to federal law, should be available to every citizen), and quickly found that they had poked into a hornet's nest. First, an officer was assigned to sit with the two observers, but this officer left after becoming uncomfortable with the arrangement.

Mclemore reports: "At this point, Captain Randy Amos came over and sat down behind us and stayed for the remainder of that session. At break-time, he came up and said that he wanted to talk to me. I could tell that he was upset but still had no idea what had occurred to cause him as well as the others to be so agitated. . . .

"He began by saying that the DARE Board had met

that morning and voted on whether to allow us to attend the training or not, and had decided to allow us to attend. But, he stated, 'you have been disruptive during the entire day.' By this time, many of the officers had gathered around us. I searched my mind for any disturbance we may have inadvertently caused but came up blank. So I asked him, 'how did we disrupt the meeting?' He replied, 'because you are resented.' More confused than ever, I then asked him exactly why were we resented. The Captain explained that all the men were aware of a letter that I had written to Governor Guy Hunt and therefore resented our presence at the seminar. . . .

"The officers seemed totally convinced that we were the enemy and by this time, we were surrounded at every turn by a DARE officer. They were making statements and throwing questions much faster than we could possibly answer. (It occurred to me at this time what an interrogation might be like.)"

She turned on the tape recorder she had brought to the seminar while this confrontation occurred. One officer reached over and turned it off, and later, another stole the tape. "To say the least, I was revolted. I recalled how only a few hours earlier I had seen a statement in the DARE workbook that read, 'Stealing a cassette is an example of a high-risk low-gain behavior.' And my mind immediately went back to the humiliating treatment we had just endured from the DARE officers." The police later admitted that they had, indeed, stolen her cassette; but they did not return or replace it.—*Leo Scanlon*

the broader social question is: Should such problems be addressed by government agencies, police agencies, in the first place? While one is naturally sympathetic to the plight of those who are truly victimized, there is something chilling about the image of a uniformed representative of the state police agencies passing out candy and teddy bears to children who are then induced to complain to the state about their family circumstances.

Behind the concern about "nipping abuse in the bud" there lurks a more arrogant and ominous attitude, reflected in a DARE manual handed out to officers instructing in the middle school grades:

"Many child development experts believe adolescence is stormy because *adults are ambivalent* about how grown-up they want youths this age to be . . . *adults often expect more than adolescents are capable of giving* . . . the simple ideas and truths that *adults* may have presented earlier no longer work for adolescents . . . adolescents want *explanations and real answers*."

The manual goes on to lead the officer into the real meat of the DARE program, the exploitation of adolescent conflict

by an adult who wishes to alienate the child from the influence of parental religious or moral values. While it is of course true that adolescence is a natural time for questioning one's parents' authority, it is quite another matter when a third party, a policeman, intervenes to *steer* that process in such a way that family ties are further weakened, telling a 12-year-old that he is now "an adult," the peer of his parents:

"Adolescents are beginning to recognize that everything is not strictly *good or bad, right or wrong*, but that there are *shades of gray to moral problem solving and decision making*. As a result, they are influenced less by the power of individuals who are bigger, older, or in authority, and more by *their own ability to make moral decisions* . . . the best way to present information is not through threats, statistics or *lectures about morality* . . ."

The officer is taught to encourage the child to act on his or her own "independent process of judgment." It is no wonder that the effect of such a New Age schema is to increase the use of drugs—after all, the 12-year-old is no longer interested in the attitudes of the parents. As the DARE officer is instructed to explain to the sixth graders, they are "no