

Family Service Looks at 'Youth Problem'

Say Misrepresentation Has Confused Public

Throughout the United States today, there is a high degree of public confusion as to the extent and seriousness of the "juvenile delinquency" problem, according to the Family Service Association of America.

In this city, as in others, says the Family Service of Oakland County, one of the national association's members, hard incidents of juvenile crime at times produce the conclusion that teenage youth is on a rampage—no longer subject to parental controls.

At other times, the fact that only three out of 100 youngsters between 10 and 17 get into police hands during a year's time is used to argue that the problem is confined to a small, irresponsible element in the population.

"MORE THAN a million American youngsters apprehended by police each year present a problem which can be solved," declared Miss Stella M. Martin, executive director of Family Service of Oakland County.

"There were 161 such arrests in Birmingham in 1956. Such figures, however, need careful examination before they can be used to prove anything," Miss Martin added.

To provide some clearer perspective of the delinquency problem, Family Service, located at 188 Oakland avenue, took the occasion of National Family Week, May 5 to 12, to issue some guides for average citizens in weighing the problem nationally or locally. Here are some to keep in mind:

1. Juvenile delinquency is not a problem of the present American generation alone.

During each war period there has been an inevitable increase in youthful crime. Since 1948, delinquency has increased a bit steadily but the problem cannot be considered out of all bounds.

AS FAR BACK as Colonial days "unruly, vicious and criminal children" were recognized as a social problem. A Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents was incorporated in New York in 1829. Report of a big city social agency in 1881 found typically that "many thousand children, without proper guardians were wandering in the streets and prowling around market-places, docks, and resorts, constantly tempted into a criminal life."

2. Bare statistics are misleading.

Current figures on delinquency in any community tell only part of the story. In a quarter century, community living everywhere has become more complex, as witness, for example, the vast increase in teen-age automobile drivers. At the same time, police detection methods have become more efficient.

THUS, TOO, one might say there are not only more laws and regulations to snare youthful offenders but our police are more skillful in apprehending them. Figures on arrest may be highly deceptive unless true comparisons can be made. As a matter of fact, with great variation in police reporting methods, there are no truly accurate national figures on juvenile crime apprehension.

3. Not every juvenile arrest represents a serious crime.

Although the FBI estimates more than a million juvenile arrests annually, the majority of these are minor, one-time offenses such as petty stealing or driving without a license. Less than 400,000 of these million arrests became court cases in 1955. While this number represented a 70% increase over 1948, some allowance still must be made for a 16% increase in the youth population during that time.

THE 100,000 cases represented one in 50 of the 20,000,000 youths between 10 and 17 in 1955.

4. Sweeping statements, without proof, should be challenged.

Concern for youth sometimes leads to exaggerated or downright inaccurate claims about delinquency which go unchallenged.

In one large city, a newspaper carried the fat assertion that 55% of all burglaries are committed by juveniles. Austin Kiplinger, of Kiplinger News Letter, called this inaccuracy, as follows:

"The fact is that only 20% of all burglaries, nationally are solved by arrests—meaning that someone is apprehended in 200 burglaries out of 1,000 committed. It may be true that 55% of the 200 who are caught are juveniles—inexperienced youth—but any policeman and any crime analyst knows

manipulation common in attitudes toward taxes and traffic violations, the American dream of the great 'give-away'; and the ideal of the movie—see—in all of this we may see true causes.

"TWO WARS during the lifetime of this generation of young people have introduced them to the 'live now' philosophy, the grasping of all that life will ever offer in a short time, the idea of easy money and easy spending.

"One must find answers to the current ills of family life, increasing divorce rates, and ever increasing numbers of mentally ill. The search must be more appropriately made in the adult created culture than in its innocent victims—among them the juvenile delinquents."

7. ALL OF US must accept responsibility for creating delinquency.

Delinquency may be attributed directly to conflict and breakdown of family life in individual families—but it also is due to social failures for which the whole adult population shares responsibility.

Norman Lourie, executive deputy secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Welfare, says:

"In a period of increasing national wealth, full employment and high standards of living, we can no longer blame delinquency on poverty and economic stress.

"The disintegration of moral values and standards presented to youth, the amoral and social values of an acquisitive society, the

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CONSTRUCTIVE proposals for reducing delinquency also may be ineffective when they are offered as "panaceas" but on closer examination are found to touch only part, and sometimes only a small part, of the total problem.

These may range from essay contests to promote "good citizenship" to increased recreation facilities for children in "poor" neighborhoods. They may never reach the unhappy withdrawn youngster who needs help most.

6. There is no one "cure" for juvenile delinquency.

U. S. Children's Bureau, after much research, is convinced that "no panacea for preventing or reducing delinquency has been discovered."

ANY EFFECTIVE campaign to reduce delinquency needs to be based on careful research and to include total community forces in its scope—from churches to schools, from police departments to social agencies, and most important, from the individual family within whose conflict and disharmony the delinquency may be produced.

Family counseling agencies, recreational services, mental health clinics, and group work agencies all can play an important part in lessening delinquency but by themselves are ineffective.

Dr. Eleanor T. Glueck, who, with her husband, Professor Sheldon Glueck, has been responsible for intensive research at Harvard University on the causes of delinquency.

Notice is hereby given that any person who has the qualification of an elector and who will have such qualification on the day of said elections and who is not already registered upon the registration books of said Township, may register at the Township Clerk's Office in the Township Hall at 20680 Berg Road, every day Tuesday through Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Mondays from 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. until May 3, 1957.

MONDAY, MAY 6, 1957, the last day to register, the office will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Fannie Adams,
Township Clerk

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