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Crime Commission Recommendations

In the Pennsylvania Crime Commission's 1984 Report it was reported that Commission personnel presented, on February 22, 1983, eight pieces of legislation to a joint subcommittee of the Pennsylvania House and Senate Judiciary Committees for review. Many of these recommendations have taken the form of House and Senate Bills which have been introduced into the General Assembly. A report on the recent status of the legislation follows, as well as a recap of the Commission's original recommendations.

Included were proposals to:

■ Block the printing or other dissemination of material that would aid or abet the obtaining of any telecommunication (telephone) service by fraud. This proposal addresses the telephone/utility "freak" underground which educates individuals and groups in how to steal services. The education has been accomplished by the publication and dissemination of false or counterfeit telephone and credit card numbers, as well as plans, diagrams or methods for the construction, assembly and/or use of any device, instrument or gadget which may be used to avoid payment of lawful telephone/utility charges. Such activity ultimately causes increased rates for legitimate users.

The substance of this proposal was incorporated in Senate Bill 938 and House Bill 1378 which were introduced into the Legislature and subsequently referred to Committee for further review.

■ Clarify and remove inconsistencies in Pennsylvania's Electronic Surveillance Act thus bringing it into conformity with federal law. This proposal would remove certain definitional ambiguities, expand the number and types of crimes subject to electronic surveillance, conform 18 Pa.C.S.A. 5709 to its counterpart, 5708, broaden the emergency situation provisions, liberalize disclosure and dissemination requirements, provide for a prospective amendment legitimizing continued interception of once unanticipated conversations and reconcile certain rules of criminal procedure.

The substance of this proposal was incorporated in Senate Bill 976 and House Bill 1779.

■ More effective loansharking control laws. In 1972, a law was passed (Act of December 29, 1972, 18 P. S. subsection 4806.1) providing strict penalties for loansharking. This law was inadvertently repealed when the Crimes Code was enacted in 1973. In 1983, House Bill 1379, Printer's No. 1665, and Senate Bill 940, Printer's No. 1147, were introduced into the Pennsylvania General Assembly providing for control of loansharking. It is unrealistic that Pennsylvania has attempted to fight organized crime for almost 14 years without a provision specifically making loansharking illegal. Hopefully such legislation will deter one of organized crime's major areas of income and stop related crimes committed by victims to pay debts.

