

# Our Rejected Children

*By*

ALBERT DEUTSCH

*The shocking, uncensored story of American children in trouble — why they get into trouble, how they are treated in "correctional" institutions, what they become as a result. By today's outstanding writer on public welfare problems.*

# OUR REJECTED CHILDREN

*By Albert Deutsch*

Albert Deutsch has written in this book the story of juvenile delinquency. Based mainly on his coast to coast survey of so-called "reform schools," jails, and courts, during which he interviewed children, as well as the adults who were attempting to cope with their problems, it exposes widespread mishandling, general failure of real reform, and inability on the part of even the best officials to carry out effective correctional measures with the meager resources at their command.

But this book is much more than an exposé, for it goes beyond a trained reporter's picture of the way a large number of boys and girls are treated by our society and offers a program of real reform. It considers the reasons children get into trouble, so often connected with the same factors which might prevent or cure delinquency — schools, parents, courts, housing, comic books, movies, radio. It discusses how the people and the institutions involved can help the

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*By Albert Deutsch*

THE MENTALLY ILL IN AMERICA

SHAME OF THE STATES

SEX HABITS OF AMERICAN MEN; A SYMPOSIUM

ON THE KINSEY REPORT (*Editor*)

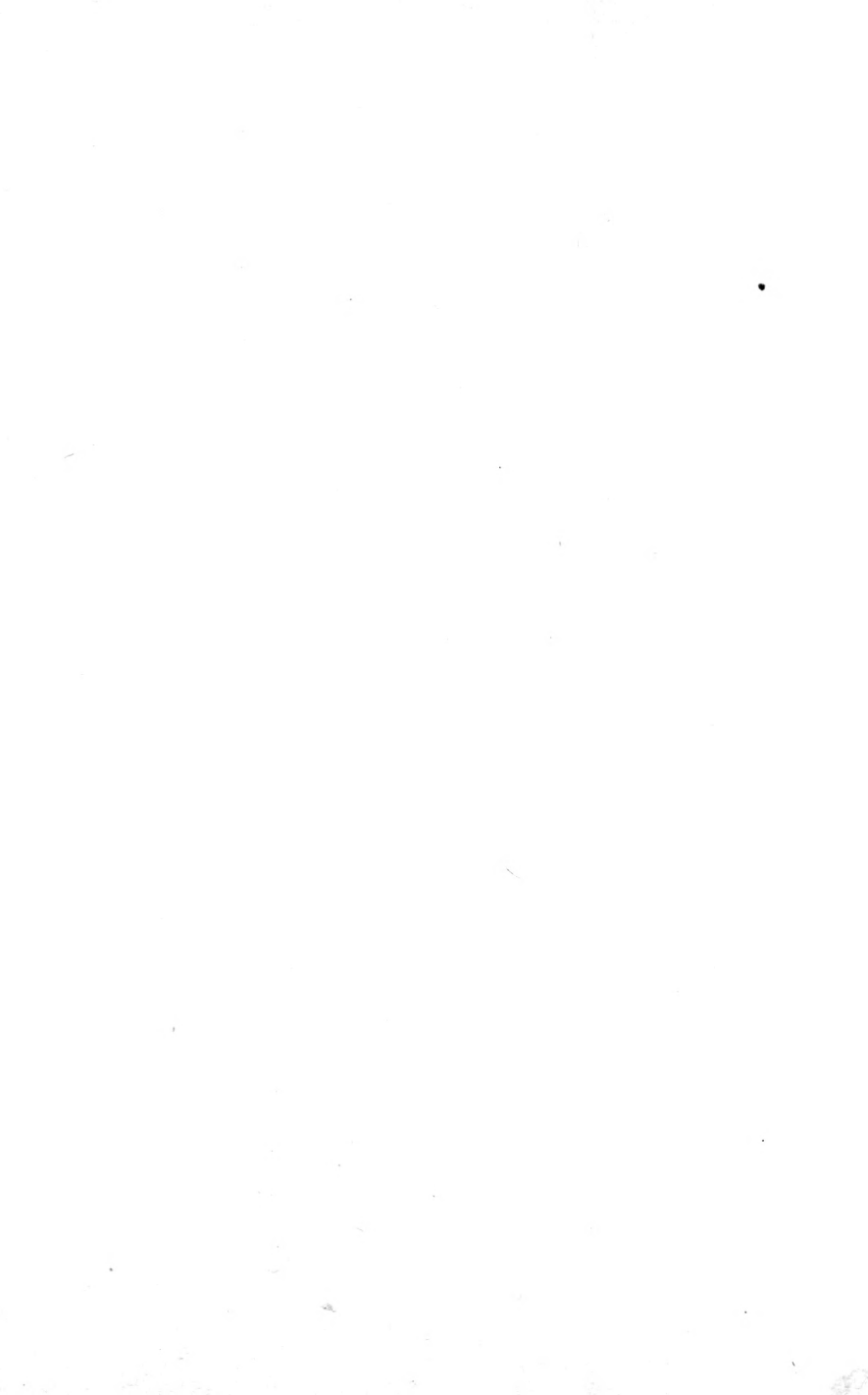
HISTORY OF PUBLIC WELFARE IN NEW YORK STATE, 1867-1940

(*with* DAVID MOSES SCHNEIDER)

OUR REJECTED CHILDREN



*Our Rejected Children*





# Our Rejected Children

*BY ALBERT DEUTSCH*



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1950

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## Foreword

THERE are few social problems about which the public has done more hysterical wringing of hands and less intelligent thinking, more talking and less doing, than on juvenile delinquency. It is not like venereal disease, for example, which could not be successfully attacked until one could come right out and call it by name in print, on the air, and in public meetings. There has been no shy holding back on juvenile delinquency. Every adult is an expert on the subject, having once been a child; so if juvenile delinquency could be talked to death, it would have disappeared long ago.

Many good speeches have been made on the subject, many good articles and books written. But there has long been need of a book on juvenile delinquency that is more than a compendium of useful knowledge on the generally accepted causes of delinquency and the tried-and-true methods of dealing with it. This is a field in which bubbles need to be pricked, theories examined and re-examined and rejected if they do not stand up under a dispassionate study, results appraised to see if they really justify claims made for them, methods and even motives questioned. It is also a field in which the grist of the mill — human beings — must be studied with warmth of human understanding and not merely through the eyes of cold science. In *Our Rejected Children* Albert Deutsch has given us such a book.

people in the field, react with vehemence to any public criticism of these institutions and even tend to assume a vigorously defensive attitude when brutality or some other scandal is exposed in a specific school. Superintendents who would not tolerate that sort of thing in their own institution seem to feel that any reflection on one training school throws a shadow on all of them. Their desire to make the public feel that a situation under criticism is not typical of training schools as a whole causes them to resist efforts to throw light into some very dark corners where ugly things are lurking, and to attempt to cast over the whole training-school field an aura of sweetness and light which does not exist in most institutions.

In the matter of the continuance of corporal punishment, for example, some of the best superintendents in the country must share the blame with the worst. In the section on institutional treatment of the Attorney General's Conference on the Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency, held in Washington in 1946, a resolution calling for the abolition of corporal punishment and other specific forms of brutal punishment in juvenile training schools was finally passed by a vote of 20 to 5. The vote followed a long and bitter discussion in which a number of our best training-school superintendents gave open or tacit support to those who opposed the resolution calling for abolition. The five who voted against the resolution included members of the better group.

In the course of the discussion, several of the most vigorous opponents of the resolution said that they did not and would not practice corporal punishment themselves, but did not want to tie the hands of any superintendent who felt that he had to use it. It was pointed out that they were

thus giving encouragement to quick-tempered or downright sadistic superintendents who could not be trusted to use corporal punishment with restraint or judgment, and were giving ammunition to those who were fighting to continue corporal punishment in states where individuals and civic organizations were trying to bring about its abolition.

It is a grim fact, which nobody can escape, that there have been in the past ten years several deaths of boys in training schools as the direct or indirect result of beatings which they received as official punishment. Mr. Deutsch has cited some of these. He gave the benefit of the doubt to one school in which two boys committed suicide in the punishment cells after being beaten. As a matter of fact, there was considerable evidence that at least one of these boys died as the result of a beating and was hung up by his belt to simulate a suicide. The Iowa Training School, to cite another example, will be a long time living down the tragedy that occurred a few years ago when a boy died as the result of being given a severe beating and then being required to work on the coal pile in the broiling sun. The lurid aftermath was a riot and mass break. The first day after the boy died, 179 boys ran away, 44 more two days later, and an average of 15 to 20 a day for some time thereafter. State troopers were chasing boys all over the state like rabbits for weeks. In a half-dozen other states in recent years the exposure of brutal punishments which could easily have resulted in the death of a boy led to the dismissal of the superintendent and other personnel.

It is only fair to point out that the use of corporal punishment in juvenile institutions and the excesses to which it is carried at times stems directly from the attitude of the public

on the subject. The list of sure-fire solutions for juvenile delinquency proposed by laymen is usually headed by the simple solution that begins and ends with those familiar lines, "Spare the rod and spoil the child." This probably has more adherents than any other panacea, despite the fact that most delinquents have had the daylights whaled out of them for years by experts: by fathers and stepfathers and step-stepfathers who are mighty handy with the rod when they are sober and really good at it when drunk.

Many delinquents have had the double advantage of being whipped also by experts who are paid to do it and therefore have a professional touch that should succeed where the fathers and other amateurs have failed. I talked to one of these lucky children not long ago in the training school of a proud and populous Midwestern state. He was an under-sized boy of fourteen with a high intelligence and a low emotional boiling point. His parents were divorced; his father had married a woman the boy didn't like and his mother had married a man who didn't like him. He had been sent to the training school for running away from "home." For infractions of the rules, mostly trivial matters, he had been flogged six times in four months: spread-eagled out, held down by four other boys, and whipped by the assistant superintendent with a heavy leather strap. For some strange reason, it did not seem to have helped this boy. He still felt insecure and rejected. I suppose you cannot expect even the best methods to work all the time.

Perhaps I am giving too much space and thought to this phase of the total problem Mr. Deutsch is discussing. If one counted the pages devoted to training schools, he would find that *Our Rejected Children* is by no means overweighted in



the direction of public training schools in general and bad ones in particular. It is only a part of his thesis that the typical training school is a "disgraceful blot on a democratic and rich society." He realizes that we must do more than improve them, that "the state training school is but one way station along the road that carries so many child delinquents to the terminal of adult crime." Nor does he attribute the weakness of these schools entirely to the shortcomings of those who operate them, but considers them rather "a symbol of neglect, a symptom of a social disorder."

A great deal of the book is devoted to a readable and provocative discussion of other subjects, such as "Facts and Fancies about Child Crime," "Mobilizing against Delinquency," and "The Parent as Culprit and Scapegoat." There are chapters on juvenile courts and probation services as well as informative description and appraisal of such new programs as that of the California Youth Authority and such older ones of great significance as the Chicago Area Project and the Back-of-the-Yards Neighborhood Council, functioning in the shadow of Chicago's stockyards. The research findings of the Gluecks and of such projects as the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study are ably interpreted.

There are distressing and disturbing chapters on "Children Who Kill," and on the widespread practice of confining children in county jails. These are subjects on which we need to be distressed and disturbed. Approved detention facilities and procedures are described, including such outstanding facilities as Youth House in New York City.

A particularly timely chapter is the one on "Our Crime-breeding Culture," in which some of the factors in American

society that have given us our unenviable crime rate are outlined and analyzed, and the syndicated crime which is now exciting public attention is placed in its proper relationship to the white-collar crime that derives no less surely than the rackets from "our crass materialistic culture."

Albert Deutsch has won distinction by his writing in the mental health field. He is fully conscious of the lack of adequate psychiatric personnel and facilities in most American communities, and has always stressed the point that many delinquents are emotionally disturbed children in need of psychiatric attention. He believes that one of the great weaknesses of training schools and other agencies dealing with juvenile delinquents is their lack of adequate psychiatric services. He does not agree, however, with those who regard virtually every training-school inmate as an emotionally disturbed child requiring prolonged psychiatric treatment. A large number, he thinks, could use psychiatric counseling for better insight into their problems, but for the most part it is the socio-economic environment, not the child, that needs adjustment.

His interesting chapter on comic books shows that he is more concerned with their "potentially perverse effect on juvenile culture" than on their importance as a specific factor in delinquency. He does not believe that a convincing case has yet been developed against the comics as a major or even a significant factor in child delinquency. The furious crusade against comic books has had a salutary effect in frightening some publishers into toning down the worst of these books, but the basic defects remain. The comics, he concludes, are "but one segment of the general juvenile

culture to which the average American child is exposed."

In such chapters as "The Rejecting Community" he puts the responsibility for maladjusted children and the delinquency into which they drift exactly where it belongs, on society as a whole. I agree wholeheartedly with him that the wonder is not that so many children become delinquent, or otherwise socially disoriented, but that so many manage to grow into sober adult citizenship in spite of omnipresent invitations to corruption, and with his conclusion that no realistic program for reducing delinquency to a minimum could possibly be complete without consideration of the need for changing our culture.

Instead of forever talking about the necessity for adjusting the child to society, as Bishop Sheil says, we must consider to what kind of society we are adjusting the child. We must think in terms of a better society, one in which a child has a fair chance to grow up without becoming delinquent. Mr. Deutsch realizes that this involves a "large-scale operation for developing social health." He challenges us to face our world squarely and to resolutely set about making it a better world for children.

AUSTIN MACCORMICK

*New York City*  
*May 1950*



## Introduction

LATE IN 1947 I started on a journalistic survey of juvenile delinquency. I visited a number of institutions for delinquent children, from coast to coast. Following a pattern set in an earlier investigation of state mental hospitals (subsequently published as a book, *The Shame of the States*), I confined my field work mainly to the "best" states — those ranking among the highest in wealth and culture. I bypassed the lower-category states deliberately, lest it should appear that I had sought out the worst on a muckraking expedition. My institutional visit was necessarily brief, usually, but in each instance it was preceded and followed by extensive interviews with staff personnel and with local experts.

In the course of my survey, I consulted with many leading authorities in the field, talked to scores of reform school inmates, visited detention homes, jails and additional institutions — other than reform schools — where children were maintained, and read through hundreds of pertinent reports, public and confidential. The project began as a single article, an institutional survey for the *Woman's Home Companion*. It developed into two articles for that magazine, supplemented by two lengthy series of newspaper articles — and finally, into this book.

Once the project was begun, I could not easily lay it aside. Questions kept piling up faster than I could find answers for them. I was haunted by the thousands of sad and bitter faces of the troubled children I had encountered in my reform school rounds. It was not enough to report on what was happening to them in institutions. I wanted to know who they were, where they had come from, and what had brought them to these places. Apart from my reporter's interest, I felt, as a citizen, my share of responsibility for their plight.

I knew I couldn't find all the answers. But I felt that if I found some of the important ones, and helped to bring existing conditions and problems to public notice, it might encourage constructive action.

My active interest in the problem had antedated this inquiry into juvenile delinquency. As a research associate in the New York State Department of Social Welfare for several years, I had come in constant contact with the subject, although I did little actual field work. I had collaborated on a history of public welfare in New York State (published by the University of Chicago Press) which had traced rather intensively the historical development of attitudes and practices regarding child delinquency. I had been familiar with the current literature in the field, and knew intimately many of its leading commentators and practitioners.

But most of my data had been obtained at second hand; much of it was conjectural. It was not until I conducted the field-study venture which formed the basis of this book that I felt at last the beginnings of a real grasp of the problem, and of its meaning for our time and our culture.

This book makes no pretense to scholarly depth. It is a

reporter's account of what he saw, heard and read. It is offered as a supplement to existing books on juvenile delinquency — written, perhaps, from a fresh and unusual angle. Much of it is necessarily impressionistic in character, with all the possible defects inherent in accounts of personal observations and experiences.

I should add, however, that I did check the objective accuracy of my data wherever possible. For example, in my conversations with institutional inmates, I used from my voluminous notes only material that was verified by at least one reliable staff member. I checked my own findings, wherever possible, with such documents as the excellent series of reports on individual state training schools published by the Osborne Association during the past decade, based on the field investigations made by its director, Austin MacCormick, and other staff members.

The first part of this book describes the conditions of child delinquents in some public and private institutions; the second part traces the community backgrounds of these children, and takes up the available facts and theories on the cause, cure and prevention of juvenile delinquency.

The facts, as I found them, shook me profoundly. They added up, in my eyes, to a black record of human tragedy, of social and economic waste, of gross brutality, crass stupidity, totalitarian regimentation in institutions and a corroding monotony even deadlier than physical violence.

With notable exceptions, the rule in most so-called public training schools I visited was one of fear and repression. The plight of children in some detention homes was even worse. That of thousands of children incarcerated in common jails

was worst of all. I did find a few institutions that were good. Some institutions were advanced in some parts of a program, but terribly backward in others. The good, I felt, was what one had a right to expect in institutions for child care in a rich and civilized community. The bad was inexcusable. The very bad was intolerable.

I found many officials and staff members trying to give kindly and intelligent guidance to their juvenile wards. But for the most part they were sorely handicapped by public indifference, legislative penury and administrative inertia — not to mention the crippling traditional attitude that juvenile offenders are pint-sized criminals and that child reformatories should be operated as if they were junior prisons.

The institutionalized children represent the hard core of the three to four hundred thousand troubled boys and girls who annually pass through our juvenile courts, and the millions more whose problems go undetected and unresolved. They constitute the vast juvenile army of the rejected — an army recruited from hordes of children who have been deprived of the most precious needs and rights of childhood: love, understanding, security, guidance, fun, hope.

They are our rejected children.



## Contents

Foreword by Austin MacCormick	vii
Introduction	xvii

### PART I: *They Call It "Reform"*

1. Facts and Fancies about Child Crime	3
2. The Semantics of Reform	12
3. Illinois Fire-Hose and Burlap Brigade	18
4. Reform School Reformed	30
5. Lancaster — a Big Institutional Slum	37
6. Plainfield — the Hoosier "Duck-walk"	46
7. Lansing — From Hellhole to Haven	55
8. "Bad Girls Should Be Sterilized"	60
9. Bloodless Brutalities in Girls' Schools	65
10. Hudson — Behind the Beautiful Façade	75
11. Warwick — End of the Burma Road	83
12. New York's "Little Alcatraz"	91
13. The Federal Reform School	96
14. California — a Paradox in Light and Shade	105

15. Boonville — a Study in Sadism	123
16. Some Notes on Private Schools	132
17. The Summing-up: Is This Reform?	145
18. A Program for Improvement	163

PART II: *Delinquency — Who's to Blame?*

19. Anatomy of Delinquency	175
20. Children Who Kill	186
21. The Parent as Culprit and Scapegoat	202
22. Battle over the Comic Books	213
23. "Who Is My Judge?"	221
24. Scandal in the Jail Cells	235
25. Detention Homes — Children in Cold Storage	240
26. The Rejecting Community	253
27. Mobilizing against Delinquency	262
28. Our Crime-breeding Culture	279

P A R T I

*They Call It "Reform"*



## C H A P T E R 1

### Facts and Fancies about Child Crime

MOST AMERICANS, including the experts, harbor some pet theory about juvenile delinquency, its nature, cause, prevention or cure. Many of us cling doggedly to one-cause, one-cure approaches to the problem. In some respects, juvenile delinquency may be likened to the fabled elephant surrounded by a group of blind men, each of whom is trying to recognize the animal by touching a particular part of its outer anatomy.

At one time some special factor in child delinquency may be singled out as the chief villain, the main cause. At another, an entirely different explanation may be advanced. Mythology and misinformation abound in this field of public interest, and few people bother to square the contradictions that result. The following are among the infinite variety of conjectures advanced at one time or another (and often at the same time) as *the* main cause of juvenile delinquency:

Too many children are deprived. . . . Too many children are spoiled. . . . Too much poverty. . . . Too much luxury. . . . Too many unhappy families. Too many divorces. Too many broken homes. Parents are to blame; they don't pay enough attention to their children. . . . Children are to blame; they don't pay enough heed to their elders. . . . It's the sexy movies. It's the blood-curdling radio serials. It's the crime-alluring comic books. It's the latest teen-age clothing fad. It's the latest dance craze. . . .

It's just "the way they bring up children these days." It's too much teen-age smoking, or drinking, or "reefer jags." It's the slums, the poolrooms, the cellar clubs. . . . It's the backward public school system. . . . It's the newfangled system of progressive education. . . . It's the alarming high birthrate of feebleminded children. . . . It's emotional insecurity. . . . It's bad heredity. . . . It's economic want. . . . It's the ethical breakdown of our times. It's lack of religion. . . . It's lack of supervised recreation. . . . It's lack of law enforcement. . . . It's the automobile.

From such premises as these have developed a remarkable number of panaceas, or cure-alls, for juvenile delinquency. Here are some samples:

Develop better parents. Sterilize the unfit. . . . Get more psychiatrists. . . . More police. . . . More progressive schools. . . . More discipline. Back to the good old Three R's in the classroom. . . . Stop repressing kids. More recreation. . . . More hard work. Close the dance halls, the grogshops, the poolrooms. . . . Clear the slums. Build character. Eliminate poverty. . . . Stop coddling children. . . . Distribute more Bibles. . . . Enforce a strict curfew for juveniles.

The farther people are removed from actual involvement in the delinquency problem, the greater their conviction that they know the main cause and the main cure. The professionals in the field are less apt to be sure. They recognize child delinquency as an extraordinarily complex problem arising from an endless number of possible causes, and amenable to a virtual infinitude of possible checks. Any or all of the "causes" listed above might actually be *factors* in the history of a particular delinquent.

The experts know, to begin with, that juvenile delinquency is a vague term that defies a generally acceptable definition. They know it means one thing in a certain community, state

or nation and quite another in a different setting. They know it changes drastically with time and place. They know that the statistical records of child delinquency are in a chaotically disordered state and that it is impossible to get an accurate view of the real extent and gravity of the problem at any time. They know that many so-called "child crime waves" have been manufactured by sensation-mongering newspapers, by law enforcement authorities seeking higher budgets and by overhysterical individuals and groups riding some pet hobby.

They know that what may be deemed a praiseworthy act in one area or in one period may be condemned and punished as a delinquent act in another. Several generations of Americans, for instance, have extolled the Horatio Alger bootblack as a symbol of juvenile self-reliance. Still, many cities witness periodic police roundups of teen-age bootblacks, who are haled to children's courts as delinquents, for violation of child-labor laws.

They know that "juvenile delinquency is what the law says it is." It is a legal term, changing in character and expanse from state to state. There is, to be sure, a basic area of juvenile delinquency which can be identified in nearly every state of the Union — namely, the commission of an act by a child which, if committed by an adult, would be regarded as a criminal offense. But around that hard core are concentric circles of other acts which, in various states and localities, are considered delinquencies when committed by children, but not legal offenses when adults commit them. One state, for instance, makes it a punishable offense for children to smoke cigarettes in public places. Several states forbid children to drink intoxicating liquors. Children who

are truant from school or absent from home without parental consent are liable to be haled to juvenile courts in most states. A child may be adjudged delinquent when he refuses to obey his parent or guardian. Children may be apprehended by the police for "wandering about railroad yards or tracks," indulging in what is considered "immoral or indecent conduct," or "wandering in the streets at night, not on lawful business" in violation of curfew laws. The legal definition of juvenile delinquency in many jurisdictions includes a sweeping reference to "immoral or indecent conduct." Sleeping in alleys is a delinquent act in others. Habituating poolrooms, saloons or houses of ill fame or "growing up in idleness" are other acts which may be adjudged delinquent in some districts. "Incorrigible" and "ungovernable" are very common charges against children brought before the juvenile courts.

In many states the distinctions between "dependent," "neglected" and "delinquent" children are so vague and ill-defined that it is well-nigh impossible to tell where the one ends and the other begins. Many child welfare workers are quite willing, even eager, to see all distinctions between the three groups abolished, viewing all of them as children in trouble and in need of help. Others are quite horrified by the fact that in many places dependent, neglected and delinquent children are all accorded the same treatment, without discrimination between the "innocent" and the "guilty," the "good" and the "bad." "Disposition" and the institutional discipline of many children — dependent, neglected and delinquent — are often so harsh and severe that it is difficult to see where "protection" ends and "punishment" begins.

The concept of juvenile delinquency was developed during



the past one hundred and fifty years by penologists and welfare workers anxious to protect children from the stigma of "criminality" and to accord them different treatment from that given to adult offenders. In the old days, the common and written laws exempted children up to a certain age (usually seven years) from any legal punishment, on the ground that they were yet incapable of responsibility in the legal sense. But all child offenders above that age were treated as criminals, on the same basis as adults — tried in the same courts, sentenced to the same jails and prisons and even to the same gallows. Gradually they were segregated from the adults, with whom they had shared common penal institutions, and, about one hundred and twenty-five years ago, they began to be placed in separate "juvenile reformatories." The first juvenile court in this country was established in 1899; they are now found in every state.

But what is the proper age of the "juvenile"? Here again the laws and customs are most confusing.

In most states of the Union, a juvenile delinquent is any law offender under eighteen years of age. But in some states the maximum age is sixteen, and in several it is twenty-one. Again, in nearly all states, a child who commits certain types of offenses (such as murder, highway robbery and rape) is subject to trial in criminal courts; the same kind of punishment as that to which an adult might be sentenced — including the death penalty — may be meted out to him. There are numerous cases on record where in recent years children of thirteen and fourteen have been tried on first-degree murder charges under the shadow of the electric chair or the gallows. Many life imprisonment sentences have been imposed on such juveniles.

One aspect of our confused handling of child delinquents was highlighted by a recent incident in South Carolina. A ten-year-old boy was haled into court on a charge of stealing. The case history showed that the lad's father had died shortly after his birth, and that his mother had abandoned him two or three years later. He was "passed around" thereafter among relatives and neighbors, failing to get a secure foothold anywhere. He had started stealing at six, and had been apprehended by the police several times by the time he was ten. The judge presiding over his case made several efforts, all unsuccessful, to obtain a suitable foster home for the boy. He could not send him to the state training school for delinquents because the law limited admission to boys between twelve and seventeen years of age.

Because the reform school would not receive children under twelve, the judge felt compelled to sentence the ten-year-old boy to the state penitentiary for adult criminals! The child was incarcerated in a cell there, a close neighbor of some of the state's most hardened prisoners.

*What is the extent of the juvenile delinquency problem in the United States?* Nobody really knows with any degree of accuracy. The United States Children's Bureau estimates that between 300,000 and 400,000 children are brought before juvenile courts each year. But not all of these are charged with delinquent behavior. Many juvenile courts handle dependent, neglected and handicapped children along with delinquents. On the other hand, it is known that the delinquents who are actually apprehended and brought to court represent but a small fraction of the total of children involved in delinquent acts.

I am inclined to agree with those experts who estimate roughly that in many areas there are at least twenty child delinquents who elude detection for every one who comes into the toils of the law. This circumstance does not dismay me, convinced as I am that too many of our agencies and methods of handling child delinquents, as now set up and used, tend to develop the very antisocial behavior they are seeking to check. A large number of Americans pass through a phase of child delinquency, minor or serious, and leave it behind to develop into upright, productive and even prominent citizens. Who knows what might have happened to them had they fallen into the clutches of some of the institutions that grind out future criminals from the raw materials of juvenile delinquency passing through their mills?

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, in its *Uniform Crime Reports*, lists the number of arrest fingerprints received at FBI headquarters. These are sent in by co-operating police authorities throughout the country. In 1949, the FBI received the fingerprints of 32,942 persons under eighteen years of age who had been arrested by the police. An additional 26,270 arrest fingerprints were received for eighteen-year-old boys and girls. These figures represent, in general, the cases of youngsters arrested for the more serious offenses. Most juvenile delinquents are not fingerprinted.

The United States Children's Bureau compiles annual statistics on delinquency cases disposed of by juvenile courts in urban areas throughout the nation. The participation of the courts in this fact-gathering is entirely voluntary, and the number of participating courts varies from year to year. One group of courts may never bother to send statistics to the

Children's Bureau, another may comply one year and not the next.

The Children's Bureau figures for 1948 — the latest available — show that 399 juvenile courts in 17 states<sup>1</sup> disposed of 63,951 delinquency cases in addition to 30,285 other types of cases. Four delinquency cases involved boys for every one involving a girl.

Is juvenile delinquency on the rise? Nobody knows exactly, but the available figures do reflect a gradual decline in recent years from the wartime peak, reached in 1945. How much of this decline is due to a real falling-off in delinquent acts, and how much to increasing community resources for handling problems outside the police precincts and juvenile courts, nobody can tell.

In spite of the postwar decline in reported cases of juvenile delinquency, the rate is still higher than it was in the prewar period. According to figures from 76 urban children's courts which have reported to the Children's Bureau consistently over the years, the total of all delinquency cases in 1947 was still 25 per cent above that of the cases reported in 1938.

The FBI reported that in 1949 persons under twenty-one years of age accounted for 14.8 per cent of total arrests in the United States. They played a prominent part especially in crimes against property, representing 27.4 per cent of the 192,122 persons of all ages arrested for robbery, burglary, larceny, auto theft, embezzlement, fraud, forgery, counterfeiting, receiving stolen property, and arson.

The 1946 FBI report noted that arrests of girls under

<sup>1</sup>Arkansas, Connecticut, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

eighteen years of age had increased 198 per cent since 1939, while arrests of boys under eighteen increased 48 per cent for homicide, 70 per cent for rape, 39 per cent for robbery, 72 per cent for assault, 55 per cent for auto theft and 100 per cent for drunkenness and driving while intoxicated.

The rate of child delinquency fluctuates with changing socioeconomic trends, with the rise and fall of general living standards, with good times and bad, with the changing thermometer of group tensions, with public calm and turmoil. Nobody can tell when the next great epidemic of delinquency will break out.

As it is, it remains a problem of great dimensions. Our annual investment in social agencies and institutions for the handling of juvenile delinquency totals many millions of dollars. Far more important is the toll in terms of the economic deprivations of young and old offenders, amounting to billions of dollars a year; of the personal and family tragedies, the human heartbreak and misery involved in the drama of crime; of the twisted personalities and chilled souls of reclaimable but unreclaimed children who are allowed, mainly through social neglect, to develop into predatory adults skulking through the underbrush of society.

The child offender is the father of the adult criminal: that is a basic fact in the general crime picture. If that parental relationship is to be severed, it must be done by people — many people — who do not only *know* but who *understand* the elemental forces that lie behind juvenile delinquency, and who are prepared to act co-operatively and constructively on that knowledge and understanding.

## The Semantics of Reform

IN MY STUDIES of the care and treatment of the mentally sick — both as historian and as journalist — I had developed a respect for the power to distinguish between the word and the deed. I learned that many neologisms, or new words, were to old actualities what perfume was to the unbathed bodies of the Elizabethan court. No magical change came about in the treatment of mental patients when “mental hospital” was substituted for “insane asylum.” No stigma was actually erased, in the minds of the general public, when “lunatics” and “madmen” became classified as “psychotics.” The old strait jacket held the same terrible power of confinement when it became known as the “camisole.” I had learned that cruel and unusual punishments were often inflicted on patients under such fancy names as “hydrotherapy” and “chemical restraint.”

The modern term, I found, was too often a euphemistic cloak for an ancient and persistent usage. An accepted principle was not always the same as a tolerated practice.

Students of history are sometimes too apt to mistake an isolated reform for a general development. Histories pertaining to a particular field of human endeavor frequently stress the peaks, without sufficient notice of the valleys and abysses in the evolutionary process. A progressive theory enunciated by one person, a progressive practice adopted in

one place, does not necessarily signify a general trend. In the evolution of reform movements, the tempo of practical change has invariably lagged far behind the tempo of progressive theory. I was reminded of this hard fact of history during a visit to Paris in 1948. At the time I made my first pilgrimage to the ancient psychiatric hospital, La Salpêtrière, where the immortal Philippe Pinel struck the chains from the insane in 1795 and ushered in the "era of humane treatment." I had expected to find, in 1948, that this world-famous institution remained at least a center of decent physical care of the mentally sick. How great was my shock when I found mental patients — men, women and children — quartered in the same gloomy rooms that were called "cells" when Dr. Pinel strode through them on his chain-breaking crusade a century and a half earlier!

When the first juvenile reformatory — the House of Refuge in New York City — was opened in 1825, it marked the first concrete application of the philosophy that institutions for child delinquents should be places of reform and rehabilitation rather than places of punishment.

On the theoretical side, the humanization of attitudes toward juvenile delinquency and its treatment progressed at a steady pace. The new philosophies were often incorporated in new laws. Gradually, in many states, the supervision and control of juvenile delinquents were shifted from penal to welfare authorities. The more overtly brutal forms of corporal punishment were prohibited, and some states enacted laws forbidding any kind of corporal punishment in public institutions for children. Social workers, in the face of stubborn opposition, gradually took over some key spots formerly held by correction officers. Emphasis (on the theoretic-

cal level, mostly) shifted from the ideal of custody and punishment to that of cure, and finally to prevention of juvenile delinquency. Modern slogans and catch phrases symbolizing this trend became increasingly popular — “There’s no such thing as a bad child,” “You can’t beat badness out of a boy,” and the like. In laudable efforts to remove stigmas, the “youthful criminal” became in turn the “juvenile delinquent,” the “problem child,” and finally the “child with a problem.” The public “juvenile reformatories” became “industrial schools,” “agricultural schools” and “training schools.”

New terms were invented in rapid succession to express the newer ideas and approaches. People in the field, good and bad, caught on to the lingo. Whatever the actuality, whatever their personal views and practices, they deemed it discreet to adopt the modern slogans, catch phrases and neologisms.

But the institutions themselves, for the most part, remained isolated, geographically and socially, from the general community. They were rarely visited by members of the general public. It took legislative appropriations to transform the new theories into practice, and these were seldom forthcoming. After all, children have no votes and hence no political pressure power — least of all the delinquents among them. Progressive theories and progressive phrases increasingly became, in effect, merely fine webs spun around institutional treatment, hiding the reality from outsiders.

I was forcibly struck by the semantic ironies that had developed in this field as I made the rounds of fourteen state training schools for delinquent boys and girls in nine states and the District of Columbia. Most of these institutions were



reputed to represent the best. Several were known as "model" training schools. I was told by competent authorities thoroughly familiar with the field, that, on the whole, they certainly were above the average among the ninety-odd state training schools throughout the country, with a total population of some twenty-three thousand children.

They called them "training schools," but I wondered what they trained for — when upward of 70 per cent of their inmates graduated into adult crime. In many respects, they were not even "reform schools," but rather juvenile prisons.

Many other modern phrases were dinned into my ears during my rounds. To the uninformed listener, they might sound like impressive symbols of progress. But, to the experienced observer, they often had a hollow and hypocritical ring.

The disciplinary or punishment barracks — sometimes these veritable cell blocks were more forbidding than adult prisons — were known officially as "adjustment cottages," or "lost privilege cottages." Guards were "supervisors." Employees who were often little more than caretakers and custodians were called "cottage parents." Whips, paddles, blackjacks and straps were "tools of control." Isolation cells were "meditation rooms." Inmates were "students," former inmates "graduates." Children helping in industrial and farm labor and ordinary kitchen drudgery — primarily to save expense, not to train the boy or girl for a useful occupation — were in "vocational rehabilitation." Catchwords of the trade — "individualization of treatment," "rehabilitating the maladjusted" — rolled easily off the tongues of many institutional officials who not only didn't put these principles into practice but didn't even understand their meaning.

Within the institutions, old-line staff members and child

inmates enriched my vocabulary with quite another series of esoteric terms, not found in the standard textbooks. Most of my friends in social work were loftily unfamiliar with these terms, which nevertheless were in many ways more accurate reflections of typical institutional life than they could see from afar. I learned that "brick counting" is a form of punishment wherein the boy or girl is made to stand erect for specified periods with his or her nose to the wall, and that "star gazing" means standing at attention with the eyes turned toward the ceiling. I learned that "rice polishing" means forcing a boy to crawl on his hands and knees across a floor strewn with rice grains until bleeding starts or until suffering is intense enough to satisfy the disciplinarian that justice has been done. I learned that "runaway pills" is a humorous term applied to laxatives and cathartics forced on captured runaways "to help keep them running." I learned other significant slang expressions for penal practices to be described in later chapters — terms like "hydrotherapy" or "fire-hosing," "duck-walking," "standing on line," "the slicks," "burlap party" and "walking posts."

The United States Children's Bureau some years ago appointed an advisory committee on training schools, consisting of top experts in the field. This committee drew up a statement of ideal objectives and functions for this type of institution that stands as a model — as yet unattained. It read:

The function of a training school for socially maladjusted children is to provide for children who, because of conduct and behavior problems, are found on the basis of individual study to be in need of the type of treatment offered by such schools.

The objective shall be to prepare such children to function in

society as normally adequate individuals according to their capacities.

The philosophy underlying this statement rests on the acceptance of four basic concepts:

1. That the training school will admit only those children who are in need of and who can profit by its services;

2. That each member of the staff, which must be adequate in number, will be understanding of, and trained in, or educable in the treatment of socially maladjusted children;

3. That the treatment of the training school will function through a unit which serves to bring in close relationship to each other the physical and mental health services, and the educational, recreational, religious and case-work facilities; and

4. That, in order to provide continuity in the process of rehabilitation, the training school will relate the training and after-care periods, through co-operation of the services of the school or the appropriate State agency with community agencies.

How are these noble principles being carried out in practice? Let's go on a tour of some typical institutions.

## Illinois Fire-Hose and Burlap Brigade

MOST STATE training schools for delinquents present an impressive façade to the casual observer — tree-lined walks, spacious lawns, well-groomed gardens. One might even exclaim, as a companion of mine did recently while driving past a training school: “I’d gladly turn delinquent to break into a place like this for a long vacation.”

I am sure that many automobile passers-by have made similar remarks about the beautiful panorama presented to the eye by the Illinois State Training School for Boys at St. Charles, about forty-five miles from Chicago. When it was established a half-century ago, St. Charles was hailed as “the world’s best juvenile reformatory.”

While being driven toward the school by Colonel J. C. Hodgkin, its superintendent, I took the opportunity to ask some preliminary questions. Colonel Hodgkin, I learned, had served for many years in the National Guard of Illinois under Brigadier General Cassius Poust, who, in 1945, was appointed Director of the Illinois Department of Public Welfare by Governor Dwight Green. Poust, in turn, had named as his assistant director Colonel H. E. Thornton, an old buddy in the National Guard, and placed Colonel Hodgkin in command of the St. Charles reform school.

“What was your civilian occupation before you were appointed to this post?” I asked Colonel Hodgkin.

"I was a telephone line repairman," he replied.

"Ever work with children before?"

"No."

"What are your particular qualifications for directing an institution for boy delinquents?"

"Well, that's easy to answer. I've handled thousands of grown men in the Army and the National Guard. It ought to be a pipe to handle a few hundred boys."

Nobody in Illinois was shocked by the fact that every political turnover in the state administration customarily brought in its wake a complete change in the personnel of the public institutions, including those for children. A few years back, a legislative commission investigating conditions at St. Charles observed that, for the past four decades, a Republican had headed St. Charles under a Republican governor and a Democrat under a Democratic governor. Most superintendents had had no qualifications for their jobs beyond their political affiliations. But the military trio in command of the public welfare system under Governor Green represented a somewhat new twist.

As Colonel Hodgin and I neared St. Charles, its vast twelve-hundred-acre expanse unfolded like an idyllic scene. Its well-kept lawns, its shaded trees, gave it the outward semblance of a college campus.

One of the first impressions that struck me as we entered was of a conspicuous orderliness, an obvious cleanliness. I noticed too the quiet deportment of the six hundred boys who made up the "student body" of St. Charles. The superintendent told me, with pride, that corporal punishment was absolutely forbidden here. He didn't tell me much that I learned later from the inmates and from staff members of

unimpeachable veracity — when I talked to them in private.

I then learned, for instance, of the way “hydrotherapy” — which means, literally, water treatment, and is normally used for beneficent purposes in our mental hospitals — was applied at St. Charles. Here’s the description I received at the time:

A boy who had offended his supervisors was taken down to the basement, stripped naked, and forced to stand facing a bare wall. A high-pressure fire hose was then played full force against his spine.

“It’s like needles and electricity running all through you,” a St. Charles boy who had received “hydrotherapy” explained to me. “You yell bloody murder and try to climb the wall. Your blood freezes. It lasts a few minutes, but it seems like years.”

Colonel Hodgkin repeatedly disclaimed any knowledge of the fire-hose treatment. But every boy I talked to who had ever been in Pierce Cottage — the disciplinary barracks for rule violators, known officially and euphemistically as the “adjustment cottage” — knew about the fire hose and many had experienced its icy agony at first hand. Eight inmates had been “fire-hosed” on a single day shortly before my visit.

I asked a staff member at the institution how much real reforming the reform school accomplished.

“About one out of every four graduates of this school returns here for a postgraduate course. Nearly 90 per cent of our graduates turn up in penal institutions later. Figure it out for yourself.”

I asked Colonel Hodgkin for an opportunity to talk to groups of boys alone — with no staff members hovering by.

(I followed this procedure in all institutions I visited. In all cases, I asked the children to tell me what they liked and disliked about the place. I told them frankly who I was and what I was about. I found, invariably, that one gets the truth more readily in talking with groups of institutionalized youngsters than with individuals.)

The boys at St. Charles thought that the food was pretty good, though ill-cooked. Some of them praised the vocational training shops. This part of the program, indeed, I found to be outstanding. Some boys liked certain cottage parents. Others liked the recreation program. But they all hated the deadly monotony. They all complained of excessive beatings by supervisors — in an institution where corporal punishment was “strictly forbidden.”

I saw an inordinate number of black eyes among the boys.

“Oh, they fight among themselves,” some staff members explained.

“My cottage father whacked me,” was a more frequent explanation from the boys themselves.

Broken eardrums here and there gave mute but impressive evidence — backed up by reliable staff sources — of particularly heavy whacks.

I visited, of course, the then notorious “coal pile” to which St. Charles boys were assigned as a means of punishment. I watched boys working at the pile on a hot summer day under a burning sun, sweat streaming all over their begrimed faces. They filled their heavy shovels at one pile, toted it to a conveyor some seventy feet away, and returned for the next load. The job could have been done with dispatch and some comfort if they had had wheelbarrows — but that wouldn't have been strict punishment.

Several boys at the pile complained that, at times, guards inflicted extra punishment by making them carry their coal-filled shovels with their arms outstretched — an elbow-breaking, back-breaking task.

“The gravel-pit detail is even worse than this,” St. Charles boys told me. “You work in the sun all afternoon in the gravel pit, with no shade at all. They let you get a drink before you start. Then you have to wait three or four hours, after work is finished, before you can get another drink. It doesn’t matter how thirsty you are.”

We entered a cottage the dormitory of which was crowded with forty-four broken-down beds, jammed head to foot. Before Colonel Hodgkin had a chance to introduce me, the cottage parent, John L. Frank, told him:

“We need new beds badly. These are terrible. . . . We’re terribly short of nightgowns for the boys. They have to sleep in the clothes they work in. . . . And most of them have no shorts to wear. Can’t we get some of these things?”

Pierce Cottage — the disciplinary house for the most refractory boys — was a veritable slum, bare of furniture. Its dormitory was dirty, gloomy and crowded. The roof leaked badly, and big blobs of scaling paint dangled from the walls and ceilings. Boys guilty of violating institutional rules were transferred from their own cottages to Pierce for periods ranging up to seventy-five days. The house rules read:

1. No talking during meals.
2. No talking in lines to and from details.
3. No talking going to dormitory. Boys will walk with folded arms and go up stairs in a normal manner.

Back in 1941, a St. Charles inmate was beaten to death by a brutal supervisor. The resulting public furore led to the



appointment of a well-known social worker, Russell Ballard, as superintendent. Ballard introduced many reforms, reduced brutality to a minimum, and dissipated some of the atmosphere of fear and repression that pervaded the place. In 1943, he resigned to become head social worker at Chicago's famous Hull House. His successor, Richard Eddy, continued his progressive policies up to the time he was replaced by Colonel Hodgkin, when the political "changing of the guard" came to pass.

"No corporal punishment at all," Colonel Hodgkin told me, again and again. But I happened to see the official report of a staff member concerning two St. Charles students who were beaten with a stick or a strap. These results were noted in the medical report about one boy:

Bruises across left shoulder, below the shoulder bone, along the lower left ribs, along the upper left arm. Crossed bruises on right shoulder, a welt and a bruise on the inside inner area of the shoulder blade.

The second boy, a known chronic enuretic (bed-wetter), had been strapped for wetting his bed. There was a "fairly large scab" on his back right shoulder. The boy was a serious cardiac patient. Both boys had to be sent to the hospital after the beatings.

It was at St. Charles that I first learned of the "burlap party" or "burlap brigade." First, the cellar of the disciplinary cottage was flooded with water. The boys to be punished were then provided with piles of burlap bags and set to work mopping up the flooded floor. They mopped, wrung out the soaked burlap, and then mopped some more until the basement floor was dry.

"Standing on line" — remaining at attention for periods up

to four or five hours — was a standard form of discipline at St. Charles, as it was at most other state reform schools I visited or heard about.

As I went through St. Charles, I witnessed many scenes and heard of many acts that came to mind again later when I read Willard Motley's extraordinary novel, *Knock on Any Door*. The gifted Chicago writer certainly was familiar with the routine at St. Charles when he composed the reform school scenes in the tragic story of his juvenile delinquent.

At St. Charles I met an unusually discerning and courageous man, Theodore Dombrowski, who was director of social service there. Dombrowski was no starry-eyed dreamer but a hardheaded, realistic professional who knew he was dealing with six hundred tough kids. He later resigned to accept a position with an Indiana child care agency.

"I just couldn't take it any more," he told me. "You don't rehabilitate children by the methods of fear and repression that are used at St. Charles. You don't cure delinquency at the end of a fire hose."

Dombrowski related how he had protested, in vain, against the high-pressure fire-hose treatment. He cited six recent cases of unsuccessful protests against "hydrotherapy." Two boys got it for running away, two for "planning" to escape, and two others for leaving the institutional coal pile without permission.

Dombrowski's repeated pleas for abandonment of the fire-hose treatment were turned down with the explanation that it was an effective disciplinary measure: "It shows the boys who's boss around here."

When he protested against the constant display and occa-

sional use of blackjacks on the boys, he was told that these "tools of control" were necessary. Dombrowski charged that one sadistic cottage parent was in the habit of suddenly remembering a real or fancied infraction of the rules on the part of some boy two or three weeks earlier, and inflicting punishment for the past infringement on the spot. One cottage parent was known to the boys as a "damn drunken pig."

Boys were frequently punished by their supervisors without even being given a reason. A boy punished without knowing why is a boy likely to feel that his main object thereafter is to "get by" at all costs, to outsmart his supervisors by any trick, fair or foul. Lying, evasion, deceit, become the tricks of his trade.

The boy who had learned the ways of St. Charles — the pride of Illinois, the hoped-for "best juvenile reformatory in the world" — was eminently fitted for a later career in which distrust, deceit and dishonesty would be outstanding characteristics.

If St. Charles had a repressive atmosphere, it was a high-class boarding school compared with what was known officially as the Security Branch of the St. Charles Training School for Boys at Sheridan, Illinois, about thirty miles from the parent institution. As we approached Sheridan, I could see what Clifford R. Shaw, well-known Chicago expert on juvenile delinquency, meant when he described it to me as a "junior prison on a prairie." Sheridan was a tight little prison structure, covering seven acres and surrounded by a high steel-wire fence. The boys at St. Charles had referred to it, with awe, as "Little Alcatraz."

Boys considered too hard to handle at the St. Charles

school — even too tough for Pierce Cottage — were transferred to the Security Branch at Sheridan.

Sheridan, which is really a cell block in the middle of a dismal plain, is in a very real sense a monument to the crusading zeal of Colonel Robert R. McCormick's powerful newspaper, the *Chicago Tribune*. In 1939 there were a series of escapes from St. Charles. Several of them were climaxed by thefts in the vicinity by escapees. The *Tribune* thereupon ran a series of hysteria-ridden articles demanding the adoption of a "get-tough policy" at St. Charles.

The institution, already harshly repressive in administration, was described in the *Tribune* articles as a "cream puff" school operated by sentimentalists, sob sisters and softies. The inmates were referred to as "hoodlums" and "young criminals" and it was charged that escapees were "terrorizing" the neighboring community. The *Tribune* featured a story recommending that whips be used to cow the "young criminals," along with suggestions for building a high wall around the institution and mounting gun turrets on it.

Panicked by this pressure, the state administration sent armed guards to patrol the St. Charles school.

The *Tribune* continued to feature escapes from St. Charles, accompanied by demands for a more secure lock-up system. When Colonel J. C. Hodgin became superintendent of St. Charles in 1945, the *Tribune* hailed the advent of an "army man" who promised to introduce sterner discipline into the school.

"We are increasing the military training, marching and drills with wooden guns," Colonel Hodgin was quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* at the time. "I am now trying to get five hundred regular army trainer rifles — with all the parts except that the barrels are solid and you can't shoot them."

Meanwhile, largely in response to the continued *Tribune* pressure, the State of Illinois constructed the cell block at Sheridan and called it the "Security Branch."

As we drove into the Sheridan institution, I noticed a group of boys being taken out of the enclosure under the guard of armed supervisors on horseback.

"The boys are being taken to the farm and gravel pit for work," an official explained. "The mounted guards see that they don't escape."

We were ushered into Sheridan by the institution's superintendent, C. E. Miller, a big, beefy man who had formerly served as head disciplinarian at St. Charles. Mr. Miller took out a huge key and unlocked for us two sets of heavy steel gates that led to the cell block.

"You see, it's a pretty tough place to get out of," Miller observed with satisfaction. "We had only two attempted escapes this past year, and we caught them both."

"The people who live around here help us," observed Colonel Hodgin, who had over-all supervision of the Security Branch. "They don't go *looking* for an escaped boy. They go *gunning* for him, and they don't fool."

There were sixty cells at Sheridan, each about ten feet by six, with cots hanging off the walls; fifty-six of the cells were occupied on the day of my visit. Colonel Hodgin told me that another cell block accommodating sixty-three more inmates would soon be built for transferees from St. Charles.

"When a boy misbehaves," Miller said, "we lock him up in his own cell till he cools off. We have no padded cells or 'hot-boxes' here. But sometimes I wish we *had* a few padded cells. We could use them."

When I later examined the institution's disciplinary book,

containing records of all punishments, I learned that the "cooling-off" period for children in solitary confinement *lasted up to thirty days at a time.*

In fact, boys transferred from St. Charles to Sheridan started off with a 30-day sentence of solitary confinement to "break them in." The Discipline Record at Sheridan contained this rule:

Boys who are in their rooms for a 30-day period will be released at the end of 21 days provided that they have a good adjustment while in their rooms. Otherwise, they will serve the full 30 days. Boys in their rooms will be visited as often as time permits.

We were led by Mr. Miller down to the basement, which is used as a recreation room for the inmates after the day's work is done. (The Sheridan boys were not called "students," since many of them got no classroom schooling at all there.) As we descended my nostrils were assailed by an almost intolerable odor. In a dark corner of the basement lay several bushel bags filled with very spoiled potatoes. A Sheridan inmate was stooped over an open sack, culling the spuds and salvaging the few usable ones. He was about to throw a rotten potato on the garbage pile when Superintendent Miller snatched it from his hand, turned it around critically, and remarked:

"Don't throw that one out. It's good enough."

Later, when I interviewed a group of inmates in a room from which staff members absented themselves, I was told that in the basement of the Sheridan cell block a new twist was given to the St. Charles form of "hydrotherapy." The victims at Sheridan were customarily handcuffed to a shower pipe, instead of just being stood in a corner, and had the fire

hose played on their naked backs, full force. There were occasional improvisations on the fire-hose treatment at Sheridan, according to the boys. One declared:

“There was some noise in the playground a couple of weeks ago. The cat [slang for guard or supervisor] picked out four of us, backed us into the cellar, made us strip, then played the hose on all of us till we screamed. He didn’t even ask if we were the ones that made the noise. He just happened to pick us out.”

The cats liked to play “flying home,” one of the boys said. I asked what the term meant.

“The cat gives you a boot in the backside so quick and sharp that you just fly off the ground. If he makes you fly high, that makes him laugh more.”

“We know we have done bad,” one boy observed. “But they keep us locked up here too long. Six months of this is enough for anybody. After that it gets so you don’t care any more about what happens to you.”

Here is an excerpt from the minutes of a conference of professional staff members at St. Charles and its Security Branch, held July 25, 1947:

At the present time the facilities [at Sheridan] are a limited work program, small wood shop, inadequate school program and disorganized group play. It was indicated that the Branch was giving primarily custodial care, and some staff members felt: “This is only a stopping place before they go to the penitentiary.”

The majority of the professionals agree “we would be better off if the Sheridan Branch with its limited facilities did not exist.” But the authorities continued with their plans to build that second cell block at Sheridan.

## Reform School Reformed

THERE IS a heartening sequel to the story of St. Charles and its Security Branch at Sheridan. Following the publication of my reform school articles in the *Woman's Home Companion* and the newspaper *PM* in 1948, a large number of Illinois citizens sent letters to Governor Dwight Green urging that remedial action be taken. The Governor relayed these letters to his State Public Welfare Director, Cassius Poust, for answer. To each protesting or inquiring citizen, Poust thereupon sent a three-page form letter purporting to answer my charges. This letter was replete with such shocking falsehoods, ridiculous distortions, and splashes of whitewash that I was constrained to draft a rebuttal to the "answer" in a lengthy memorandum to Governor Green, which was duly published.

Fortunately, I still had in my possession a thick notebook filled with my notes on the St. Charles visit. I also had signed affidavits of staff members supporting my charges, along with several confidential official reports which thoroughly refuted the whitewash attempt of Director Poust.

I never did learn what inspired Director Poust to draft his awkwardly untruthful "answer" to my charges. I do know that within two weeks after my detailed memorandum to Governor Green was published, Colonel Hodgins's resignation as superintendent of St. Charles lay on Director Poust's desk.



Besides my articles, a brilliantly effective broadcast exposing conditions at St. Charles, by the radio documentarian Ben Park, had helped develop a citizens' reform movement radiating from Chicago.

Other developments followed swiftly. Governor Green directed the Illinois Youth Commission to investigate the situation at St. Charles. The commission's report, in June 1948, confirmed the charges of widespread demoralization and maltreatment, and recommended a drastic staff purge. Several staff members resigned.

Superintendent Hodgin's resignation was accepted in July. Charles W. Leonard, a young and progressive social worker who had directed social service activities in the Catholic Youth Organization in Chicago, was named to replace Hodgin.

Superintendent Leonard was wise enough to realize that no deep-going reforms could be made without first re-educating the staff members themselves. Supervisors whose experience has been limited to a harsh rigid disciplinarian system do not easily change over to a nonpunitive philosophy. The new superintendent drew up a twenty-nine page "Basic Statement of Philosophy" which was made required reading for every employee, new and old. He recommended to the state general assembly, meeting in January, 1949, a clarification of the law as to commitments to St. Charles.

"I plan to recommend a maximum age of sixteen or seventeen," he told me at the time. "All boys coming here should be committed under the Juvenile Court Act. At present, we receive many who are sentenced by the criminal or circuit

courts to a penitentiary in accord with the criminal code. We are running, therefore, both a prison and a training school. In addition, our age span is from ten to twenty-one years, and the variety of cases is unlimited.

“This, of course, makes a treatment program practically impotent, especially when a local newspaper [meaning the *Chicago Tribune*] is constantly exaggerating the number of escapes and making it look as though we are coddling criminals and encouraging their escapes.”

Leonard's efforts at reform were accelerated by the election, in November 1948, of Adlai Stevenson as Governor of Illinois and the latter's immediate appointment of Fred K. Hoehler, a top-ranking social welfare executive, as State Public Welfare Director to replace Poust. Hoehler broke up the “military command” which had ruled the department, and gave great strength to such programs as Leonard was trying to effect at St. Charles.

Leonard's first drastic step was to reorganize the administrative program so as to make the rehabilitation clinic — consisting mainly of the social, psychological, medical, psychiatric and remedial services — the basis and focal point of the whole program, indicating a sharp shift from the former stress on custody and maintenance of the physical plant to a service for the boys centered on treatment.

In a résumé of progress up to July 1949, Superintendent Leonard informed me that many abuses had been abolished, and many employees with the wrong attitude had been dismissed. The institution was now free of politics, and Leonard was completely free in the hiring and firing of personnel within the regulations of the state civil service statute.

"I know you are keenly interested in discipline," Leonard remarked. "This is where we stand at this point:

"We still have Pierce Cottage — but it is quite different from the one you knew. Of course, corporal punishment no longer exists. Silence is no longer the rule in Pierce, and gradually the environment is being relaxed. I am sure you understand why these things must be done gradually. With our large personnel, rapid changes would only create a chaotic condition and undermine the future of our whole philosophy. Example: Over a period of months the idea of having Pierce boys work all day on the coal pile was lessened. Gradually the Pierce detail was used for other work assignments, and \$16,000 worth of mechanical equipment was moved into the coal-pile area. At this point, the Pierce detail is no longer associated with the coal pile.

"Because of our doing this gradually, the staff hardly noticed what was happening and the usual resentment did not appear. Similar things are being done all over the institution and, ultimately, discipline will be controlled by a clinic committee consisting of clinic director, psychiatrist, psychologist and counselor working with the individual boy involved. Numerous privileges for boys are being introduced and this reduces the need for punishment such as was found in Pierce and the old-type training school. A picnic area has been created with outside fireplaces. Cottage parents are encouraged to use this area. Boys go fishing in our lake and have fish-fries."

Leonard described many more recreational reforms of this nature. He told me of his plans to set up a child guidance clinic within the institution, and of modern academic schooling. A full-time resident psychiatrist had been employed for

the first time. A full-time resident clinical psychologist, with an excellent background at the Illinois Neuropsychiatric Institute, had also been added to the staff. The staff of psychiatric social workers, pitifully starved under previous administrations, was being augmented. Prominent leaders in the newer approaches to juvenile delinquency were being invited to address the staff of St. Charles to help indoctrinate and orient its members in modern treatment methods.

“In general,” Leonard observed, “we are doing everything we can think of to sell the idea of treatment to the total staff in order to have all members want to participate.”

In Chicago, State Public Welfare Director Hoehler, former president of the National Conference of Social Work, explained his special personal interest in reforming St. Charles as a symbol of the “human-oriented new deal” in the whole Illinois social welfare system.

“We are all concerned,” he said, “that our institutions actually serve to help reduce delinquency rather than increase the problem in the communities of this state.”

As for Sheridan, the state legislature in 1949 enacted a series of bills, upon recommendation of an investigating commission, that detached the institution from St. Charles and established it as a separate state reformatory for boys under seventeen years of age convicted of felonies. Previously, juvenile felons had been committed to the male reformatory at Pontiac, where they were mixed with adult offenders.

By the time this change in status was made, the second cell block had been built at Sheridan, raising its population to 128 boys — all considered too hard to handle in the open system at St. Charles. Plans were instituted to supersede the original

cell-block buildings with dormitory-type houses of less severe appearance. A new workshop and schoolroom were added, together with expanded recreational facilities.

With the new dormitories, the capacity at Sheridan was raised to 200 boys.

Welfare Director Hoehler, explaining the reasons for detaching Sheridan from St. Charles and transforming it into an independent reformatory, stated:

“We were sending boys to St. Charles who needed better security care and a different kind of treatment because, unfortunately, they were felons in the teen-age group. We were also sending teen-age youths to the Pontiac reformatory, which is intended for older people.

“This new institution is limited to those under seventeen, and we will remove from Pontiac all those who are now sent there and who are bound to come out as hardened criminals because of associations they form there. We shall try to limit intake to first offenders. We hope, in time, to establish at Sheridan the same kind of treatment program we have now introduced at St. Charles.”

I could not feel happy about the disposition of Sheridan, which began operating as a reformatory in January 1950. I didn't like the term “teen-age felons,” applied to juvenile delinquents. I didn't like the way Illinois newspapers referred to the “youthful criminals” at Sheridan. I was convinced that regardless of efforts at improvement, Sheridan must always remain a “prison on the prairie.” But I kept my fingers crossed, hoping that some miracle might be accomplished under the direction of Fred Hoehler.

One other thought made me uneasy: Would all the inspiring efforts invested in St. Charles under the new dispensation be destroyed, as similar efforts had been in the past, when and if the great State of Illinois experienced another overturn of political power?

## Lancaster — a Big Institutional Slum

THE BOYS' INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL at Lancaster, Ohio, is the nation's largest institution for juvenile delinquents. More than 45,000 children have been its involuntary guests since it was opened 91 years ago. Not long ago it had over 1000 inmates there at one time. There were 750 there when I visited it — still the largest population among the country's 90-odd state training schools for child offenders.

The Lancaster authorities are not proud of its reputation for bigness.

"We have far more children than we can handle effectively," Colonel Harold L. Hays, the superintendent, told me. "We've got to handle them on a mass basis. Individual treatment is well-nigh impossible when you have to take so many, from nine to seventeen years of age (some stay till they're twenty-one), for offenses ranging all the way from truancy to murder. Maybe that's one reason why nearly half our graduates return to us for postgraduate courses."

Like most mass institutions for child delinquents, Lancaster's life was dominated by excessive regimentation and deadly routine. The end result was more likely to be the production of robots or antisocial rebels than well-adjusted children prepared for normal community life.

Lancaster, in common with many other reform schools, was operated under a military regime. Military drill played a

prominent part in the training program. Cadet officers, or monitors, were placed at the head of groups. The abuses of this officer or monitor system have long been observed and vehemently denounced by experts.

Wherever the monitor system prevails, there inevitably arise "leaders" who use their powers — some are authorized to beat up or otherwise discipline their fellow inmates — to make flunkies of the weaker boys, to extort bribes, to inflict sadistic punishments, and even to force homosexual relationships. Lancaster's system shared many of these dangers.

Let me make it plain that, in criticizing the institution, I certainly would not attribute its evils to its superintendent; for Colonel Hays, in spite of his military background, manifested a genuine sympathy for his boys during my inspection visit, and in several discussions after that time. What's bad at Lancaster has been bad these ninety years, as repeated investigations have revealed. It is the system and the tradition, rather than the superintendent, from which the institutional ills I found arose.

The following quotations from the official rules and regulations at Lancaster would have seemed more appropriate for an adult army camp than for an institution for child care such as I was visiting.

Cottage groups always march at attention in military formation on the avenues. You should maintain good military bearing at all times, with absolute silence while marching.

Each cottage group maintains complete silence when at attention or parade rest in military formation; also during religious services, in the Detail Hall, and at any other time when that order is given by the officer in charge or the boy leader.



Although you may have become accustomed to smoking before coming here, this practice is not permitted here. To have tobacco or matches in your possession or to use them in any manner is a serious violation of regulations. [Smoking and carrying tobacco, I learned upon examining the discipline book, constituted one of the most frequent causes of disciplinary action. Many of the boys were well past sixteen years of age, and had been smoking for years before commitment to the reform school.]

Whenever you are told to report to any officer or to any building, do so immediately. Address the officer politely and remain standing in a respectful manner. . . . Whenever you are asked your name and serial number by an officer, give it without hesitation.

Special credits, according to the rule book, were given boys who prevented or caught runaways from the institution or who "turn in valuable information." This sort of reward put a premium on "snitching" and tattling — hardly considered a manly act in the outside world for which these boys were supposed to be rehabilitated.

I couldn't put my own impression of Lancaster into better words than those used in the remarks of two Ohio State University sociologists, Dr. T. C. Holy and Dr. G. B. Stahly, who conducted a survey of the institution in 1940 for the Ohio State Public Welfare Department. They said:

Although there have been several studies made of the School, dating as far back as 1919, the scene unfortunately has not shifted appreciably, and the picture painted in those previous studies could in a large measure be reproduced today in the same colors with the same brush.

True, shackles and chains are no longer used and the boys are not placed in solitary confinement. But the "deadpan" look on the faces of the boys, whether on the avenue, at work, at play, in

school or in the cottage, depresses anyone with a sense of human values.

Nor could I improve, save in one respect, on the summary Dr. Holy and Dr. Stahly made at the end of their intensive survey of the Ohio Boys' Industrial School:

The philosophy of the School is based on two sets of facts and the interpretations of them. The first is that since the boy has sinned he owes a debt to society; he must therefore be punished. He is not looked upon as an individual with potentialities which need to be developed; he is thought of as a criminal. . . . Suppression and repression are considered the only kinds of treatment to which the boy will respond.

In the second place, emphasis is placed on the maintenance and operation of the institution, to the disadvantage of the boy. Economy is the watchword. Great pride is taken in pointing out to visitors the neatness of the grounds and buildings, the care with which machinery and stock is handled, and the productiveness of the orchards, the farm and the dairy herd—the boys are incidental.

That philosophy, as I have said, was not the personal philosophy expressed by Superintendent Hays. It wasn't the philosophy of several of the more alert and sympathetic staff members with whom I talked. But it did represent, for all that, the underlying basis for the prevailing practice at Lancaster, ingrained by ninety years of tradition and enforced by legislative penury which denied to the institution the things it needed for modern rehabilitation.

Lancaster, like St. Charles, was considered a model when it was originally built. It was the first institution of its kind to be based on the "cottage plan," where boys are placed in

smaller buildings instead of being congregated in one huge structure. But today most of those cottages are nothing but broken-down, overcrowded slums. Some were condemned years ago as unfit to live in; others are in sad disrepair.

“We shouldn’t have more than thirty-five boys in any cottage,” Colonel Hays told me, “but most of our cottages have more than sixty.” (A maximum of twenty-five would be closer to modern standards.)

Even more shocking than the rundown physical plant was the incredibly shabby appearance of the boys. Most of them were wearing misfit, oversized shoes. Their outworn, prison-made clothing made many look like scarecrows.

Boys in trouble, subjected to stifling routine and regimentation, forced into ill-fitting threadbare clothes that make self-respect almost impossible, deprived of the schooling to which the law entitles them, thrust into institutional hovels — such boys are not likely to work up admiration and respect for a society that treats them so in the name of “reforming” them.

Mr. Staley, Lancaster’s educational supervisor, told me that only 10 to 15 per cent of the boys attended school daily; an additional 40 per cent worked and attended classes on alternate days; the rest got no academic schooling at all.

I was struck by this basic irony at Lancaster, as at other reform schools: boys arrested and institutionalized on charges of being truants were being deprived of a chance to attend school, in spite of the state compulsory school attendance law for the violation of which they had been committed!

“We need a new school plant badly,” Colonel Hays remarked, “but the state legislature hasn’t appropriated the needed building funds.”

They called Lancaster an "industrial school." The main stress was supposed to be on teaching trades to the boys. But I saw very little evidence of real industrial training. There was plenty of work for the boys, yes; but they were engaged mainly in institutional production and maintenance that had little to do with teaching useful skills for normal living.

Lancaster was one of the many juvenile reformatories at which corporal punishment was still practiced openly, under sanction of the law. Rule breakers among its seven hundred and fifty inmates might get anything from a mere reprimand to a whipping with a leather strap at the hands of the disciplinarian. Some were transferred from their regular cottages to a wretchedly dilapidated building known as Auglaize, called a "disciplinary cottage" but looking more like a jail. (The Lancaster boys called it "the jug.") Thirty-five boys were confined there at the time of my visit.

Holy and Stahly, in their report on Lancaster eight years earlier, had declared:

Auglaize Cottage is very old and a distinct fire hazard. This building should be razed as soon as possible.

It had become an even greater menace since, but it remained the official punishment cottage with no immediate prospect of being abandoned.

Colonel Hays handed me a detailed report of disciplinary measures invoked at the institution during a typical month. A total of 360 cases were referred to the disciplinarian in that month. Of these, 55 boys were put to work on disciplinary squads, 147 got time added to their "terms" in the re-

form school, 31 were “spanked” (whipped with a leather strap on the bare buttocks), 11 were spanked on the hand, 26 got both whippings and added time; the rest were subjected to various other forms of discipline.

The offenses listed for disciplinary action included: disobedience, impudence, smoking, escape, planning to escape, immoral act, scheming or loitering, fighting, possessing contraband (as cigarettes, matches, toothbrush handles, knives), playing at work, careless work, favoritism to another boy, trading with tobacco, bed wetting, talking while on detail, or using profane or vile language.

Colonel Hays defended corporal punishment, pointing out that a recent survey at Lancaster had revealed that all but two of the inmates had been subjected to corporal punishment at home.

“We’re only giving them here what they got at home,” he observed.

The fact that nearly all of Lancaster’s seven hundred and fifty students had received corporal punishment before reaching the institution seemed to me an impressive index to its failure to deter undesirable behavior patterns. The whipped ones had landed here, and that was the payoff.

Dr. Miriam Van Waters, one of the best-known experts in the field, put the case against corporal punishment in institutions neatly:

“The injury inflicted in correctional institutions is not to be condemned because it gives pain, or is displeasing to sentimentalists, but because it wrecks the spirit of children and increases delinquency. If someone remarks that parents use the rod and other corrective displays of force, let it be clearly distinguished from the use of corporal punishment by a state

official. The social effects of repressive violent methods of discipline in state correctional schools are wholly bad and they should be condemned by the community as costly, inefficient, stupid and dangerous."

One institutional superintendent put it even more pithily in a survey cited by the United States Children's Bureau:

"Corporal punishment is too dangerous. Too few people are blessed with enough judgment to use it. Those so blessed won't need it."

At no time at Lancaster was I so appalled by its immense size as during the lunch period, when I watched six hundred of the seven hundred and fifty students march into the huge barnlike structure they called the dining room, line up at the serving table where other boys slopped food into their out-thrust trays, proceed to their bench-lined tables, eat (in sulky silence for the most part), and quickly march out again.

Some of the boys didn't eat at all. I asked several why they didn't touch their food.

"Try it yourself."

I did. The coffee tasted like watery mud. The main dish for the day was chile con carne. It looked unappetizing, and tasted worse. I almost broke a tooth on one of the several stones mixed into my chile. At another table, a group of boys pointed grimly to an impressive pyramid they had piled up, consisting of stones carefully extricated from their food.

I noticed that white and Negro boys were segregated at different tables. Jim Crow, I learned, was the dominant pattern in Ohio institutions. I found at Lancaster, as I did elsewhere, that racial friction is highest in reform schools

practicing segregation, as it is lowest in places where racial discrimination is minimized or avoided.

In Lancaster's huge dining room I found a classic illustration of the evil effects of racial segregation. I asked Negro boys at one table:

"Do you feel you are getting equal treatment here?"

"Hell, no," the boys answered in unison. One summed up the feeling of the rest:

"The good assignments around here are 'for whites only.' We get the lousiest cottages and the dirtiest work. We're just niggers, and that's how we're treated."

Later I talked to a group of boys at a "white" table. I asked them how they got along with their Negro fellow students. This was their reply, in sum:

"We hate those guys. They get all the breaks. The supervisors are scared of them. They let them alone, and take it out on us. If we're caught smoking, we get hell. Just go into Patterson Cottage (for Negro boys) and you'll see the floors piled high with cigarette butts. The supervisors let them smoke all they want to. They're afraid to stop them."

I did visit Patterson Cottage later. The floors were spick and span, with not a cigarette butt in sight.

Rumors of racial favoritism, in the absence of actual contact and mutual acquaintance, spread like wildfire among both groups, and occasionally flared up into mass fist fights. Colonel Hays told me that racial friction among the boys was a serious institutional problem.

At Lancaster, as at other institutions I studied, racial segregation invariably meant racial friction and unequal treatment. It bred the very tensions and hatreds that a good reform school should try to eliminate.

## Plainfield — the Hoosier “Duck-walk”

SUPERINTENDENT Albert Jessup took off his Stetson and let his eyes roam over the thousand-acre expanse of the Indiana State School for delinquent boys, at Plainfield.

“Yes, we’ve got some fine stock here,” Mr. Jessup, a large man of about fifty, said with justifiable pride.

The superintendent was referring, of course, to the dairy herd on the institutional farm, not to the four hundred and fifty inmates ranging from ten to twenty-one years of age. Mr. Jessup was an excellent judge of cows; he had been in the dairy business in the town of Plainfield before the tide of state political fortunes swept him into the top job at the children’s institution.

Mr. Jessup also had definite opinions about the boys under his care.

“The social work theorists,” he explained to me, “tell us that lots of these boys wind up in places like this because they come from broken homes. That’s a lot of bunk. These boys come here because they have broken the law, and for nothing else. They’ve got to be handled accordingly. Why fool ourselves?”

Mr. Jessup was expansively frank about his resentments against social workers generally (they had protested his appointment) and his contempt for psychiatrists.

“If it weren’t for those social workers in Indianapolis,” he



complained as we moved across the spacious, well-kept lawn, "we could have military training here. We keep asking for it, and they keep opposing it. These boys could use it. If you keep 'em at it all the time, it keeps 'em out of mischief. We could get them neat-cut uniforms, like the new army ones. The boys would love it."

Sober-minded experts have estimated that anywhere from 20 to 50 per cent of children who wind up in state training schools are emotionally disturbed and that most of these would benefit by psychiatric attention. Mr. Jessup dissented, vigorously. He stressed the point that the Indiana Boys' School had no staff psychiatrist.

"Wouldn't stand to have one around," Mr. Jessup said. "These psychiatrists always bring trouble wherever they go. They're always digging into sex, as if every problem leads to sex or away from it."

Mr. Jessup tolerated no sexual misbehavior at his reform school.

"If a boy is caught masturbating," he explained to me, "we give him a warning and tell him not to do it again. If he's caught again, we give him six to ten licks with the leather paddle over his bare back."

Not many miles from Plainfield is Indiana University at Bloomington, where Alfred C. Kinsey is professor of zoology. In his epochal report, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Dr. Kinsey observes that masturbation is virtually a universal practice among adolescents. I mentioned this to Mr. Jessup, along with the general disapproval by child-rearing experts of whipping as a punishment for masturbation.

"I don't go by what the professors say," Mr. Jessup replied. "The law and custom disapprove of that kind of behavior,

and that's what I go by. You've got to beat it out of the boys."

"We use *applied* psychology here," Mr. Jessup added, with a broad smile.

I saw the heavy leather paddle with which Mr. Jessup's brand of psychology was applied by the institution's official disciplinarian. The law of Indiana authorizes corporal punishment in institutions for child delinquents. The discipline book at Plainfield — in which all official corporal punishments were carefully recorded — showed that on an average forty-five whippings were administered each month.

One thirteen-year-old boy, it was noted in the discipline book, had been whipped on eight different occasions. His social history indicated a deep emotional disturbance, which apparently had not been improved by the repeated paddlings. The record of a fourteen-year-old boy showed three whippings. His history revealed that he had "graduated" from the reform school a year ago and had been returned as a parole violator after trying to run away from his home. He had become involved in a number of senseless scrapes at Plainfield. His social record stated:

Evidently there is something seriously wrong about the boy's mentality. He will not be a safe risk back on home placement for about two years.

Nothing was noted about possible treatment at the reform school; nor was there any indication as to how an added two years of confinement would make the boy a "safe risk" at home.

A boy caught in a theft at the school was given eight lashes with the leather strap. Another charged with "impudence and vulgarity" got fifteen strokes. "Laziness and carelessness"

earned another ten strokes; the same punishment was meted out to another for "having tobacco on his person." So the disciplinary list ran.

In November 1946 a National Conference on the Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency was held in Washington, District of Columbia, under the sponsorship of Attorney General Tom Clark. The conference report on institutional treatment for child delinquents declared, on the subject of corporal punishment:

All children learn more quickly by reward and encouragement than by punishment. . . . The better training schools have developed their programs so that desirable conduct is motivated through positive, constructive means rather than reliance on punishment. Corporal punishment and other abuses, however, are still far too prevalent.

Among the disciplinary practices in training schools that have been reported by qualified and reliable observers in recent years are the following: whipping or spanking with sticks, wire coat-hangers, paddles, straps; striking about the face and head with sticks and fists; handcuffing to the bed at night; use of shackles and leg chains. . . .

This list represented variations of what Mr. Jessup smilingly referred to as "applied psychology." But the list lacked one interesting mode of punishment I found at Indiana State School — "duck-walking." The boy culprit is forced to grasp his ankles with his hands, and then waddle around a room like a duck for a prescribed period of time, or until he falls over from exhaustion. The boys at Plainfield told me this punishment was imposed often on rule violators.

They told me, too, of a type of punishment I found nowhere else. The victim was forced to bend over backward in a stiffened position, with the part of his back just below the

shoulders touching the edge of a table and his feet held as far apart as he could stretch them. A few minutes of this punishment made it impossible for a boy to walk upright again for hours afterward.

In one cottage, I noticed a group of six boys — none over thirteen years of age — polishing the floor with wax cloths as they moved backward on all fours in unison. When I asked them why they were moving backward on their knees, they explained that they were being punished for having talked loudly at breakfast table that morning.

We came to Cottage X as its child residents were putting on their shoes in front of the building. They had just emerged from their noonday meal and were preparing to return to their work detail. Like the youngsters in most state training schools, they were required to take off their shoes before entering a cottage — it helped keep the floors spotless, and most superintendents are fanatical about outward cleanliness (it impresses visitors). The shabby, torn garments of the boys contrasted sharply with the shining floors and well-scrubbed walls of Plainfield.

The staff member who was escorting me through the institution at this point bent over toward me and whispered:

“See that boy over there? He’s a murderer. You must have read about him in the papers a few months ago. Killed his foster mother with a shotgun.”

I had, indeed, read about this boy’s case. It seemed inconceivable that this skinny, awkward, scared-looking boy of fifteen could be a killer. Inconceivable, that is, if you didn’t recall his background. Orphaned in infancy, shunted from one orphanage to another with intermittent stays at foster homes, beaten with incredible brutality at some, pitilessly

exploited as a child laborer at others, all his pent-up hatreds and resentments exploded finally through the barrel of a shotgun aimed at the latest in the long line of foster parents.

The court authorities had recognized his case as that of severe emotional disturbance rather than of malicious wrongdoing, and they had committed him to Plainfield for "rehabilitation."

"He's given us no trouble here at all," the staff member observed. "In fact, he's one of our best-behaved boys."

I scanned again the boy's frightened aspect, which seemed to be permanently etched on his drawn face.

"Shouldn't he be getting some psychiatric attention?" I asked.

"Psychiatry for what? He doesn't misbehave and that's all we ask."

Experts in modern institutional treatment of juvenile delinquents ask for more. They warn against the widely prevalent tendency to train children to "adjust" to the artificial, highly abnormal, regimented life of a reform school instead of preparing the child for adjustment in the normal community to which he must return. Conformity to institutional patterns is not always a healthy sign of preparedness for normal community life. Indeed, it is sometimes a danger signal of serious abnormality.

I asked to be shown through the classrooms on the afternoon of my Plainfield visit. I saw a number of empty rooms, with blackboards and desks but no teachers and no pupils. Only two of the classes were in session. It was explained to me that the institution was terribly short of teachers — they were almost impossible to recruit at the salary of one hundred

and seventy-five dollars a month which the state offered them. Of the few at the school, one or two were sick, another was on vacation, and two had just quit. Hence many of the boys, who needed schooling more desperately than most of those on the outside, were without any.

But Superintendent Jessup didn't like to see idle children. He had developed a system of farming out the institution's children to his neighboring fellow farmers. About one fourth of the four hundred and fifty boys were being hired out as farm laborers. They got fifty cents an hour — about half the prevailing rate in the area. They were allowed to keep 60 per cent of their pay; the rest was kicked back to the institution for recreational equipment.

Plainfield "cottages" were really large brick buildings. They held far more than the twenty-five considered as a maximum for good cottage life; one had a huge dormitory in which eighty inmates slept.

The pay of cottage parents at Plainfield ran from \$175 to \$200 a month per couple, with maintenance. I asked one cottage father, who obviously disliked both his job and the children in his charge, why he had taken the post.

"It's hard to get a decent apartment in Indianapolis, where my wife and I come from," he replied. "Our living rooms here are better than the apartment we had on my last job."

"Where were you last employed?"

"Oh, I was an assistant to a funeral director, and we lived over the funeral parlor."

Plainfield, like all reform schools, had its quota of social-minded, decent staff members along with the misfits, failures, sadists and refugees from the normal community. Miss

Lorena Wedeking, the psychologist, who had a Master of Arts degree from Columbia University, struck me as a most conscientious person who, on a salary of two hundred and fifteen dollars a month *without maintenance*, was striving desperately against insuperable odds to do an adequate job of testing and classifying the four hundred and fifty inmates. Besides her own monumental task, all sorts of odd jobs were thrown on her overburdened shoulders.

At the end of my visit Mr. Jessup gave me a lengthy résumé of his philosophy on juvenile delinquency.

"I don't see why all delinquent children aren't fingerprinted," he said. "It would come in handy in catching run-aways and in checking up on criminals. We could put that across, if it weren't for those social-work theorists. What's more, I think our whole probation system is wrong. Why have social workers at all? Why not deputize every policeman and sheriff of Indiana as a probation officer, and give him a list of all juvenile delinquents in his district? Those police officers know the people in their neighborhoods, and they could keep a sharp eye on our graduates, and catch them quick if they got into trouble again."

A well-known sociologist in Indiana, who asked me to withhold his name, later observed:

"We had a good superintendent at Plainfield — Dr. E. M. Dill. He was replaced, through the present state administration, by a man with no training, experience or competence for this work. I am sorry to say that this instance of political manipulation of the destinies of children who need help is not unusual in this or other states. I hope that the time will come when political parties will decide if it is good

politics to put the welfare of the state above the opportunistic drives of the party.”

Well, there was another political overturn in Indiana's state administration as the result of the November 1948 election. The new Governor placed Plainfield's former superintendent, Dr. Dill, at the head of the State Public Welfare Department. Dr. Dill immediately replaced Mr. Jessup with a new superintendent, trained in handling children and reputedly progressive in the field. The new man, Windell Fewell, is concentrating his main attention on kids, rather than on cows, and has already introduced many heartening reforms.

But a man, no matter how good, can accomplish little of permanent value if his tenure depends entirely on the turn of political tides. And nobody knows how that tide will swing at the next election.



## Lansing — From Hellhole to Haven

IT TAKES YEARS, as indicated earlier, to reform a bad reform school where mismanagement and manhandling have become ingrained by long usage. It was a heartening experience for me, then, when I visited the Michigan Boys Vocational School, in December 1948, and witnessed a process that was transforming one of the country's worst juvenile hellholes into a modern treatment center for child delinquents. Lansing's three hundred and thirty inmates were beginning to feel the impact of a new deal instituted by their new superintendent, young John B. Costello.

Austin MacCormick, director of the Osborne Association, had surveyed the institution seven years earlier at the request of Governor Murray D. Van Wagoner of Michigan. He had found the place completely demoralized. Boys were being brutally beaten, in spite of a regulation forbidding corporal punishment. They were forced to perform full-day heavy institutional labor under the guise of "vocational training." They were deprived of their educational rights, and generally terrorized into robotlike obedience. The repressive character of the school was reflected in the many rules governing conversation, which was limited to two boys at any time. Group conversation was permitted only under official supervision.

Silence was the order of the day — and of the night. To

see how far the silence rules went, Mr. MacCormick walked about the institution's cottages at a time when children were supposed to be indulging in a play period. The silence of the grave prevailed everywhere.

In the disciplinary cottage, boys were not allowed to talk to one another under any circumstances. One boy had been under this rule of absolute silence for ten months.

In many instances, boys were "sentenced" to excessive "knee-bends" as a form of punishment. Knee-bending, as you know, is a standard type of calisthenics, healthy in its place. But it can become excruciating torture when overdone under compulsion. The Osborne Association investigators found one boy in the process of working out a penalty of three thousand knee-bends in the course of an afternoon and the following morning.

Boys were made to sit or stand rigidly, without moving, for long periods of time as a consequence of breaking minor rules. On one occasion a "house father" had swooped down on a boy who was making faces at himself in the mirror (a common conceit of children), knocked him down and stamped on the boy's face and body with his foot.

When MacCormick reported these and similar conditions to the Governor, the latter called in the superintendent and his assistant and ordered them to file their resignations forthwith. But the mere removal of a poor superintendent solves no basic problems. In 1946 a state investigating commission reported to Governor Harry F. Kelly that repression and regimentation still dominated the Boys Vocational School program. The commission declared:

An excessively large part of the educational and recreational diet consists of punishment and atonement for misdemeanors of

various kinds. It is characterized by solitude, irksome toil, severe discipline, excessive and unreasonable punishment and denial of privileges. There is too little opportunity in the dreary penitential routine for normal behavior and expression. The school as well as the rest of the institution is permeated with the philosophy of custody rather than rehabilitation.

That remained an accurate picture of Lansing when John Costello took over its management in 1948. Costello had been assistant superintendent of the New York State Agricultural and Industrial School at Industry, which, under Clinton W. Areson, has developed one of the best programs for boy delinquents. The new superintendent started by tearing up many of the old repressive rules and regulations at Lansing. He began patiently to orient the staff members to a new outlook. He promulgated concrete measures aimed at rehabilitating the boys for outside life instead of keeping them under institutional lock and key. When he fired four supervisors in rapid succession for beating up children, the staff knew that corporal punishment was not permitted — period.

Costello told his staff not to worry about runaways; he would do the worrying, personally, and take the consequences. This step in “taking the heat off” individual staff members with respect to potential runaways under their charge was a very important factor in dissipating the repressively custodial atmosphere that had hung over the institution.

I was pleasantly aware of a significant absence of tension among the boys as Costello showed me through the industrial school. The experienced observer can sense when he's

being given the dressed-up "grand tour" of a children's institution. A superintendent or other official trying to stage a phony show will often put his arm around an inmate's shoulder, dole out frequent pats on the back, call children by their first names (any name will do if he doesn't know the real one), smile benevolently at his charges, and otherwise act like the indulgent father of "one big happy family." The real character of the day-to-day relationship is then often accurately mirrored in the faces of the children — tension, fear, confusion; or naturally affectionate response, relaxation, trust.

In this instance, I noted that there was a genuinely warm feeling between the boys and their director. Their ease at work and at play as we passed was natural; it wasn't artificial. There were no long silences, no regimented marching. The boys talked freely, and at play they yelled at will.

Superintendent Costello was gradually drawing the community into active participation in the rehabilitative program. There were many visitors (an encouraging sign), and the boys were invited out often to football, basketball and baseball games at nearby colleges and high schools, and to other affairs in the community. Costello realized that recreation and academic training alone could not rehabilitate the boys under his charge. He recognized, too, the importance of the emotional problems often underlying delinquent behavior. He had on his staff six social workers, four intern psychologists from near-by Michigan State College, and a consulting psychiatrist.

The Boys Vocational School was still far from an ideal institution when I visited it. The physical plant, as noted in the commission's report of 1946, was "fashioned for mass

routine, mass living and impersonal custody." The question of its abandonment in favor of a new institution, designed for individual treatment, homelike living and a friendly atmosphere, was being seriously considered by the state authorities. There were staff problems, too — created mainly by a shortage of competent trained people and the lack of adequate financial incentive — that had to be worked out.

But Costello was doing a good job with what he had. He could do far more, I was certain, if he only enjoyed more adequate public support. He was facing the problem of public apathy that has so often nullified the work of good men and destroyed sound efforts at reclaiming our child delinquents for useful citizenship.

## “Bad Girls Should Be Sterilized”

I HAD SEEN and heard much of maltreatment of reform school inmates by the time I corresponded with the woman superintendent of the Kansas State Girls' Industrial School at Beloit on the subject of sexual sterilization. But few things gave me such a shock as the statement of this state school executive, advocating sterilization for juvenile delinquents and deploring the suspension of the practice in her state.

At one time, about a generation ago, it was widely believed that such social disorders as poverty and crime were caused mainly by defective heredity and that their main cure lay in sterilizing the “unfit” — that is, depriving them of the power to reproduce. A lot of pseudoscientific literature appeared, tracing the genealogies of so-called “royal families of the feeble-minded,” patterned after the pioneer study of the Jukes family by Dugdale which was published in 1875. These genealogies were frightening reports purporting to show how breeding by mental defectives produced long lines of criminals, chronic reliefers, prostitutes, alcoholics and other depraved classes. A classic study of this kind was *The Kallikak Family*, by Dr. Henry H. Goddard, published in 1912 and apparently offering the scientific “clincher” to the thesis that bad heredity was at the basis of nearly all crime, insanity, pauperism and other socially undesirable conditions. A great alarm was raised at the time to the effect that the

feeble-minded and other “unfit” types were outbreeding the better classes and, if allowed to reproduce their kind, would soon overwhelm the well-bred in numbers. Goddard’s *The Kallikak Family* (the name means good-bad in Greek) purported to trace two lines of descent from an American Revolutionary Army soldier. One line, the “bad,” comprised generations of criminals, lunatics, mental defectives and paupers, stemming from the illicit union of the Revolutionary soldier and a supposedly feeble-minded servant girl. The second, the “good,” consisted of generations of respectable, well-to-do and even famous descendants of the same soldier and his legitimate spouse, a girl of good family.

This entire alarmist school was later torn apart by scientific investigators, notably Dr. Abraham Myerson, who proved that its most impressive published products were based on appallingly poor research methods, were infused with bias, and that their purported findings were worthless — especially as indexes to general trends. But a good deal of damage was done in the meantime. Popular alarm found expression in a number of state laws authorizing sexual sterilization of certain classes. Most of the statutes were confined to people with mental disease or mental defects. But several permitted sterilization of persons convicted of certain types of crime (mostly sex offenses). Other laws were so vaguely phrased that they provided an extremely wide net for the sterilizers.

The laws prescribing sexual sterilization as a punishment for certain types of crime — such as rape — were declared invalid by the United States Supreme Court, on the grounds that they violated the constitutional prohibition of “cruel and unusual punishments.” A number of states, however,

continued to provide for sexual sterilization on "eugenic" grounds, mainly for cases of mental disease and feeble-mindedness. (California retains the most drastic sterilization law of all, under which tens of thousands of persons have been operated on, constituting more than half the total number of surgical sterilizations in the entire country.)

Many leading psychiatrists strenuously oppose any kind of sterilization program — save in extremely rare cases where a mental disease or defect is definitely *known* to be hereditary in character. They point out that our scientific knowledge of these conditions is still too meager to permit use of so potentially dangerous a social tool as sexual sterilization. The inhuman abuse of sterilization by the Nazis in their "eugenic" program for breeding a Master Race has underscored the danger. Speaking for myself, I am not opposed to sterilization in principle but I do oppose its application today, even for the rare types of mental handicap known to have a hereditary basis, because I am convinced that we have not yet reached a stage of civilized maturity to control the practice adequately, once put into effect.

In 1935 the State of Kansas embarked on an extraordinary program of sterilizing "unfit" inmates of its Girls' Industrial School, under its sweeping sterilization law. At least sixty-two sterilizations were performed on girls there.

In 1937 Mrs. Kathryn O'Loughlin McCarthy, who had formerly represented Kansas as a Democratic Congresswoman, exposed the program and demanded an investigation. She charged that many sterilizations were performed solely as punishment for unruly girls of normal intellect, and



that in some cases the legally required consent of the parents wasn't even solicited before the operation.

The Associated Press, at the time, quoted the surgeon who performed the sixty-two operations at Beloit as saying in rebuttal:

"It seems rather ridiculous that the consent of a mother who sent her child out on the streets should be required to have a sterilization done. These operations represent a forward step in handling social problems in Kansas and in any other state. Scientific and humane operations of this kind will diminish lawlessness and crime in any country."

Mrs. McCarthy's campaign, however, succeeded in stopping the sterilization program at the Beloit school. That the program had not been confined to the feeble-minded is demonstrated by a list of eighteen cases recommended for sterilization, cited by representatives of the Osborne Association — a leading penal reform agency — who visited the institution in 1937.

These recommendations, the Osborne Association representatives reported, were supported by no more detailed medical and social data than such statements as the following:

- I.Q. 76 — Steals, runs away, immoral.
- I.Q. 102 — Incurable; very, very bad.
- I.Q. 93 — Incurable.
- I.Q. 92 — Fights, immoral. A potential criminal.

To check on the current status of sterilization at Beloit, I addressed an inquiry late in 1947 to the superintendent of the state school, Mrs. Lula B. Benton, in the form of a series of questions. I received in reply the following letter from

Mrs. Benton, which I published verbatim in the column I then conducted in the newspaper *PM* of New York:

There is no sterilization program at the Kansas Ind. School. No inmates have been sterilized in the last 10 years.

I have a good many so-near-feebleminded — IQ 71 — In my opinion they should be sterilized. School for Feebleminded full up — I have to keep them and try to train them.

When they leave here on Parole — as is bound to happen — they will breed more of the same or worse.

A very wise physician was on our State Board away back in 1937 and he saw to it that those with IQ below 65 were sterilized before release.<sup>1</sup> The opposition party [in this case the Republicans were on the board] — the New Dealers — exposed the policy and blew every one up on the place — so probably none will ever be sterilized in the future.

The writer of the extraordinary letter from Beloit was recently replaced as superintendent by a woman with a far more modern approach to juvenile delinquents and a far greater sympathy and understanding in handling girls with problems. But I stress the sexual sterilization incident as a significant index to the thinking of some of the people placed at the head of reform schools with the object of rehabilitating delinquent children. For the melancholy truth is that the attitudes of Mrs. Benton are still shared by many persons who handle juvenile delinquents, regardless of the *theoretical* progress in the general field.

<sup>1</sup> As noted above, girls with I.Q.'s as high as 102 were also sterilized.

## Bloodless Brutalities in Girls' Schools

AUSTIN MACCORMICK, who has probably surveyed more correctional institutions than has any other American, once told me of an incident he encountered in the course of an investigation. A girl inmate of a certain state training school for delinquents took great pride in her beautiful hair. One day she violated a minor institutional regulation. The superintendent's wife forthwith meted out the standard punishment for rule infractors — she sheared the girl's hair close to the scalp. The girl was crushed by the cruel act; that night she committed suicide by hanging.

This incident reflects dramatically the kind of subtle cruelties invoked all too often against girl students of our public reform schools. In my limited survey of girls' schools, I found relatively few cases of corporal punishment (although it is permitted in many states). But I did find many tragic instances of spiritual and emotional cruelties far more crushing to the personalities of the victims.

I made personal visits to three girls' institutions in the course of my journalistic survey. These were the Indiana Girls' School at Claremont, the Illinois State Training School for Girls at Geneva, and the New York State Training School for Girls at Hudson. I supplemented my personal impressions

by consulting many contemporary reports on other institutions for girls, and received additional data in personal interviews with many of the nation's acknowledged authorities on the subject.

The composite picture I received of the handling of the approximately 6000 girls in public reform schools was more disturbing, in many respects, than that covering the 17,000 inmates of state training schools for boys.

True, *physical brutality* is uncommon in girls' schools, though slappings and spankings are frequently dealt out, openly and *sub rosa*, in some. But repressive measures are, as a rule, more severe than those in boys' schools. The girls are generally regimented in classrooms, in dormitories and at work. Monotonous routine, day after day, is common. Many of the girls' schools are headed by prissy, puritanical middle-class women with little understanding of the lower-class cultural, economic and social backgrounds of their wards and little sympathy for their problems. Some are convinced that the girls are incorrigible agents of Satan, beyond redemption, and some display open hostility and vindictiveness toward them.

Isolation in solitary cells or rooms for prolonged periods seems to be one of the most frequent forms of punishment for serious infractions, although spanking is still popular among some officials, even for girls over sixteen years of age. Deprivation of food and excessive "silence periods" are also frequent modes of disciplinary action.

Nearly all girls' schools have disciplinary or punishment cottages to which rule violators may be transferred. (I shall describe the one at Hudson, New York, in the next chapter.) The solitary confinement rooms in the disciplinary cottage

of the Illinois State Training School for Girls at Geneva were completely without lighting equipment at the time of my visit, leaving the lonely inmates in utter darkness when the sun went down. What this meant during the winter months, when the sun set early, can readily be imagined.

John R. Ellingston thus described the situation at the California School for Girls, at Ventura, several years ago:

On admission every girl had her hair cropped back to her ears. All were forbidden to talk. The silent system of the old-time prisons was clamped down alike on children of nine and young women of twenty. To be caught talking to another girl or even waving meant thirty days in a punishment cell, the severest penalty imposed at the school. This was believed necessary to prevent the girls from plotting to escape.<sup>1</sup>

The repressive policy has been considerably relieved since 1947, when a new administration took over. But California experts familiar with the Ventura situation told me there was still too much regimentation there.

I didn't get to see the Minnesota Home School for Girls at Sauk Center, when I made a trip to the state reform school at Red Wing, but Governor Luther Youngdahl of Minnesota told me frankly in the fall of 1949 that he was deeply dissatisfied with conditions there.

"There's too much repression at Sauk Center," Governor Youngdahl said. "We've got to get more warmth and humanity into the program there, and we're planning to do it."

<sup>1</sup> John R. Ellingston, *Protecting Our Children from Criminal Careers* (New York, Prentice-Hall, 1948), p. 142.

Mr. A. Whittier Day, director of the Minnesota Youth Conservation Commission, which operates the state training schools, gave emphatic affirmation to Governor Youngdahl's observations on Sauk Center when I interviewed him.

It is only fair to note here that I received favorable reports of several state training schools for girls that were not included in my own inspectional itinerary. Several examples of good programs will be cited in subsequent chapters. Most frequently mentioned by discerning authorities as a well-run institution is the Delaware State School for Colored Girls at Marshallton, where some sixty children receive the benefits of a modern nonpunitive and rehabilitative program. Although I didn't visit the institution, I met its director, Mrs. Dorothy B. Banton, on several occasions and was impressed with her charming, vibrant personality and her fund of knowledge about child behavior.

Few of the girls' schools have staff or visiting psychiatrists, although many of the students are seriously disturbed emotionally, and desperately in need of psychiatric counsel. Instead of treatment, they get punishment for the manifestations of their emotional disorders.

In one state training school, according to a recent report, girls found guilty of indulging in sexual misbehavior (homosexuality is a common occurrence at girls' schools, as at those for boys) were forced to parade in complete nakedness before the entire student body, assembled for the occasion.

There is an endless variety of humiliating punishment imposed on girls' school inmates, which leave no mark on

the body but which may leave indelible marks on the soul. Such punishments can turn the victims into a state of bitter resentment and leave them eagerly vengeful and permanently crippled emotionally.

Some institutions are in a shocking state of neglect, seemingly forgotten by the community. The superintendent of the Indiana Girls' School, Mrs. Adeline C. Lehman, apologized for the gloomy, dilapidated appearance of the institution. In some places floors were eaten away and walls were falling apart. Mrs. Lehman (since resigned) had inherited an archaic program, infused with Victorian repression, from her eighty-five-year-old predecessor, who had ruled the place with an iron hand for thirty-five years. Until recently, girls being trained for domestic jobs had to do their washing in dirty, rust-eaten tubs and their ironing with ancient twenty-pound flatirons. In one cottage thirty-four girls — all with venereal disease — had to do their bathing in two broken-down tubs, without a change of water in some cases.

The Indiana institution is one of the girls' training schools where corporal punishment is still authorized by law.

Mrs. Lehman told me, disconsolately, at the time of my visit:

"We're short of everything we need here, just everything."

Here, as in most institutions for girl delinquents, Negro and white students were strictly segregated. Mrs. Elizabeth H. Lewis, superintendent of the Illinois state school at Geneva, expressed the prevailing attitude when she told me:

"White and Negro girls in this type of institution tend to 'honey up' to one another when they are mixed in com-

mon living quarters. That is, they tend to develop homosexual crushes for those of the opposite racial group. Then again, Negro girls like to be with their own kind, just as white girls do."

Nobody can deny that homosexuality is a problem, often serious, in all types of institutions and boarding schools for adolescents, delinquent or otherwise. It is rampant in most places where adolescents in the formative periods are thrown together for a long time in the exclusive company of their own sex, especially where a confined and repressive program prevails. But I am convinced, on the basis of my own observations and on that of discussions with qualified experts, that the racial "honeying-up" theory represents the survival of an ancient and vicious superstition.

As Professor Alfred C. Kinsey, who had interviewed hundreds of reform school inmates in the course of his monumental study of sexual behavior in humans, once remarked to me:

"If an evil genius were intent on creating an abnormal environment designed to check wholesome development, he might dream up the typical state training school for adolescents to accomplish his ends."

A relatively large number of private institutions for delinquents partially solve the problem of sex segregation by accepting both girls and boys and permitting some degree of commingling. But this practice is rare in public institutions, due largely to the fear of disastrous flare-ups of an ill-informed and easily confused "public opinion" on matters of sex morality.

Several public institutions do receive both girls and boys,



but usually keep them segregated in fenced-off sections where they may perhaps catch glimpses of one another from a distance but seldom mix socially. The Weeks School for Boys and Girls in Vermont (a state institution named for a former governor) has a "partially coeducational" program for its one hundred and fifteen students, about two thirds of whom are boys. The girls' and boys' quarters are located at opposite ends of the institution. Both sexes attend religious services together. A "coeducational" general assembly of the entire school is also held weekly, where girls and boys join in singing and in putting on plays for visiting groups from nearby communities.

Harrison C. Greenleaf, superintendent of the Weeks School, informed me that occasionally he invites a few girl and boy students, carefully selected on the basis of rewards for good behavior, to participate in evening socials. He added that he would like to expand the coeducational program, but that he must proceed slowly in deference to public opinion in his state.

The outstanding "coeducational" public training school is the Louisville and Jefferson County Children's Home at Anchorage, Kentucky, popularly known as "Ormisby Village." As its official title implies, it is operated and financed jointly by the city of Louisville and Jefferson County. The coeducational feature is part of a long-standing progressive policy that has earned Ormisby Village an enviable reputation among public institutions for many years. Its superintendent for the past twenty-three years has been Henley V. Bastin, a kindly, tolerant soul with a genuine love for children.

In the course of a lengthy interview, in October 1949,

Bastin and his assistant superintendent, William H. Pine, gave me these facts and figures about Ormisby Village:

The institution accepts white dependent, neglected and delinquent children of both sexes. (An annex for seventy-six colored boys and girls is operated under Bastin's supervision at Ridgewood.) It receives boys up to seventeen, girls up to eighteen years of age and may retain them during their minority. The population at Ormisby Village is one hundred and seventy-five, about evenly divided between boys and girls. The school is operated on an "open" basis: there are no fences. No discrimination is made between dependent, neglected and delinquent children; they are classified and grouped according to age, personality, and so on, but with no regard for the reason for commitment.

The boys and girls occupy opposite ends of the open campus, but attend classes, religious exercises, dances and other social affairs together. The development of friendships between the sexes, "dating" and "going steady" are not discouraged by the authorities. Wholesome spooning is permitted.

"We have several instances where boys and girls who met and fell in love on our campus got married after placement on the outside," Superintendent Bastin told me.

"They are all children with problems arising from very much the same causes," Bastin explained. "We conceive our duty as being not that of judges but of guides."

Children who get involved in serious or chronic misbehavior are returned to juvenile court, whence they may be sent to the State Training School at Greendale, also coeducational but in a far more limited sense.

Ormisby Village enjoys the trust and interest of the com-

munity, has affiliations with many educational, psychiatric and social agencies, and regularly receives a relatively generous appropriation for its well-rounded program.

The nursery, always a joy-provoking sight in the obstetrical department of a general hospital, is a sad thing to behold in a training school for girl delinquents. Every crib represents, in a sense, a personal tragedy. Some training school authorities have the decency to send out their pregnant inmates to a regular hospital to have their babies delivered and thus avoid the stigma of institutional birth. But others don't.

In many girls' reform schools, pregnant inmates are transferred to outside hospitals during their confinement so that the stigma of being born in a reform school can be spared the child. But some institutions still have inmates' children delivered on the grounds.

It is a widely accepted modern principle that no stigma of illegitimacy should be stamped on birth certificates for public use. Yet several states still require that such certificates be stamped with the "illegitimate" mark when the parents are not married to each other. Several other states indicate illegitimacy indirectly on the birth certificate. The U.S. Children's Bureau and other agencies have been urging the universal use of the "short form" or "birth card" certificate for all purposes other than those in which relationships or legitimacy is questioned in a court of law. Such short forms avoid needless references to the circumstances of birth.

In many communities, pregnancy in an unmarried juvenile is taken as irrefutable evidence of delinquency, and the girl carted off to a training school. It matters not that she may be the victim of statutory or forcible rape; her pregnant status

automatically marks her as a candidate for a reform school. In many cases, the sin of parents or of a community in depriving girls of the right to wholesome sex education is visited upon the victim in the form of a double burden — unmarried motherhood and a delinquency record.

## Hudson — Behind the Beautiful Façade

TO THE EYES of the casual visitor, it might look at first sight like a modern boarding school for girls. It is pleasantly located in the country, a few miles from the city of Hudson, overlooking a wide and lovely sweep of the Hudson River Valley. There are acres of spacious lawns, tree-lined walks and two huge quadrangles of handsome red-brick buildings, fifteen of which are residential cottages housing the girl students. The stone walls and iron grilles along the road leading to the New York State Training School for girl delinquents are so well appointed that they look more like decorations than institutional fences, and a large area surrounding the school has no fences at all.

As state institutions for girl delinquents go, Hudson certainly ranks among the better ones. There was a significant lack of tension among most of the two hundred and thirty-five students there at the time of my visit. The girls were not nearly so regimented and routinized as the inmates of other institutions. They did not have to march hither and yon. They did not seem to be subjected to long periods of enforced silence. They were not ruled by a martinet.

The superintendent, Miss Inez Patterson, greeted me warmly, answered questions frankly and showed me the worst aspects of the institution along with the best. Miss Patterson is a Minnesotan who headed a girls' reform school in her native state before she was called to Hudson in 1940

on the heels of an institutional scandal involving gross racial discrimination and general demoralization at the New York State school.

That discrimination had been only partially eliminated at the time of my survey, while institutional morale was still on a far from satisfactory level. For the good at the Hudson school was not good enough and the bad was a shocking reflection on the wealthiest state in the Union.

Hudson is New York's only state training school for girl delinquents. (Two others, for boys, are located at Warwick and Industry.) The Hudson school receives girls from twelve to sixteen who are committed by children's courts, and also takes girls under twelve years of age who have committed offenses that would be adjudged felonies if committed by adults. It can keep them up to twenty-one years of age, although very few of the girls are over eighteen. The average age of the students when I visited Hudson was fifteen years and six months, and the average length of stay was eighteen months.

I was favorably impressed with some of the programs, notably the vocational training program, which did not teach specific trades but attempted to train the students in good work habits at home or in industry. I found cottage life spotty, with morale high in some cottages — especially those with understanding and loving "house mothers" — and low in others.

I found no evidence of corporal punishment at Hudson. Girls were not whipped as they were in some reform schools. But in the "discipline cottage" I found a form of punishment far more barbarous, in my judgment, than whipping.

Of the eighteen locked rooms in the discipline cottage fifteen were occupied on the day of my visit. With the exception of one or two, each of the confined girls represented a serious problem in emotional maladjustment. Their attempts at escape or other offenses in many cases represented symptoms of their underlying emotional problems. But instead of receiving the psychiatric counsel they obviously needed, they were locked up in solitary confinement for various periods of time. One of the girls had been confined for eighty-one days in her little solitary room, save for periods when she was let out into the corridor to help sweep or scrub the floor.

Each girl for the first ten days of confinement in the discipline cottage was given only bread and milk for two of her three daily meals. The breakfast meal alone was regular. If the girl remained defiant or recalcitrant or disturbed, the bread-and-milk diet was extended for longer periods.

The practice of locking up children in solitary rooms for prolonged periods is contrary to all enlightened precepts of institutional treatment. It only deepens the initial emotional upset; it does not mitigate or eliminate it. It tends to freeze the soul of the already maladjusted child instead of warming it by the tender love and understanding care it so badly needs.

On those occasions when it does seem to "break the spirit" of the unruly child, long-extended solitary confinement may in reality only succeed in further warping an already distorted behavior pattern. It dams up the unhealthy resentments, suspicions and feelings of rejection, only to have them loosed later in the normal community.

I was astounded by the fact that this institution, operated by the great Empire State, with its two hundred and thirty-five children in all stages of emotional or social disturbance, lacked a single staff psychiatrist. It had been without a psychiatrist for years, save for a three months' period in 1947. During that period, Dr. J. Louise Despert, a child psychiatrist on the staff of the New York Hospital, served as a temporary member of the Hudson staff. Dr. Despert, in a research report, strongly condemned the methods of solitary confinement and milk-and-bread diets.

Some of the girls I talked to in the discipline cottage had been placed in "isolation" because they had grown hysterical. Several were in for what they called "club trouble" (stirring up gang strife in the institution). One girl started to talk loudly to herself after we left the room. The matron hurried back and called through her locked door: "Now stop that. You know you're not allowed to talk between two and four."

One of the girls, Miss Patterson explained, had "gone haywire" at the age of twelve, when she learned that her "mother" was actually her grandmother, while the girl she had been brought up to regard as her "older sister" was really her mother. She had been an emotional problem ever since, but no psychiatric supervision was available for her at Hudson. There was only an isolation room.

I noticed that the window sills in many of the isolation rooms were torn out. This, I was told, was the work of the emotionally disturbed inmates whose pent-up energies exploded destructively as they tore at the framework with their bare hands.

Miss Patterson told me she had sought desperately for a full-time staff psychiatrist, without success. Several months



after my visit, she was able to obtain a part-time psychiatrist with the help of the nearby Rip Van Winkle clinic.

I was forcefully struck at Hudson by a peculiar “half-and-half policy” with regard to racial segregation. When Miss Patterson had taken over in 1940, the institution was 100 per cent Jim Crow — that is, all Negro girls were housed in Negro cottages, white girls in white. This racial segregation — always a demoralizing and corrupting influence in children’s institutions — had given rise to many intramural gang fights between the white and Negro inmates. The situation, in fact, as I said, was the precipitating cause of the scandal that had led to Miss Patterson’s appointment. The new superintendent had been instructed to “integrate” the students as soon as possible.

Miss Patterson had adopted a policy of gradualism. At the time of my visit to Hudson eight years later (in 1948), only four of eleven cottages had been “integrated,” that is, mixed. The others were still on a segregated basis. While this slow gradualism might seem reasonable to many, its actual effect was most harmful. New arrivals to Hudson were given a virtual choice of moving into a segregated or an integrated cottage. The presence of mixed cottages accentuated the resentment of the Negro girls forced to live in the segregated buildings. Frictions were made more acute. It seemed to me that the institution was violating the New York State Constitution and civil rights statutes which expressly forbade any form of racial discrimination in public places, and this opinion was later confirmed by several leading citizens.

Apart from the matter of illegality, there appeared to be no moral or social excuse for imposing a Jim Crow pattern —

even on a 50 per cent basis — on the children of a state priding itself on its equalitarian principles, children supposed to be rehabilitated for good citizenship in a democracy.

Every Negro girl I talked to at Hudson was bitterly conscious of this half-and-half racial segregation policy. Every Negro staff member felt resentful toward it. One of them, Miss Ann Hawkins, vocational director, expressed clearly the sentiments of these staffers when, in the presence of Superintendent Patterson, I asked her:

“What do you think would happen if a fully integrated system would be introduced tomorrow, with all segregation abolished?”

“Nothing bad,” Miss Hawkins answered promptly. “It would be good for the girls. The segregation creates bad feelings. I don’t know of a single white girl here who would resist or resent racial integration.”

Miss Patterson was of another opinion. She felt that abolishing segregation completely would harm the morale of both Negroes and whites. She had to consider the possible prejudices of the white girls, and especially of white staff members, she added. And she also explained that upstate New York judges exerted powerful pressures for the retention of some degree of segregation.

“Following the same reasoning,” I asked, “wouldn’t it be logical to have segregated cottages for Italian, Polish, Jewish, Scandinavian, Catholic, Protestant, city and farm children to satisfy the assorted prejudices of particular judges, matrons and inmates?”

Miss Patterson smiled, and did not answer. To be fair, it must be noted that Hudson was but a climactic link in a long chain of racial discrimination that added to the juvenile de-

linquency toll in New York. Half of its students were colored, a figure highly out of proportion to the racial ratio of the state. The figure did not reflect the disproportion of delinquency among Negro girls so much as it did the shocking inadequacy of private facilities for Negro girls in trouble, especially in New York City, which accounted for most of Hudson's inmates. When a white girl gets in trouble there, the chances are that any number of private agencies would willingly extend some help before she finally committed an act which ticketed her for Hudson. But widespread discrimination against Negro children in private agencies robs them of those extra chances at rehabilitation before Hudson gets them. If a white girl under sixteen becomes pregnant without benefit of clergy, a private agency probably will see her through without the stigma of delinquency being placed on the record. The chances are greatly reduced if the girl happens to be colored. The state institution for girl delinquents is likely to serve as her obstetrical ward.

This discrimination, disgraceful enough in private agencies, was intolerably so in a public institution violating the state constitution.

I said so, plainly, in a special newspaper article on discrimination at Hudson in July 1948. Several members of the New York State Board of Social Welfare, the policy-making body for the agency operating the state schools, took up my charges at the next board meeting. A board committee appointed to investigate the matter confirmed my charges in every detail. They recommended immediate integration, and their recommendation was adopted by the board. Superintendent Patterson was instructed to put the new policy into effect at once, and she did. Several unregenerate staff mem-

bers thereupon resigned, but otherwise the policy was launched without trouble.

“From now on,” State Social Welfare Commissioner Robert T. Lansdale told me, “we’re not going to accept the old dodge that some Negro girls are more secure with their own and that the same goes for white girls as an excuse for maintaining the half-segregation practice. All girls admitted to the institution will be assigned to the most suitable cottages regardless of the color of their skin.”

Hudson had become a law-abiding institution.

## Warwick — End of the Burma Road

THE BURMA ROAD (that was its official designation) is now remembered only by the old-timers among the four hundred and thirty-five students of the New York State Training School for boy delinquents at Warwick, in Orange County, about forty miles distant from New York City. It was officially abolished in 1946, but the boys who worked on that road retain vivid recollections of it.

It was a mile stretch of bumpy road, over which captured runaways and other miscreants were made to haul rocks and dirt in wheelbarrows from one end to the other, under broiling sun or against wintry wind. Dr. Herbert D. Williams, former superintendent of Warwick, once told me that returned runaways were assigned to the Burma Road gang on this basis: the amount of gasoline and oil used up in searching for the escapee was carefully calculated; the cost of the fuel was tallied. The boy was then set to work on the Burma Road to work off the cost at the rate of five cents a barrow load. Boys caught in attempts to escape while working on the Burma Road were chained to their barrows.

This righteous form of retribution got rocks moved from one place to another, but it was not calculated to build up better boys.

The Burma Road is gone, but its ghost still haunts War-

wick. Hailed (like so many others in their time) as a model reform school — the best in the country — when it was opened in 1932, Warwick has been a secret problem child of New York State ever since. The school receives delinquents between the ages of twelve and sixteen, most of them committed by juvenile courts from the New York City area. As mentioned earlier, it is one of the state's two training schools for boys — the other, at Industry, near Rochester, serves the upstate areas.

Like the girls' school at Hudson, Warwick is located on rolling country overlooking the Hudson River Valley. The fifteen residence cottages for the boys, each with a twenty-bed dormitory and twelve individual rooms, are set compactly in a great quadrangle, plump in the middle of the institution's seven hundred and forty acres. Superficially, the setting looks impressively bucolic, even idyllic. But you learn, later, that many of Warwick's acres are covered by noxious swamps, hidden by tall-growing weeds.

That topographic situation symbolized Warwick itself: on the surface, it seemed like a beautiful institution operated on the most modern ideas of treating child delinquents, but that picture was marred by many hidden swamps in terms of human relations. I had known Warwick during its early years when I was on the research staff of the New York State Department of Social Welfare, which controls the institution. I had followed its development closely. I can say that at the time of my visit in the summer of 1948 it was a far better place than it had been twelve, six, or two years previously. Under its new superintendent, Alfred Cohen, who directed its social work staff prior to his promotion, it had indeed improved considerably between two visits I made in Novem-

ber 1947 and July 1948. But a large part of the program was still bogged down, having been mired fast for years.

On paper, Warwick looked like an ideal institution. Its stated aims were most progressive. Few experts could find fault with its organization chart — as printed. But it never did get started on an even keel toward its founders' goal, and it had floundered since the first boys were sent there even before buildings were prepared to receive them.

Warwick, for one thing, never overcame its initial flaw. It was a mass institution, where proper classification and individual treatment were impossible. In theory, it was a treatment center for troubled juveniles. In practice it was mainly a custodial institution for children who break the law. The institution sank into a terrible slump during the late war, and by 1948 it had not quite regained the ground it lost. An already inadequate (and low-paid) staff was depleted to sub-skeleton levels as many employees left for military service or better-paid jobs. Untrained workers were employed as supervisors. Chronic drunks and abnormal sexual misfits were hired to prevent complete organizational collapse.

"We were glad to take anybody with two legs," one official told me.

Many of the staff members were afraid of the larger boys, and were easily bulldozed by them. Gangs of inmates took over virtual control of the institution. Large groups of inmates were ruled by remote control by the teen-age gangs of New York and, conversely, gang leaders committed to Warwick maintained their dynasties through long-distance orders via the grapevine to their followers at home. Gang wars in New York streets swiftly had repercussions in mass

fighting at Warwick. When the Saber gang killed a member of the rival Ravens in New York once, thirteen Saber members lit out of Warwick in terror of reprisal. Another time, an entire cottage of thirty boys "breezed" in a mass outbreak.

The larger, tougher boys were often given choice jobs as bribes for not making trouble. Sometimes hardened oldsters were put in charge of weaker, younger boys. The latter were forced to pay tribute, to serve as flunkies, and to submit to the homosexual assaults of officer-protected bullies. The incinerator assignment — where boys were detailed to burn the institutional garbage and waste in a far-off corner — became a notorious place of homosexual rape and mayhem.

A well-phrased motto still hanging on the wall of a Warwick staff office reads:

CHILDREN HAVE MORE NEED OF MODELS THAN OF CRITICS.

But until recently, several staff members were notorious sadists who beat their charges brutally, disregarding the strict legal ban on corporal punishment. On many occasions, certain staff members pursued their task of helping reform the children while they themselves were in drunken stupors. One Warwick official was known locally as "the biggest booze-hound in Orange County." (This man has been on the water wagon for some time now, Superintendent Cohen informs me.)

Gambling was rife among institutional personnel, and heavy losers in crap games or poker occasionally worked out their disappointments on their hapless wards. The irony of the situation was not lost on the "bad boys" of Warwick, who were supposed to be molded into junior gentlemen by these same gentry.



Dr. Williams, superintendent of Warwick for a dozen years until his resignation in 1948, was a very well intentioned and well informed scholar who for years has been recognized as a leading theorist in the handling of child delinquents. But somehow he was never able to put his fine ideas into practical effect at Warwick. A man of great reserve, he had little contact with rank-and-file employees and seldom visited the boys in the cottage area. One cottage father told me that he hadn't obtained his first sight of Dr. Williams until his fifth month of service at Warwick. The executive's aloofness didn't help improve institutional morale among staff or students.

In 1945 Judges Justine Wise Polier and Hubert Delany of the New York City Children's Court — both widely known for their public spirit and humane approach — made a joint inspection of Warwick. They were horrified by the manifold signs of institutional demoralization and drew up a sharply critical memorandum.

Warwick, as I have noted, had improved appreciably by the time I visited it last in 1948 — but not nearly enough.

“Our bed-wetters have decreased from sixty-seven to twenty-two during the past six months,” Superintendent Cohen told me on my last visit. The note of satisfaction in his voice was understandable to those aware of the significance of bed-wetting statistics in a reform school. Usually it is a symptom of emotional tension and, in an institutional setting, often a reaction to excessive repression with resulting feelings of insecurity.

There was no military system of rank and discipline at

Warwick. The boys were not subjected to excessive military drills of the kind I had seen elsewhere. They were not forced to march in step or in silence from building to building. There was, indeed, some evidence of persisting physical punishment administered clandestinely by certain supervisors, but such instances were rather uncommon and certainly not methodical. There was no evidence of the exquisite forms of torture applied elsewhere — such as duck-walking, the squats, and standing on line.

Some parts of the Warwick program were unusually good. The boys were almost unanimous in their praise of the Warwick workshops, where vocational training was offered on the basis of teaching useful skills in accordance with individual aptitudes. The academic education program was also outstanding. I was told that one out of every four boys admitted to Warwick had reading difficulties. Special classes were held to overcome these difficulties, which so often are at the root of truancy and of even more serious delinquencies.

But Warwick could not pull itself up by its own bootstraps. In spite of all efforts to introduce progressive treatment programs, it remained a mass institution with a total of 435 inmates. Most experts agree that no school for delinquents should have more than 200 inmates, and many insist that 100 should be the maximum. Individualized treatment is impossible in a mass institution; no place as large as Warwick could ever achieve the ideal of a “substitute for a good home.” As one cottage parent — a trained social worker — put it:

“What kind of ‘substitute home life’ can you expect in a

cottage 'family' of thirty-two boys of varying backgrounds and in all stages of emotional and social instability?"

Regardless of the physical trappings, the success of a reform school depends mainly on the presence of enough people who care for children and who know their jobs. At Warwick, a long-standing low-party policy (improved somewhat by moderate increases recently) had blocked the recruitment of a high-quality staff. Staff morale had never been high; turnover in jobs had been terrific. Until a few years ago, the annual turnover rate was 50 per cent. In a single year, the turnover in cottage parents reached 100 per cent.

Attitudes toward the children varied widely among the staff. At times, in Warwick as in similar institutions, a particular boy's trouble reflected not his own cussedness but rather the hostility of a supervisor. In reading through some case histories at Warwick, I came across two reports on a single boy, written by different staff members about the same time. One report said:

This boy is very good in the cottage, and is a very good worker. One of the best boys I ever had.

The other remarked:

A very sulky boy, supremely lazy. Cannot accept even a slight suggestion without looking daggers at me. Does lousy work and expects to be praised for it. Very insolent in his attitude.

The inadequacy of psychiatric and social work supervision stood out as a serious weakness at Warwick. This in

spite of the fact that the place had a full-time psychiatrist — and a good one — Dr. Irving Knapp. But with four hundred and thirty-five boys to handle, he and his staff of three social workers could do little more than classify and diagnose cases. Actual treatment was possible only in rare instances, for highly selected cases.

“It is really disgraceful,” Dr. Knapp said. “I need at least twice my present staff to do a job of even minimum adequacy. But our requests for more help never get by the state budget bureau. We could help a lot of these children and return some of them as useful, stable citizens — if only we got the people we need.”

Superintendent Cohen agreed. So did Robert T. Lansdale, the state’s Social Welfare Commissioner, who had repeatedly requested more psychiatric and social work personnel for Warwick. But the budget bureau remained adamantly negative.

An attempt had been made to form an affiliation for the school with the psychiatric department of the Columbia University-Presbyterian Hospital Medical Center in New York City, but this effort to get consultant assistance fell through, largely because of the distance between the institution and the Medical Center.

Under the circumstances, instead of giving chronic run-aways and other emotionally disturbed youngsters a chance at the intensive treatment they needed, Warwick sent them to its new “Security Annex” — a prisonlike building at the New York City Reformatory for Men.

## New York's "Little Alcatraz"

THE BOYS at Warwick referred with awe to the Annex as "Little Alcatraz," using the same nickname as that given to the Sheridan Security Branch by the boys at St. Charles in Illinois. Its official title was the New Hampton Security Annex of the New York State Training Schools for Boys. It occupied one of several buildings on the grounds of the New York City Reformatory for Men, about sixteen miles from Warwick. It had been opened in 1946 when the state took it over as a place to which Warwick's "worst boys" could be transferred and maintained under "security" conditions. New Hampton also received delinquents considered too hot to handle at Industry, the State's second reform school for boys.

"Little Alcatraz" looked the part. Physically, it had the appearance of a forbidding, jail-like structure surrounded by a high wire fence that set it off from the men's reformatory.

I must confess I was deeply prejudiced against this security annex before I visited it, accompanied by Edwin J. Lukas, director of the Society for the Prevention of Crime. I knew that the progressive trend in institutionalization was toward more "open" minimum security schools rather than toward the establishment of "maximum security" places. In California, I had seen evidence of this progressive trend in

the stress there on building open camps where children could enjoy maximum freedom, rather than on erecting stronger jails for the tougher children. My native state, New York, seemed bent on reversing this progressive trend.

As Lukas and I approached the New Hampton Annex, our hearts sank at sight of the gloomy structure. We both thought: "What a place to lock up troubled children!" We exchanged glances of shock.

But what a pleasant surprise lay in store for us when we entered the forbidding building, talked to the superintendent, the staff and the inmates, and learned about the program! What a contrast to the soul-breaking repression at Sheridan!

On that first visit and on another made several months later (in August 1948), I became convinced that New Hampton represented a curious paradox in the reform school field. I had seen physically beautiful institutions where the souls of the juvenile inmates were chilled and constricted by callous, indifferent, inadequate or sadistic supervision. Here, at New Hampton, was an ugly building that looked like a prison — and indeed had served as such — where boys were treated with warmth and understanding. They looked relaxed even in the little cells they slept in. The toughness that had brought about their banishment from a "model" reform school to "Little Alcatraz" was gradually being softened by the considerate attention of people who seemed to care about them.

I asked the boys what they liked about the place. The answer was, in sum:

"They play fair and square with you here. They don't hold grudges. They don't play mean tricks on you. The super-

visors are our friends, and you get a chance to talk with them when you've got something on your mind. You know you can trust them, and they're really interested in you."

The boys also liked the food, the active all-day program of work, play and schooling (in sharp contrast to the debilitating, mischief-creating enforced idleness at many other institutions), and the fact that they were handled in small groups rather than in masses.

Nearly all the boys liked the young superintendent, Dr. Benjamin J. Hill, who had been an elementary school teacher before he went into the correctional field. Hill proved to be a friendly sort of man who talked like an educator rather than the head of an institution for especially tough adolescents. He was imbued with progressive educational ideas. He was putting them into practice with the help of a like-minded staff made up mainly of younger men who were refreshingly free of the warping mind-set that "you can't do anything with these hoodlums but keep them locked up tight."

When I asked the inmates what they didn't like, they criticized mainly the inadequacy of vocational facilities for learning industrial skills (such as they had at Warwick). Some also complained about being cuffed now and then by certain staff members, although none mentioned serious brutality.

A number complained about too much regimentation in the "toilet call," which was set at specific times of the day.

As one boy put it:

"Sometimes boys have to go to the bathroom right away. The question they pop at you is 'Why didn't you go when we had toilet call?' They seem to think you can go any time you want to. In that case, you could go to the bathroom now for three o'clock tomorrow and not have to go then. What

I'm getting at is you go to the bathroom when you have to."

There were forty-five boys at New Hampton, ranging from fourteen to eighteen years of age. The staff totaled thirty-five, including kitchen, office and maintenance employees besides the teachers and supervisors working directly with the boys.

One very glaring lack, as in most institutions of its kind, was the inadequacy of psychiatric service. By the very nature of the annex's selective process, nearly all the boys had severe emotional problems. But visiting psychiatric service — almost casual at that — was available only twice a week. Intensive treatment under such conditions was impossible.

New Hampton was frankly an experimental institution. The law that created it required a review at the end of a five-year period, with the understanding that it would be abandoned if it did not prove successful by then.

To my own pleasant surprise, I had received a very favorable impression of the school on both my visits. But I had these reservations and questions:

Things might look good now, when there were only forty-five boys there and a proportionately large staff, generally imbued with initial enthusiasm, to supervise them. But what would happen should the population be expanded to a hundred boys or more, as was contemplated? Would individual attention for these seriously-disturbed children be possible then? What if the staff were not expanded proportionately? What if the initial enthusiasm should subside into cynicism with time?

What if the New Hampton annex should gradually turn into a convenient dumping ground for all the unwanted boys at Warwick and Industry? What if it became, then,



a mass of institution itself, losing its main claim to effectiveness as a place where a small number of especially difficult children can receive the concentrated attention of a competent, adequate and well-chosen staff? Then, indeed, it would become what it looked like — a prison for children, a Little Alcatraz.

## The Federal Reform School

THE FEDERALLY OPERATED National Training School for boy delinquents in Washington, District of Columbia, is one of the country's best reform schools. Yet its director, the head of its supervising agency and others are agreed that it has no valid reason for existence.

About one fourth of the three hundred and eighty boys at the school when I visited it were from the District of Columbia; the rest represented nearly every state in the Union. The National Training School receives delinquents under eighteen years of age from all over the country who have been found guilty of violating a federal law — such as stealing from a post office or other government property, or violating the Dyer Act, which makes it a federal offense to cross state lines with a stolen automobile. A large percentage of the boys are “Dyer Act-ers” — they are runaways who crossed state lines in stolen cars. Tried in federal courts, they are placed in the custody of the United States Attorney General. In some cases, efforts are made to contract with a public institution in their own state; when that is not done, the boy is sent to Washington, even if it means transporting him thousands of miles from his own state.

The federal institution is located atop a high hill commanding a magnificent view of the nation's capital. It is operated by the United States Bureau of Prisons. It is an “open”

institution; that is, it is not surrounded by prisonlike fences or gates. Its close proximity to the heart of Washington makes escapes tempting and easy. This fact results, in turn, in a strict supervision which, while not harsh, is too repressive for a good rehabilitation program.

The institution has improved considerably since 1939, when Harold E. Hegstrom left Minnesota's state training school at Red Wing to take over its direction. Hegstrom found the school in an appalling condition. Corporal punishment was officially sanctioned and frequently used. The kitchen and dining rooms were swarming with rats and vermin. There was then no rehabilitative program worth mentioning.

The academic program at the federal school, when I visited it, was one of the finest I'd seen or heard about. So was the vocational training program, which included a splendid auto-repair shop and an effective setup for teaching business-machine operation. Corporal punishment was strictly forbidden, and I heard no complaints about "unofficial" physical violence in private conversations with inmates.

Nevertheless the institution faced insuperable difficulties in terms of ideal modern functioning. The physical plant was poorly suited for a rehabilitative school. Some of the buildings were ancient. The "cottages," or residential buildings, each averaged over fifty inmates, with some having more than sixty. Mass handling, rather than individual treatment, was an inevitable consequence of this setup. I was disappointed to find, in the nation's capital, that racial segregation ruled this federal institution, with white and colored stu-

dents quartered in separate cottages. Surely, here is one place where President Truman's civil rights program for the nation could be enforced by the Administration itself.

An unusually high proportion of the boys at the National Training School were emotionally disturbed. Many were chronic runaways, seeking desperate escape from their inner conflicts. One of the boys I met at the school was Tom, a native of Detroit, who had been orphaned at four, and later spent time in twelve different orphanages. He had run away at least once from each. He was sent to a state reform school as a chronic runaway. He ran away from there. At sixteen, he stole a car in Toledo, was caught in Indiana, and wound up at the National Training School as a "Dyer Act-er." Now, at eighteen, he was about to be paroled, having learned to use an IBM machine with great proficiency, and Superintendent Hegstrom held out high hopes for him.

Many boys had wound up at the Washington school, far from their home towns and families, as a result of a callous and often vicious "you-can-have-him, we-don't-want-him" attitude on the part of local and state authorities. In short, they arrived at the National Training School as rejects from their home communities.

There was the case of two Brooklyn boys who, in running away from home, picked up somebody's car and drove to Utah before they were caught. The federal authorities tried to place them, at federal expense, in a New York institution. But the boys were known locally as tough troublemakers, and nobody would have them. So they wound up at the Washington school.

There was the case of Howard, a 15-year-old West Virginia boy, who was awaiting transportation to the state training school for a series of petty thefts when he pilfered something from a federal reservation and was haled to federal court. The state authorities immediately washed their hands of him, and refused to send him to the state school, as requested by the federal officials. He was then "sentenced" to five years at the National Training School, where he proved to be a bright boy and made an excellent adjustment. When I saw him, federal officials were trying vainly to get community agencies sufficiently interested to help plan for Howard's future so he could be released.

Albert was thirteen, and on probation by a local court for "joy riding" and petty thefts, when he came into federal custody for breaking into a post office with a sixteen-year-old companion and pilfering one dollar in postal funds. Here, too, the federal authorities wanted to turn the boy back to the local people, but the latter's attitude was: "The Feds are stuck with him. Let them keep him." The boy was committed to the Washington reform school for four years.

The National Training School, when I visited it, had by far the best institutional psychiatric program. On its staff were two young psychiatrists, serving on assignment from the United States Public Health Service, three psychologists and five psychiatric social workers. These people were operating as an effective team in providing diagnostic and classification services, treating emotionally disturbed inmates, helping many "normals" to gain clearer insight into their problems, and planning rehabilitation after release.

I watched one of the psychiatrists, Dr. James J. Thorpe, as

he conducted a group psychotherapy session with eight boys, all in the pre-parole class. It was an impressive form of treatment, developed in recent years and still in the experimental stage. The boys, skillfully and patiently directed by the psychiatrist, engaged in a lively bull session on the problems disturbing them and the questions that would face them upon returning to their communities. From this and other sessions they gained mutual insight into the factors underlying their behavior, and mutual strength from the knowledge that they were not alone. It seemed far better to treat behavior problems in this way than to try to beat "bad" behavior out of a boy.

In 1949, I was deeply disappointed to learn that the two young psychiatrists had been withdrawn from the National Training School as a result of a federal budget cut. Another consideration prompting their withdrawal, I was given to understand in private, was the fact that their group therapy sessions were regarded as newfangled frills by old-line staff members, whose resentments and hostilities helped ease them out of the institution. Plans were under way to continue psychotherapy for specially selected children by the psychologists and social workers, but the program, under the circumstances, could not be the same as the promising one inaugurated experimentally by the two psychiatrists.

I was unfavorably impressed, at the National Training School, by the fact that supervisors were uniformed. They wore natty gray uniforms with pith helmets, to be sure, but they were uniforms nevertheless, and lent a penal flavor to the school. The institution had a better-than-average staff, although the boys told me they felt too "hemmed-in" by the close supervision. Several prisonlike cells in the "adjustment

cottage" held chronic runaways and seriously disturbed children. They were clean but ugly isolation cells; Superintendent Hegstrom assured me they were needed in an otherwise "open" institution.

Of one thing I was convinced: there was no corporal punishment at the NTS, official or unofficial. Hegstrom had stopped it firmly when he assumed office in 1939.

Federal Prisons Bureau Director James V. Bennett and Superintendent Hegstrom are convinced that the National Training School itself is an anachronism, and that it should be abolished — provided that known but presently unavailable alternatives could materialize. To transport delinquents hundreds and even thousands of miles from their homes is not only economically wasteful but administratively unsound, and perilous from the human angle. The boys lose all contact with their own communities. The great distances make yearned-for visits from relatives rare, and in many cases impossible. The same factor is an effective barrier against trial visits, or periodic week-end visits, home — often a splendid morale builder. A recent report of the Federal Prisons Bureau sets forth additional disadvantages of the National Training School. It points to the age of the institution — which was established on its present site during Abraham Lincoln's administration (1864). The cottage for new admissions was built in 1875, and other buildings are of ancient vintage.

The major problems of the National Training School [the report states] stem from its plant and location, and the limitations of both serve to complicate the school's administration and provide serious obstacles to the development of a fully-rounded program.

The plant was not designed to meet the requirements of the present program. . . . The housing units as they now exist ac-

commodate groups of boys too large for effective counseling by the cottage master. [Each has a capacity for sixty-five boys.] They are difficult to supervise. They constitute a constant hazard from fire, and because of the age and deterioration of the buildings, they are increasingly difficult and expensive to maintain. The problem of maintenance is equally serious for many other existing buildings. Buildings are poorly located on the site to permit ease in moving groups of boys from activity to activity. This adds considerably to problems of supervision.

The report adds that the school's location, in the midst of a steadily growing urban population, offers a constant temptation to attempt escape and, conversely, requires more stringent supervision to reduce runaways to a minimum. "The result is that boys must be regimented within the confines of the school to a degree which is contrary to accepted principles of good training school administration," it continues.

The Federal Prisons Bureau, furthermore, urges that the present school be abandoned and that another be erected on a more suitable site, planned to meet the requirements of a modern rehabilitative program. Better still, as Director Bennett puts it today, would be to abolish the school entirely and to substitute contracts with appropriate private and public agencies in the home states and communities for rehabilitative handling of boys who run afoul of federal laws. Thus far, alas, such arrangements have been possible in only a small percentage of cases. A suitable over-all *modus operandi* has not yet been worked out, and state and local officials have not shown any great degree of eagerness in helping to solve this problem.

Besides the National Training School, the Federal Government, through its Prisons Bureau, operates the Natural Bridge



Camp in Virginia for boy delinquents. This institution, established in 1944, is located on the site of an abandoned CCC camp, with a capacity for about one hundred boys. Its creation arose mainly out of two considerations: the sharp wartime rise in juvenile delinquency, which had the effect of gravely overcrowding the old federal reform school in Washington, and the desire to put into practice some of the newer methods of treatment such as had been developed in the forestry camps of California. Personnel at the Natural Bridge Camp have been carefully selected on the basis of interest in children and ability in treating them. The program is much more informal than that at the National Training School, consisting largely of forestry projects aimed at developing good work habits and inculcating feelings of adequacy and self-confidence, with a minimum of formal academic education. In fact, the boys at Natural Bridge Camp are selected largely from among youngsters who will not particularly benefit from academic work. There are a number of serious problems at the camp: its relatively isolated location, the difficulty of getting building materials to it, and the fact that most of the construction work has to be done by the boys themselves. It is still too early to assay the success of the experiment.

In 1947 the United States Department of Justice inaugurated a new method of handling first offenders of juvenile age. In certain cases of such first offenders who appeared amenable to supervision, prosecution was deferred and the juveniles were placed under the supervision of probation officers for stated periods and under stipulated conditions. If a youngster completed this period successfully, his case was closed and no official record was developed against him. During the first year, a total of one hundred and seventy-five

cases of juvenile offenders against federal laws were handled in this manner.

As noted earlier, many of the inmates of the National Training School in Washington are runaways who have driven stolen cars across state lines in their flight. But there are thousands of interstate runaways every year who do not steal cars and hence don't get tangled up with federal law. The plight of many such runaways is appalling. They often become the objects of absurdly long-drawn-out litigation and wrangling between the localities where they are picked up and the place of their origin. Frequently, the expense of transporting a child back to his community is multiplied many times by the expense of communications and law-court litigation over financial responsibility for its return. It has been charged by reliable observers that runaway children are sometimes transported to a state or county line and "dumped" on the neighboring state or county to avoid transportation expense or other problems arising from the child's situation. Many a child languishes in jail for long periods while the sovereign states wrangle over which shall pay the cost of returning him home.

To obviate this vicious situation, bills have been introduced into Congress for several successive years authorizing the Federal Government to pay such transportation expenses for runaway children who cross state lines. Such a bill is now before the Eighty-first Congress. It also provides federal funds for the decent maintenance of children in appropriate shelters, foster homes or other suitable detention places while awaiting return. It is a pity that children should be made the footballs, often to their grave injury, in a game played between state officials as to which can pinch a penny tighter.

## California — A Paradox in Light and Shade

I HAD never heard of "rag sniffing" as an institutional vice before I reached California in my rounds of reform schools. It was raging in almost epidemic form at both the two large state training schools for delinquent boys that I visited — the Fred C. Nelles School at Whittier, in Southern California, and the Preston School of Industry in the northern area.

My curiosity was aroused when I found, in both places, a rather large percentage of boys being disciplined for what was noted in the official records as "rag sniffing." I learned upon inquiry that this peculiar practice consisted of soaking a rag in gasoline, benzene, floor polish or virtually anything that gave off strong fumes. The lad would then hold the rag to his nose and breathe deeply, until he became dizzy. The aftermath of this strangely induced stupor often was a violent headache and severe nausea.

I asked one of the boys at Whittier, placed in the punishment cottage for rag sniffing, why he did it, especially in view of the unpleasant aftereffects.

The boy grinned sheepishly.

"Well, Mister," he said, "it's a change. It makes you feel high. You keep feeling the same all the time here. Rag sniffing makes you feel different, even if it's only for a little while."

I couldn't help recalling the epidemic of "benny jags" that I had encountered on a visit to the California State

Prison at San Quentin the previous year. The prisoners, at the time, were eagerly obtaining benzedrine inhalers. At first they secured them free at the prison pharmacy by claiming head colds or sinus trouble. When the prison officials discovered the strange use to which they were being put, they clamped down on the distribution. The prisoners then had them smuggled in by friends and accommodating employees, sometimes paying as high as ten dollars for a single inhaler.

They removed the benzedrine-soaked, blotterlike inner cardboards in the inhalers, either chewed or boiled the strips, and then swallowed them. This practice apparently produced a temporary feeling of euphoria, or well-being. The prisoners called it a "benny-jag" or a "benzedrine binge." So widespread did this practice become that the California state legislature later enacted a law prohibiting any unauthorized person from bringing benzedrine into a penal institution. Many other prisons throughout the country were confronted with this problem of "benny-jags." In 1949, the manufacturers of benzedrine inhalers announced the perfection of a new formula eliminating the ingredient that produced euphoric feelings, as a direct consequence of the "benny jag" problem in prisons.

The prison "benny jags" and its juvenile version, rag sniffing, it seemed to me, were motivated by the same factor that blights life and withers personalities in most of our correctional institutions — the factor of monotony. Few persons who know nothing but the outside world of relative freedom can appreciate or understand the terrible nature of institutional monotony and its deadly impact on its long-term victims. Worse than physical blows, worse than occasional harsh words, worse than the contemptuous and even hostile

attitudes of some supervisors, worse than anything else, is the dull, deteriorating monotony of diet, monotony of work, monotony of being taught by rote, monotony of drills and marching and dormitory life and clockwork routine in general, day in day out, week after week, month after month and sometimes year after year, in the penal setting that characterizes most of our public reform schools.

Director Karl Holton of the California Youth Authority disputes my interpretation of rag sniffing as arising from the yearning to find momentary relief from institutional monotony. He contends that it represents partly a senseless fad that "caught on" with the boys, and also a substitute for the tobacco, alcohol and even marijuana that some had been using. I have a high regard for Mr. Holton, but my own observations, confirmed by others whose opinions I respect, leave me convinced that monotony and rag sniffing have a definite relationship.

The part of the California reform school program that I saw struck me as a strange paradox. The state Youth Authority, which has jurisdiction over the juvenile training schools, was one of the most progressive agencies I encountered, as I shall note in more detail later. Karl Holton, its director, was one of the ablest administrators and planners I met. California's long-range program for controlling child delinquency was more impressively far-reaching than that of any other state. Yet I was shocked by some of the conditions I found at Whittier and Preston late in 1947. I found at both institutions much that was good. I also found much that was bad.

The Fred C. Nelles School at Whittier had the finest campus I had seen anywhere, with lovely shade trees, spacious well-kept lawns, and good-looking buildings. There were three hundred and nineteen boys there, filling the school to capacity. Most of them were in the fourteen- to sixteen-year-old age group, though some were not yet in their teens.

Orrin A. Bell, the superintendent, had taken over at Whittier a few months before my arrival. He had received his master's degree in school administration at the University of Nebraska before entering the institutional field. He had started to put into effect some splendid plans for reorganizing the academic program of the school. But he faced some serious difficulties, mainly an acute shortage of qualified personnel, some resistance to reform on the part of old-line staff members, and remnants of a harshly repressive tradition which Bell's predecessor, Paul J. McKusick, had not been able to eliminate entirely during his five years' tenure, notwithstanding his own good reputation as an administrator.

"How can I get enough good teachers," Bell remarked, "when the salary here — for teaching difficult children — runs from six to seven hundred dollars below the salary scales for public school teachers in the normal community?"

The Nelles School at Whittier had had a long history as a trouble spot. Built in 1889 as a model juvenile reformatory, it had been the focus of recurrent investigations. The institution had been in an uproar in 1940 and 1941 when, within the space of a year, two boys committed suicide in isolation cells within the disciplinary barracks known as the "lost privilege cottage." An investigation was conducted at the order of the Governor of California. Within a year (1941—

1942) seven different superintendents succeeded one another in kaleidoscopic change at Whittier.

The famous Father Edward J. Flanagan of Boys Town was persuaded to try to restore the institution's devastated morale. In a noble but disastrous experiment, he called the entire student body together on the first Sunday morning, and told them:

"Boys, the day is yours. The gates are open — take a holiday and return by six this evening."

By eventide, less than half the boys had returned to the school. The others participated in one of the biggest mass outbreaks in reform school history. They were frightened, confused, demoralized, completely ill-prepared to react soberly to Father Flanagan's fine gesture of faith. The task of rounding up the large number of runaways was a heart-breaking one, punctuated by angry outcries from the surrounding community. Within three weeks of his arrival, the good Father Flanagan returned to Boys Town, a saddened if wiser man.

The program at Whittier when I visited it was most impressive — on paper. The repressive tradition, the relatively large inmate population and the location of the "open" school in the center of a thriving town, made close supervision and mass regimentation almost inevitable. Whittier had a full-time psychiatrist, but when he recounted his manifold duties to me — examination of all new admissions for classification and placement, service as the general medical officer for both the staff and the student body, and examination of outgoing boys — there seemed to be little or no time for actual treatment of those needing it.

Here the disciplinary or lost privilege cottage was known

ironically as "Thomas Jefferson Cottage" and took up one section of a two-story building that also housed the receiving section. One dormitory was in the form of a huge iron-barred cage that gave its residents the appearance of animals in a zoo. It had been designed to make it easier for supervisors to watch the boys at all times.

There were twenty-seven boys in this disciplinary cottage. About half of them were recorded as "rag sniffers." And here it was that I saw one of the most extraordinary institutional practices I encountered — the "toilet line." Twenty-seven boys, arms folded, stood in three straight lines in the center of the cottage lavatory, with three open toilets on either side. The boys followed one another in rotation, each rejoining the line when finished. After each had taken his turn, they marched out. There were seven "toilet lines" like this daily — before and after each meal and before bedtime. Individual visits to the toilet were rarely allowed, and then only under a supervisor's guard.

Corporal punishment was "strictly forbidden" at Whittier, but from a number of boys I learned of beatings, some very severe, administered by a particular staff member. "But he never beats you unless you deserve it," the boys agreed. Each newcomer to the Thomas Jefferson disciplinary cottage was "broken in" by being made to "toe the line" for one hour before each meal for three days. That is, he stood at rigid attention on a white line in back of the dining-room tables.

The pattern of repressive regimentation was far more pronounced at the Preston School of Industry near Ione, about forty miles from Sacramento. There were five hundred and



forty-four boys at Preston when I visited it. They ranged in age from fifteen to twenty-one years. Preston, by law, was maintained under military discipline, with the discredited "cadet and monitor system" in full employ. (To the South, Orrin Bell had proudly pointed to the end of the monitor system at Whittier, and added: "You can't get rid of the abuses of the monitor system until you get rid of the monitor system itself.")

Again unlike Whittier, Preston was ugly architecturally as well as overly repressive in practice. It consisted mainly of a cluster of ancient, drab buildings. There had been so many shocking incidents in recent years that people in the field spoke of "the chronic Preston scandal." Several progressive-minded superintendents placed in charge of Preston following recurrent revelations of maltreatment had been frustrated and beaten back by the brazen sabotage of old-line underlings.

The double-tiered prison cell barracks for boys undergoing punishment — known as Company G — were among the most depressing I saw anywhere. There were forty-seven boys in this disciplinary building. The tougher ones among them were quartered in a special cell block, in isolation and under all-day silence rules. They were restricted to three meals a day each consisting exclusively of a specially baked meat-and-vegetable cake. This cake contained all the vitamins and other nutrients needed to sustain life, but it looked like a mud pie and tasted like a mud pie. I found it hard to repress a feeling of nausea when I tasted one. There wasn't a single piece of furniture in any of the silent cells; the boys slept on the floor.

I watched the boys of Company G eat their noonday meal.

The boys lined up at attention, in columns, outside the dining room. A monitor, or cadet officer, barked a command. The first column marched stiffly into the dining room and stood at attention over the table benches. Another command, and another column followed suit. When all five columns were in, the boys sat down in unison as the monitor cried: "Sit!" They ate their meal in complete silence. Fifteen minutes after their entrance, they arose and marched out, column by column, in response to a series of shouted commands.

I had heard much of the Youth Authority's "diagnostic and classification center" or clinic that had been established at Preston for the purpose of screening delinquents. Boys committed to the YA were sent to this diagnostic clinic, where they were presumably studied intensively for periods of six to eight weeks in preparation for their classification and assignment to Preston, Whittier, or one of the YA camps. On paper, and as described verbally, this center appeared most impressive. I found it housed in a broken-down building that had been condemned as unfit in 1920, and had been abandoned for years. There were one hundred boys housed in it at the time of my visit. The center was in charge of Dr. Gordon W. Riley, a well-trained, well-oriented and conscientious clinical psychologist, grossly overworked, unprovided with any adequate staff, forced to fight off the indifference and even hostility of other Preston officials. He was so burdened with clerical details that he had little time to use his psychological skills. The whole clinical setup — starved in terms of staff and budget, harassed by bold obstructionism — seemed like a pitiful caricature of the appealing picture painted in the official literature and described to me verbally in Sacramento.

In theory, the diagnostic clinic was supposed to study intensively the social, psychological, mental and physical capacities of each boy, together with "a complete analysis of his ability, personality, emotional stability, interests, fears, tensions, and conflicts" before his assignment to Preston or any other institution. In practice, the overwhelmed clinic staff could do little more than sketch most superficially a psychological test and case material record on each boy. There wasn't a single social worker on the clinic staff; there was no budget provision for any.

Dr. Burton M. Castner, chief of the YA diagnostic and classification division at Sacramento, told me that the agency planned to set up two diagnostic and classification centers in place of the Preston central clinic as soon as sufficient personnel could be recruited and appropriate sites — one in southern California, one in the north — and buildings obtained.

The strangest sight at Preston was a small cluster of buildings in the center of the institution, enclosed as a stockade by a circular steel-wire mesh fence about thirteen feet high. This represented the "living space" of Company S (for segregation) — consisting of very disturbed boys, chronic runaways, homosexuals and others representing a serious morale problem. Within this enclosure they worked, played, ate and slept, in full view of but separate from the rest of the cadets. It looked like a concentration camp, and that was the name given it by the Preston boys. The inmates were watched like hawks by the supervisors.

I looked on as a group of boys in one building gathered around a single colored page torn from a Sunday supplement magazine. It displayed a girl in rather scant attire. A young,

tight-lipped, ruddy-faced supervisor broke into the circle, snatched the sheet and tore it furiously into little bits. Later, outside the building, he turned to me and offered this bitter plaint, in a high-pitched voice:

“I’ve had a fine education. I’ve got to work with uncouth cow hands here. The boys curse terribly. They may look like little angels, but they’re devils, every one of them. But I know how to handle them. I never permit any swearing, obscenity or anything like that — I was brought up in a decent home, and my mother never allowed it. They know where I stand, and they’re afraid to use such language in my company. It’s terrible what they say when I’m not around. If they use foul language, they’ll do foul deeds. It follows like night the day.”

I thought of the esoteric language used by some city editors of my acquaintance.

In 1944 the California Taxpayers’ Association, reporting on its survey of Preston, revealed many repressive measures and concluded:

It is obvious that the present program has not retrained the boys. In fact, it may possibly have done them serious damage. Far too large a portion of these youths has continued in criminal ways after release.<sup>1</sup> The state has made heavy expenditures for rehabilitation but has not stopped the criminal careers of boys sent to our correctional schools.

There had been some improvement at Preston since the Taxpayers’ Association published its report, but its basic criticisms still obtained at the time of my visit.

<sup>1</sup> A published follow-up survey revealed that of 250 boys released from Preston in 1929, 67 per cent had been arrested one or more times and 47 per cent sentenced to state prisons by the year 1939.

None of the state officials that I interviewed in Sacramento expressed any particular pride in the existing operations of Whittier and Preston. They were mainly apologetic, too, for the program at the state school for girls at Ventura, which, it was generally acknowledged, was dominated by a rigidly repressive regimen. They noted, in justifiable extenuation, that radical reforms had been impossible during the war years, especially, because of the acute shortage of personnel and materials. For these three mass or congregate institutions they expressed hope for the future based on programs in the blueprint stage.

But everybody, from Youth Authority Director Karl Holton down, was proudly enthusiastic about the state camp programs for delinquents, then under way.

Karl Holton expressed himself as opposed to "mass" institutions.

"Small institutions are run for the benefit of the children," he observed. "Large institutions are run for the benefit of the staff."

In the California Youth Authority I found the best functioning state-wide setup for handling the over-all delinquency problem. It had been created through the Youth Authority Act of 1941, though it did not begin to function until 1943. Governor Earl Warren, when he assumed office in the latter year, called it "one of the greatest social experiments ever undertaken in this state."

As amended in subsequent years, the enabling legislation gave the Youth Authority supervision over all delinquent children and youths under twenty-one years of age, control over the state reform schools, and power to assist county

and city authorities to set up local delinquency prevention and treatment programs. All courts handling youthful delinquents were required to commit them to the Youth Authority for disposition instead of to any particular institution.

The Youth Authority consisted of a three-man board with extraordinarily wide supervisory powers over preventive and treatment programs in delinquency. The Authority's chairman also serves as the administrative director. The original act was patterned on a model bill drawn up by the American Law Institute and fostered principally by that agency's consultant, John R. Ellingston.

Karl Holton, then chief probation officer of Los Angeles, was named the YA's first chairman and director. I had heard much of this energetic man in Los Angeles — of how he had fearlessly exposed brutal mistreatment at Whittier, of his pioneer development of community coordinating councils to cope with the delinquency problem, and of how he had built and supervised a forestry camp for boy delinquents of Los Angeles, based on a nonpunitive philosophy. That first camp was to serve as a model for an expanding network of colonies for child delinquents operated by the YA.

"I would never build another Preston or Whittier," Holton told me.

Instead, the YA has been creating small, camplike schools for girl and boy delinquents committed to its care. The ideal maximum, says Holton, is fifty or sixty, but all camps have already exceeded that limit. The children are carefully selected and placed on the basis of age, background, personality and potentiality. The camps in operation in 1949 were:

PASO ROBLES INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL for boys aged 14 to 16, with a capacity of 135.

FRICOT RANCH SCHOOL for boys aged 8 to 16, with a capacity of 100.

LOS GUILUCOS SCHOOL for girls aged 8 to 16, with a capacity of 110.

BEN LOMOND CAMP for boys aged 16 to 21, with a capacity of 60.

WHITMORE CAMP for boys aged 16 to 21, with a capacity of 70.

PINE GROVE CAMP for boys aged 16 to 21, with a capacity of 70.

COARSEGOLD CAMP for boys aged 16 to 21, with a capacity of 90.

The latter four institutions are all forestry camps, mainly for older youths who do not require or presumably will not benefit from the more formal educational programs of the typical reform school.

In Sacramento, Holton outlined to me his philosophy, plans and other observations on institutional training for juvenile delinquents. He said:

“What we need most desperately in modernizing and humanizing our programs for delinquents are people, good people, people who care, and plenty of them. People mean more than newfangled gadgets and trimmings. People are all-important. You can't have a good institution without good people to run it. I know you'll find many things you don't like at Whittier and Preston. There are things that I don't like myself. We are trying to catch up with our lacks and defects.

“We must develop a positive approach. We must ask ourselves: ‘What can we give these children,’ not ‘What should we take away from them?’ We used to have a great many more runaways at our institutions than we have now. We are reducing escapes by developing better programs, not by making discipline harsher. Not that we are worried about

having some runaways. Any institution that boasts it has none should be investigated; there is something wrong with its program.

"There is no excuse for monotony. A diversified, well-planned program, where children participate fully, would solve half our disciplinary problems. But I don't believe in frills and fancy gadgets. I believe in simple institutions, simply run. Stick to fundamentals. We've got to teach the children that they must live in the world as it is, and to respect the rights of others."

Holton admitted that the YA was seriously short of psychiatric personnel, but explained: "It's hard to get good psychiatrists, and we won't take bad ones." His main emphasis seemed to be placed on attracting enough teachers and educational administrators to convert the reformatories into real schools. He was critical, indeed caustic, in his observations on what passes for "vocational training" in many reform schools.

"Much of the so-called 'trade work' is simply disguised maintenance labor, as you well know," Holton said. "In the old days, when we taught trades at all, we customarily did it with antiquated equipment or taught skills that had no application to California industry. Now we are installing modern equipment and teaching specific skills geared to going trades in California, so that our children can use them in getting jobs here."

Holton deplored the fact that large numbers of juveniles were held for long periods in jails and detention homes because the shortage of personnel and facilities made their processing and placement a lengthy operation after their commitment to the YA. This prolonged waiting period, in



idleness and demoralizing surroundings, was apt to have a profound effect on the child's future attitude and adjustment potential. At both Whittier and Preston, many boys bitterly complained to me of lengthy jail or detention-home stays prior to admission in the reform school. They were resentful that the time spent there was not deducted from their minimum stay at Preston or Whittier.

YA officials, including Holton, complained that too many juvenile court judges started children on their way to institutions with erroneous attitudes and expectations certain to produce serious morale problems later. There were those who conjured up hellish pictures of Preston discipline, telling the victim:

"You're only fit for a place like Preston. They'll cut you down to size there. They know how to handle your kind."

Then there were those who painted rosy pictures and made promises of things to come that the institutions couldn't possibly deliver.

Holton expressed justifiable pride in the reorganization of the parole service under the YA. When it came into existence, each state training school had its own parole officers operating independently, with consequent duplication in travel and lack of integration. In reorganizing parole and placement services, the YA's first steps were to centralize supervision and to lighten the case loads of parole officers. Case loads were reduced from a high of 175 per officer to a standard of 80 each.

One of the most significant advances in the YA program was made possible by a law passed in 1945 authorizing the state to pay half the expenses of operating county camps for juvenile delinquents built in accordance with minimum YA

standards. This step encouraged a number of counties to establish their own facilities. In 1949 there were eleven such county camps in California. A major aim of the county juvenile camp movement is "to spend less money on formal buildings and more money on securing well-qualified counselors to work with these children."<sup>2</sup>

One of the best of these institutions is the Log Cabin Ranch maintained by the Juvenile Court Department of the City and County of San Francisco under the dynamic overall direction of Chief Probation Officer George W. Ososke, with an average of fifty-five boys in residence.

The California Special Crime Study Commission on Juvenile Justice, in its final report (June 30, 1949), recommended considerable expansion of YA powers and activities in both the treatment and prevention aspects of juvenile and youth delinquency. It specifically urged the state legislature, by joint resolution, to give first priorities in the state building program to "facilities needed for the proper care of children and youth." The report pointed out that the YA had to reject some cases committed to its care by superior courts because of inadequate facilities, and that many young persons had to languish in county jails and juvenile halls while awaiting admission to crowded YA institutions.

The Commission, in another specific recommendation, urged that the YA "be provided with clinical facilities adequate to enable it to give appropriate diagnostic and treatment services to those of its wards who, although not comitable to the Department of Mental Hygiene, present such severe emotional and personality disturbances that they cannot be properly cared for in the regular programs of existing

<sup>2</sup> *California Youth Authority Quarterly*, fall 1948, p. 22.

YA facilities." Here the commission pointed to a serious sore spot in the YA program — inadequate handling of delinquents with emotional disorders, and a shunting of cases of this kind between it and the Department of Mental Hygiene, each disclaiming responsibility for psychoneurotics without psychosis.

John R. Ellingston describes in full the story of the California Youth Authority in his interesting book, *Protecting Our Children from Criminal Careers*.<sup>3</sup> While I found this book most informative, I also found its analysis of the program far too uncritical, with a tendency to accept plans and goals for accomplished reality. It seemed to me that Ellingston tends to exaggerate the qualities of the YA program and setup and to ignore or gloss over some serious lacks and defects.

Yet, with all its deficiencies, I found California's program outstanding among the states in the child delinquency field. I was greatly impressed with the boundless energy and far vision of Karl Holton and some of his top associates. I felt that he had managed to gather many good men at the state planning level, but that his humanistic philosophy and sound common sense had not yet percolated sufficiently to the lower operating levels. He was, as he repeatedly noted himself, desperately short of good people.

In my first flush of enthusiasm after witnessing part of the YA program in operation and learning of its leaders' plans, I felt that it represented a splendid model for other states to follow. But with later analysis and reflection I became increasingly convinced that while the system was well suited to California, it was an undesirable and even dangerous pattern for most other states. It happened that California had a

<sup>3</sup> New York, Prentice-Hall, 1948.

comparatively weak state social welfare administrative setup, and the YA, at its creation, filled a virtual vacuum. Then, too, a great deal of the YA's accomplishments had to be credited to the personal force and perspicacity of its director.

The basic fact remains that the YA, in inception and largely in operation, is a correctional agency. In the final analysis, juvenile delinquency is but one aspect of the general child welfare problem, and should be handled mainly within the penumbra of that field. To tear the delinquent child away from other children with problems springing from essentially the same roots is to create an artificial separation and to encourage unhealthy and expensive duplication and rivalry. The *whole child* has to be considered, in the *total setting*; ideally, it is the child welfare agency that is best suited to handle children with problems requiring public attention.

## Boonville — a Study in Sadism

WHEN MY EXPOSURES of conditions in American public reform schools began to be published in magazine articles and newspaper series, many people shook their heads incredulously and said:

“Such things can’t be. Not in this country. Not in these places. Not in our time.”

The same response had been accorded to my lengthy series of journalistic reports on mental hospital conditions, even when accompanied by telltale photographs. A number of professional Pollyannas added their voices in dispraise of my “destructive articles,” several of them implying that I had dreamed up much of my data to supply sensationalistic stories. But as was the case with my mental hospital reports, corroborating details poured into the public press with tragic frequency from places I had not visited or mentioned in my own accounts.

The manner in which these shocking details were revealed reflected the melancholy truth of the observation made in 1946 by the Institutional Treatment Committee of the National Conference on Juvenile Delinquency:

Training schools are not much in the public eye. It is only when some incident occurs which outrages the public conscience and makes big-type headlines that the man in the street is made aware

of the existence of these institutions and the fact that they care for the most difficult and maladjusted children.

For instance, in December 1948 a fifteen-year-old inmate of the Colorado State Industrial School for Boys at Golden committed suicide by hanging himself with a noosed towel. He had been placed in one of the four prison-type detention cells because he was suspected of planning to escape. His death was not discovered by officials until five hours had elapsed, in spite of a specific rule requiring guards to inspect each isolation cell every half-hour. Two boys locked up in an adjoining cell for complicity in the same escape plot had witnessed the tragedy and had yelled for hours before the guards finally appeared.

When questioned by a local reporter, one of these two boys declared:

“Ruben asked me if he could kill himself by not eating. He said he wasn’t having any fun in the school, or at home either, and that there was no use living. He said he was afraid he would get strapped with a wet towel and that he would kill himself if he could.”

Inquiry revealed that wet-towel beatings were frequent at Golden. Its superintendent, G. F. Soelberg, was quoted in the Denver press as saying, in the course of an interview following the suicide:

“We have stopped beating the boys with a wet towel, but we have stopped purely because of the public outcry in connection with Ruben Garcia’s death. I consider this type of punishment very mild and humane. It would be helpful once in a while as a last resort, the same as it is helpful in the public schools or in your own home. Although all beatings and whippings with straps or wet towels have been ordered

stopped, I have not ruled corporal punishment out entirely. You've got to slap a boy's mouth sometimes when he uses profanity or defies authority."

A public demand arose for an investigation of the state reform school at Golden. The Governor of Colorado, W. Lee Knous, thereupon directed Superintendent Soelberg to investigate and report on his own institution. The superintendent submitted a report of twenty-five pages, which summed up the incident as follows:

All indications are that there were no irregularities concerning the boy's death. There is nothing to indicate that it was anything other than suicide through strangulation by hanging. The boy had not been mistreated in any way. There was no opportunity for foul play while the boy was in his detention cell. Several bits of information indicate that the suicide was definitely premeditated, and over a long period of time; in fact, such talk had become routine. I feel this incident was unavoidable and that it could have happened almost anywhere at any time. . . .

The Governor, upon receipt of this report, ordered the case closed, without inquiring as to how officials alert enough to detect an escape plot overlooked the premeditated suicide, which had become "routine talk."

Early in 1949 hell broke loose in the press of Missouri, over a chain of sensational revelations involving incredible horrors at the Missouri State Training School for Boys at Boonville. For weeks these revelations were front-paged and banner-lined in the leading papers of St. Louis and other cities. They added up to a story of violent death and Gestapo-like terror, of the lives and destinies of troubled children tangled up in political knots, of gross brutality and brutaliza-

tion. It took two violent deaths at the institution to attract attention to the hellhole at Boonville.

From the official documents, correspondence with leaders in the juvenile delinquency field in Missouri, and the contemporary reports in the local press, I pieced together this tragic chain of events:

The Boonville institution had been established in 1887 by a statute which specified that it was to be "not simply a place of correction but a reform school where the younger offenders of the law, separated from vicious associations, may receive careful physical, intellectual and moral training, to be reformed and restored to the community with purposes and character fitting for a good citizen."

Notwithstanding this pious ideal, Boonville had been a bad reform school from the start. It had been investigated many times during the two preceding decades, with shocking conditions reported. But it never had been reformed.

Its youngest inmate, in March 1949, was nine years old; its oldest was twenty-four. The boys were mixed indiscriminately — the younger with the older, dangerous mental cases with the normals, the first offender with the hardened repeater, the frightened child with the sadistic hoodlum.

Terror-stricken and desperate boys had been escaping from the institution in great numbers. Four hundred had escaped during the year 1948.

In 1945 Governor Phil M. Donnelly appointed the minister of his family church as superintendent of Boonville.

In August 1948 a Boonville inmate strangled another to death in the isolation cell block used for punishment. Several months later the six-man unpaid State Board of Training Schools (an agency of the Missouri Department of Correc-



tions), which laid down policy for Missouri's three state reform schools and which had vainly protested the retention of the Governor's preacher at Boonville, finally took matters in its own hands and fired him as incompetent. The board appointed in his place John C. Tindall, a trained man with a reputation for progressive attitudes. Tindall began to introduce reforms in the Boonville institution, but he was gravely hampered by a long-standing tradition of sadistic maltreatment and a grossly inadequate budget.

In January 1949 two Boonville inmates killed a third boy in the same punishment cell where the August strangling had occurred. Governor Donnelly grasped this opportunity to dismiss Tindall. He also demanded the resignations of all members of the Board of Training Schools. When they defied his order, he dismissed them without the public hearing required by law.

Tindall, in a signed article published in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, thus described his nightmarish experiences at Boonville:

I had at the very first issued orders that there was to be no more brutality. Then I found that most of the guards were paying no attention to my orders. I saw black eyes, battered faces, broken noses among the boys. But they were afraid to talk to me. They believed what the guards said — if they told, they would get the same thing again. The usual corrective procedure among the guards was to knock a boy down with their fists, then kick him in the groin. . . . Many of the men were sadists.

Moving fast after his summary dismissal of Tindall and the members of the Board of Training Schools, Governor Donnelly placed a state trooper in charge of the Boonville school, and had it patrolled by scores of armed state police.

This act shocked many Missouri citizens and earned the condemnation of many professionals in the welfare and correctional fields. Hugh P. Reed, formerly in charge of United States Navy prisons, who investigated the Boonville situation for the National Probation and Parole Association, called the display of firearms at a juvenile reform school a "dangerous practice," one that could not be found "even in the major penitentiaries which confine society's worst adult offenders."

The incident touched off a number of legislative and other investigations of Boonville. Here are some of the findings:

Untrained guards at the children's institution had been thrown into their jobs, with no instructions as to their duties. "The present salary scale is so low that it does not attract the proper individuals, especially the guards, who receive a salary of \$130 a month plus the usual maintenance." There was an acute shortage of guards, and "the greatest turnover." As a result of this shortage some guards had to work in double shifts. Teachers in the academic schools were commandeered to work as guards on week ends.

One administrative employee told an investigating group: "This institution is a damned mess — the personnel fighting and fussing among themselves, the inmates fighting among themselves, and no control whatever."

Fear ruled the institution. Sadistic beatings were frequent. The former steward of Boonville testified he had seen an executive officer knock a boy down and kick him. He was asked if he had personally witnessed other beatings.

"Yes," he replied. "On other occasions I saw groups of boys whipped. They were stripped completely and held over a table and the beatings were administered with leather straps three feet long and about two inches wide.

“Officials of the institution were present at these beatings, and on many occasions blood appeared from cuts made by the straps. Sometimes iodine was put on the cuts, but the boys were not taken to the hospital.”

Other witnesses testified that children often had their teeth knocked out by the blows of brutal guards. (They were officially called “guards” at Boonville, which disdained the politer euphemisms.)

A so-called “self-government” system among the inmates was actually a hierarchy of the bullies and the bullied. The stronger, older and more unscrupulous inmates formed themselves into “leader” cliques and called themselves the “Dukes.” At the other end of the scale in the inmate “companies” were the weaker boys, known as the “Sanks” — short for sanctified. The Sanks were under the virtually totalitarian control of the Dukes, forced into intramural serfdom and, often, into homosexual associations.

Dormitories were reported to be “filthy,” with cockroaches visible in every corner. Windows were broken out; window sills were rusting; ceilings, floors and walls were unpainted and caked with dirt; toilets were in “horrible condition”; plumbing everywhere was leaking and in general disrepair. The kitchen and mess halls were described as filthy. “Large cockroaches throughout the entire Negro mess building were seen along the edges of the tables, steam radiators, steam pipes, baseboard in the kitchen and around the food dispensers and in the storage room. . . . Open-top garbage cans [in a room adjoining the kitchen] attracted bugs and cockroaches.”

Dormitories for Negro inmates in the Jim Crow institution were found to be dangerous firetraps, with rotting wooden

floors, and plumbing fixtures were "all in extremely bad condition."

Inmates in all companies (the school was organized on a military basis) stated they had nothing to occupy their time while confined to their barracks. "Two Negro companies had nothing in the form of outside recreation — all they had was time on their hands."

The St. Louis *Star-Times*, which conducted a notable campaign for improvement of Boonville, expressed the sentiment of Missouri's socially conscious citizens when it stated editorially:

In the present disclosures of distressing conditions at Boonville the people of Missouri have had held up to them a horrible example of long-standing apathy and political buck-passing. The Boonville story is shocking and it may result in some wholesome reforms of the training school system.

In its annual report for 1948, the State Board of Training Schools gave a frank and revealing picture of conditions found at Boonville when the new members took office in March of that year. Here are some excerpts from the official report:

The institution was in a state of physical and moral collapse. . . . During the preceding six months, there had been approximately 165 escapes. . . . When we visited the dormitories in the evening, groups of active boys in their middle teens were found seated at one or two decrepit wooden tables or long benches along the side of the dormitory with nothing whatever to occupy them between the hours of dusk and bedtime. . . . The entire atmosphere was such as to lead anyone to easily conclude that if 300 model boys from even the best families in Missouri were

placed in this institution, within a reasonable time they would deteriorate and become juvenile menaces. . . .

Parenthetically, the condition of the cattle at the Training School has always been as good as the condition of the children was bad. . . .

The Board of Training Schools then listed some reforms it had instituted by the end of the year 1948. These included a prohibition of corporal punishment; lowering of the average age limit on juveniles; passage of law providing an indeterminate sentence of juveniles to training schools instead of the fixed sentence that had previously prevailed; somewhat increased appropriations (though admittedly not nearly enough); introduction of the merit system in Missouri's training schools; a new Boonville superintendent with progressive ideas, and — most important — a fresh outlook at the school.

All these were heartening gains, to be sure. But, without seeming to be overskeptical, I must again repeat that these good intentions and even the concrete changes have marked many a previous reform in many another state — a reform that gradually sank back into the old institutional quagmire when public interest waned and the reformers were left in isolated desolation. An encouraging beginning had been made, but it was still far from permanently imprinting itself upon the crime-breeding slum at Boonville.

## Some Notes on Private Schools

THE INSTITUTIONAL care and treatment of juvenile delinquents is predominantly a state responsibility. But there are a few local publicly operated schools (such as the aforementioned Louisville and Jefferson County Children's Homes) and a number of private institutions. Because of their tremendous variation in aims and functions, it is impossible to estimate accurately their number. The United States Office of Education in 1946 listed 30 residential schools for delinquent children operated by counties and cities, and 63 operated under private auspices. It has been roughly estimated that some 7000 delinquent children are in local public and privately operated institutions, besides the approximately 23,000 in state training schools.

The private institutions receiving delinquents range from "mass" homes open to many categories of children in need, including dependent and neglected classes, to very small specialized treatment centers with less than ten children in residence. Most of the private places are operated on a voluntary, nonprofit basis by churches, fraternal organizations and social agencies, sectarian and nonsectarian. Many make no distinction between delinquent and other children accepted for admission; their particular criterion for accepting children might be the presence or suspicion of "emotional disorder," or "personality maladjustment." Some institutions

are so highly specialized that they take in only children suffering from serious emotional illness.

Most delinquents in private institutions have been referred by juvenile courts, but some are sent there directly by parents or by social agencies, without court procedure. The private schools have a tremendous advantage over the state training schools; they can accept or reject any child referred by a court, while the state institutions as a rule have to take any child committed by a court and thus become amorphous dumping grounds. The private schools, too, can exert more rigid controls over the volume of intake and thus prevent the overcrowding that characterizes so many state schools.

Some private places are richly endowed, and maintain the appearance of a juvenile country club or luxurious summer camp. Others look like slums, and are operated on marginal budgets. Some charge as high as five hundred dollars a month for maintenance of a child; others charge modest fees, or no fees at all. Several subsist largely on public subsidies paid on a pro rata basis for public charges.

Mainly because of the great advantage they enjoy in intake and population control, most private schools are run on a higher level than the average public institution. But many are reliably reported to maintain harsh, depersonalized, repressive policies that place them on the level of the lowest-grade public reform schools.

Many private institutions maintain their outward superiority to state training schools by the simple expedient of selecting for admission the "best-behaved" among delinquents needing institutional care, either by rejecting those likely to be more troublesome problems or by transferring to state institutions already admitted children who prove themselves

tough to handle. Others, however, deliberately seek out the most serious behavior problems for treatment. Some have their sights set far ahead into the future — blazing new trails, utilizing their greater freedom to experiment in discovering new facts about the dynamics of delinquency along with improved treatment methods, serving as pilot plants for the application of progressive theories. Others operate within the framework of nineteenth-century regimentation, hypocritical moralism and a slavish clinging to tradition that could be described adequately only by a present-day Dickens.

The most famous of the private institutions is Father Flanagan's Boys' Home at Boys Town, Nebraska, directed until recently by the late Right Reverend Monsignor Edward J. Flanagan. Originally founded in 1917 by Father Flanagan as a home for homeless boys in Omaha, it was later moved to a site ten miles west of that city and its intake policy was expanded to admit delinquent children also. The warm, understanding personality of Father Flanagan was a major factor in the successful operation of Boys Town as a non-punitive institution.

Some observers have made the same criticism of Boys Town that has been leveled against the National Training School for Boys operated by the Federal Government in Washington and other national institutions: the children are recruited from all parts of the country, often thousands of miles from their home community, far afield from their relatives, with consequent loss of a contact that might have proved valuable in later readjustment. Also, it has repeatedly been remarked by experts that, while liberal donations have permitted Boys Town to maintain a relatively high level of physical comfort for its students, the publicity spotlight



constantly centered on it has given it the atmosphere of a showplace, or goldfish bowl, developing the feeling of self-consciousness among the boys and divesting the place of many of the homelike qualities it used to have.

Among the best treatment centers for juvenile delinquents, by common agreement, is the Hawthorne Cedar Knolls School operated by the Jewish Board of Guardians of New York City. It functions as a part of an unusually comprehensive network of resources for emotionally disturbed children — including development centers for nursery-age children with behavior problems, child guidance clinics and treatment institutions — sponsored by the JBG under the general direction of Herschel Alt, one of the top experts in the delinquency field.

Located near Pleasantville, about forty miles from New York, the Hawthorne Cedar Knolls School has a coeducational policy, with 135 boys and 65 girls of ages ranging from 7–18 years. The institution itself is not physically impressive, its sponsors having sacrificed landscaping and other environmental accouterments in order to pour more money into high-grade personnel. Only children with problems of emotional maladjustment are admitted; these range from minor psychiatric disorders to definite psychoses. The Hawthorne staff functions as an effective team, with all members — including the maintenance workers — playing some role in the therapeutic process. The chief emphasis, apart from developing an atmosphere of warm acceptance for the children, is on psychological treatment: the staff includes ten psychiatric social workers and five part-time psychiatrists. The chief social worker, Hyman Grossbard, had earned a hero's role

among the students shortly before my visit by catching in his arms a girl who had thrown herself from a third-story window while in a suicidal depression. The girl received no injuries whatever; Grossbard had sustained a serious back injury.

Norman V. Lourie, director of the Hawthorne school, believes, along with most experts in the field, that in emotionally disturbed children, delinquent behavior represents a symptom rather than a disease in itself. He goes so far as to recommend the erasure of the term "juvenile delinquency" from the vocabulary.

"We attempt to deal with the total personality presenting the symptoms, rather than with symptoms alone," Lourie explains. "Here we talk of total treatment, meaning that all the positive qualities of a child can be used, that whatever is healthy needs to be emphasized — as well as the mixed-up elements which need psychiatric help to unravel."

Four out of five children at Hawthorne came from New York City; the rest come from outlying areas representing fourteen different states. The average length of stay is two years. Most of the children are legally delinquent. Several years ago a New York City court, in a courageous action, committed to Hawthorne a fifteen-year-old boy who confessed to murdering his grandmother, instead of sentencing him to a long prison term. That boy was discharged from Hawthorne after three years of intensive treatment, and is making an excellent adjustment as a useful, self-supporting young citizen.

During my visit to Hawthorne, I encountered Jackie, the fourteen-year-old "baby-sitter killer" whose sensational trial I had covered as a reporter. He too had been committed to

Hawthorne and was making a splendid adjustment at that time.

Altogether, Hawthorne, with its two hundred children in various stages of emotional disturbance living in an informal, homelike atmosphere under wise and loving guidance, was a most satisfying experience against the background of reform school repression and regimentation deeply etched in my memory.

One of the most interesting private institutions I visited in the New York area was the Wiltwyck School for "pre-delinquent" Protestant children aged seven to twelve. Located near Esopus, New York, overlooking the lovely Hudson Valley, Wiltwyck was originally founded to receive Negro children from New York City, where agency racial discrimination left them neglected and uncared for.

In keeping with the recent trend toward breaking down racial segregation even when it does not stem from prejudice, Wiltwyck now receives white and Negro children alike, offering them a high-grade treatment program. Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt has been especially active in developing this institution. Wiltwyck served as the locale of the much-discussed documentary film, *The Quiet One*.

In 1895 William R. George founded at Freeville, New York, an interesting colony for delinquents and neglected children based on a rather drastic development of the "self-government" idea. It was named the "George Junior Republic" and was the first of seven such miniature republics to be established in different parts of the country. Its underlying concept is that children can best learn to be citizens by

actually operating as junior citizens. Dr. Alexander Forbes, president of the board of trustees of the Freeville institution, explains its philosophy in these words:

“The essential idea of the Junior Republic is to teach young people how to live and be useful citizens by giving them the full responsibility of ordering their own lives and managing their affairs. The citizens earn their living by working at various trades, enact their own laws, enforce them, organize their own government and perform the legislative, executive and judicial functions therein. In doing this, they are training their minds and characters for life in the larger republic in an altogether unique manner.”

The idea of a miniature republic where children can learn citizenship by practicing it has a strong appeal to the imagination. The sponsors of the junior republics are enthusiastic in their belief that the method works, reclaiming many delinquents for lives of useful citizenship. Others, however, maintain that it is based on the erroneous assumption that children are miniature adults, places too much stress on institutional *form* rather than function, and tends to pour all children into a single, standard mold.

The Freeville institution occupies five hundred and fifty acres of farm land near Ithaca, and has a capacity for one hundred and twenty-five boys and girls. It is the only one of the seven existing junior republics that maintains a co-educational policy. Its directors feel that the coeducational feature is an essential part of Founder George's philosophy.

One of the most interesting – and significant – developments in the field of juvenile delinquency during recent years has been the establishment, in a number of communities, of

small "study homes" and "treatment centers" where delinquents with especially marked behavior disorders can be subjected to intensive study and/or treatment by highly qualified experts. Several of these centers are blazing trails in treatment through pioneer experiments which public institutions are seldom able to initiate. They are also uncovering invaluable data concerning the dynamics of behavior disorders in children, whether the symptoms are legally delinquent acts or otherwise.

One of the most remarkable of these experimental stations was Dr. Fritz Redl's Pioneer House in Detroit, where five of the city's "toughest kids," aged eight to twelve, received a concentrated course of group treatment more intensified than I had seen elsewhere. Redl, a clinical psychologist who combines to a rare degree serious scholarship and urbane humor — and who can talk to "toughies" in their own language — established Pioneer House in 1946 as a focus of experimental study and treatment of children with such severe behavior disorders that their disruptive shenanigans exiled them from home, school *and standard institutions*.

I visited Pioneer House in 1948, shortly before it was forced to close its doors for lack of financial support. I still recall vividly the case of Bob, one of the five boys being treated there at the time.

Bob, at ten, had already been involved in numerous delinquencies. His parents had been divorced when he was an infant; his mother remarried when Bob was six. The stepfather, who was much older than Bob's mother, was a severe alcoholic, brutal to his wife and stepson. The child had been beaten mercilessly by this sadist, threatened with a shotgun, booted about, thrown into the drainage ditch behind the

house, and locked in the woodshed for long intervals without food. Before this remarriage, Bob's mother had placed him out in a long series of boarding homes and children's institutions. Bob was a severe stutterer, with a chronically tense expression and staring eyes that seemed to mirror a perpetual nightmare. Like his four co-residents at Pioneer House, Bob had been badly messed up; it would take a long time to restore him to integrated normality.

Redl had a large staff of case workers and group workers living and working with the children in what he called "total group therapy in a residential home." The ancient house used for the experiment bore many marks of the destructive proclivities of the children who, at certain stages of the therapeutic process, were permitted to tear up and throw around the furnishings at will. The inexhaustible patience of the staff members in handling the miniature anarchists was most impressive to the visiting observer.

Redl explained the kernel of his treatment policy in these words: "Most of the therapy takes place in real life situations — eating, getting up, going to bed, playing, working, and every phase of daily life — rather than in selected individual or group interview situations."

Redl described Pioneer House as a combined "research and service" center, treating children with serious personality disturbances which still constitute almost virgin fields for social explorers. In this respect, he said, "Pioneer House is comparable to a small cancer hospital in the early stages of cancer research."

It is a pity that this valuable experiment had to come to an abrupt end because not enough moneyed people in wealthy Detroit could become sufficiently interested to see it through.

A somewhat similar "permissive" program, where children are allowed to give vent to their pent-up aggressions and frustrations without punishment, underlies the activities at the Southard School — a unit of the Menninger Foundation, famous psychiatric center at Topeka, Kansas. The professional staff at Southard outnumbers the twenty-five emotionally disturbed students by a ratio of two to one. Far more stress is placed on standard psychoanalytic procedures than was the case at Pioneer House. Dr. Edward Greenwood, its director, is an outstanding psychiatrist. The relatively high cost of treatment at the Southard School inevitably limits its small clientele mainly to children of well-to-do families.

The Ryther Child Center in Seattle, established in 1935, stresses case work and group work rather than psychiatric interviewing for the one hundred and twenty-five children, including delinquents, under its care. The center is directed by Lillian J. Johnson, a trained social worker with a remarkable ability to get along with disturbed children. Some of the one hundred and twenty-five children live in the center's residential home, but most are placed out in foster homes under the center's constant supervision. As explained by Miss Johnson, the Ryther Child Center is "set up to incorporate, within one integrated program, services of sufficient breadth and flexibility so that the multiple needs of emotionally disturbed children can be met within the scope of one agency's operation. Consequently it has added to the social planning services of a typical case-work agency (including foster home care) the diagnostic and treatment skills of a child guidance clinic, plus the operation of two treatment institutions, all interdependent and subordinate to the whole."

To serve its youngsters, the center has a staff of eight social case workers and a part-time psychiatrist.

A successful treatment center for emotionally disturbed children with delinquent behavior patterns is the Orthogenic School,<sup>1</sup> operated by the University of Chicago. Like Fritz Redl, Dr. Bruno Bettelheim, its principal, is a clinical psychologist. He ranks among the topmost social scientists grappling with the sociopsychiatric aspects of the delinquency problem in this country, and his writings have thrown much light on the dynamics of "misbehavior" in children.

The Orthogenic School is housed in an unprepossessing former private residence in Chicago. I recall the pleasant surprise I experienced when I contrasted the relaxed congeniality and warmth inside with the cold, bleak exterior of the place. Dr. Bettelheim limits enrollment to thirty children — boys and girls of normal intelligence but with emotional disorders. The procedures at the school, according to Bettelheim, are based on the principles of "dynamic psychology" — a rather eclectic term covering several modern psychological schools from psychoanalysis to Gestalt.

Bettelheim observes that delinquent behavior is a symptom of the child's inability to arrive at a balance between the satisfaction of his inner needs and the requirements of his environment. To modify and control the inner needs is a necessary but difficult task. Bettelheim seeks to achieve that final goal — essential in the rehabilitation of the emotionally disturbed delinquent — by offering the child a modified environ-

<sup>1</sup> What a horrible-sounding name! It reminded me of the feeling of depersonalized antiseptics conjured up by the name of the Institute for the Scientific Treatment of Delinquency — an internationally-famous treatment center, and a good one — which I visited in London, England, in 1948.



ment at the school, carefully scaled to the individual case, so that the program requirements are balanced to the child's ability to meet them. This balance between personality and environment, once struck, is gradually developed — always within a framework of love and acceptance — until the child is deemed ready to cope with the realities of the outside world as a relatively well-adjusted person.

"The disturbed child," Bettelheim told me, "has to master three main problems — that of his home, his school and his peers. Here, at Orthogenic, we attack one problem at a time. We gather the child's total 'ego-strength' and concentrate it at one point — for instance, his ability to get on with his peers, with children of his own age. (In most institutions, the 'ego-strength' is divided between all three main points at once, dissipating an already weakened ego.) Then, when the child has mastered the task of getting along with his peers, we will gather the ego-strength toward the job of getting along with adults who serve as 'parent-figures.' One problem at a time."

Nearly all the children are resident at the school, though some are treated on an "out-patient" basis. The average stay is two years; no less than a year of treatment is projected in any case. There are as many full-time staff members as there are children; the former are aided by eighteen part-time workers, recruited mainly from graduate students at the University of Chicago.

Asked to evaluate the results of his school, Dr. Bettelheim estimated that about 40 per cent improved considerably to the point of being considered the equivalent of "cures"; an additional 50 per cent improved enough to be considered "social recoveries," while 10 per cent were failures.

"Our percentage of clear recovery would be much higher,"

Bettelheim added, "if we were not constantly hounded by pressures from parents, judges and others to withdraw children prematurely. Many guilt-ridden parents will withdraw their children from treatment when they themselves are in crisis, regardless of the disastrous results to their offspring."

The Orthogenic School is supported mainly by the University of Chicago, but it receives partial subsidy through state grants and fees from parents and social agencies.

Perhaps the foremost exponent of the philosophy of love and acceptance of the child as he is, along with rehabilitation through redirection of his individual personality, is August Aichhorn, the Austrian pioneer in psychoanalytically oriented treatment centers for juvenile delinquents. Dr. Aichhorn's experiences and philosophy are vividly set forth in the book, *Wayward Youth*,<sup>1</sup> a veritable Bible for progressives engaged in the art of helping children with behavior problems.

To compare private schools for child delinquents with the state training schools would be unfair to the latter — for as we have said, private institutions enjoy such great advantages in selectivity of students, control of program, freedom to experiment and (in many, though not in all, cases) more adequate budgeting. The best among them have demonstrated the value of small treatment centers, as contrasted to mass institutions, and also the tremendously important role of love and acceptance on the part of adults (as parent figures) in re-educating emotionally malnourished children.

<sup>1</sup> New York, Viking Press.

## The Summing-up: Is This Reform?

AT THE END of my survey I was convinced that the state reform schools were schools indeed — but in most instances most effective crime schools, organized on a mass level. In many instances, it seemed as though they could not have been improved upon as training centers in crime if Fagin himself had controlled the program.

The point may be illustrated by the story told me by one training school staff member. He was questioning a boy who was about to be paroled after eighteen months at the institution.

“What did you learn here?” the staff member asked.

“Well, I learned how to pick a lock four ways,” the adolescent answered promptly.

My own observations, in general, fully confirmed the criticism voiced by the Committee on Institutional Treatment in its report to the 1946 National Conference on Juvenile Delinquency. The committee report, while recognizing progress made during the past century in the treatment of child delinquents, noted:

Nevertheless, in far too many jurisdictions today, training schools for delinquents are still dumping grounds for children with all kinds of chronic and acute conditions: neglected, mentally

defective, pre-psychotic, those with glandular and physical disorders, in a manner comparable to the discredited almshouses of a bygone day. One training school was recently studied where almost two-thirds of the children needed care in an institution for defectives. . . . Provision of specialized treatment facilities has long lagged far behind recognition of specific juvenile problems.

In many states, legal bans on corporal punishment are flagrantly violated daily with or without the superintendent's tacit consent or even with his active participation. Supervisors or guards in some commonly carry blackjacks, clubs, switches, paddles or other "tools of control" on their person. Some boast proudly — in private — of ingenious forms of physical punishment that leave no telltale marks, such as "mugging" a boy with a stranglehold around the neck, swishing him with a wet towel, or punching him in the belly.

Occasionally, as has been noted, the sudden death of an inmate brings such institutional sadism to public notice — temporarily.

A boy died in August 1945 at the Iowa State Training School at Eldora. His death was attributed to "heat-prostration" by the school authorities. The coroner ascribed the death to a blow on the head. Inquiry revealed that on the day he died the boy had been struck with a blackjack by a supervisor, then set to work on a coal pile under a hot sun.

There was a riot at Eldora the day after the boy died. A mass breakout got under way — 179 boys ran away the first day, 44 more two days later, and an average of 15 to 20 daily for weeks thereafter. The official investigation revealed that corporal punishment had been administered harshly and frequently.

There was an outburst of righteous indignation, and the superintendent was replaced. But, as often happens in such instances, the legislators still did not appropriate the money needed to transform Eldora from a punitive prison to a rehabilitative school. At last reports, Eldora was not much farther advanced than it was in 1945.

Some of the most stupidly brutal forms of punishment are those imposed for acts attributable to physical or emotional disorders rather than to willful misbehavior. Austin McCormick of the Osborne Association, while surveying a certain training school, noticed a boy confined in a bleak basement cell, bare save for a coffinlike wooden box which did for a bed. This was the institution's "bed-wetter's cell." In another training school, McCormick saw a frail lad of thirteen who had to make frequent visits to the toilet. McCormick, upon inquiry, learned that this sickly boy had been sentenced to do more "knee-dips" than any of his fellow students — all because of his chronic enuresis. He was at the time working out a penalty of 3000 knee-dips for his latest "offense." Upon McCormick's recommendation the boy was referred to the hospital, where medical examinations revealed he was suffering from a serious kidney ailment. Punishment for enuresis is common in many other institutions.

Enuresis is a symptom of an emotional or physical disorder. It is a medical, not a disciplinary problem. The United States Army recognizes the fact in an official order prohibiting punishment of any soldier for bed-wetting. But what is acceptable and understandable in adult soldiers is still punishable for children in many reform schools.

In schools for girl delinquents, moral cruelties such as the cropping of hair, we have noted, constitute the most common forms of discipline. Shaving of heads is not rare. In one institution, refractory girls are made to sit with their backs to the table at meals, while the others eat. Not infrequently girls are strapped into strait jackets during temper tantrums.

Isolation in "meditation cells" or rooms, often in absolute silence, for periods ranging up to weeks and even months, is one of the most devastating — and most common — forms of punishment in both girls' and boys' schools. Occasionally, the victim is also kept on a restricted diet of bread and water, as we have pointed out. Bread-and-water diets are bad enough for adult prisoners. What may they do to the health of growing children?

Nothing, perhaps, is so heartrending to the observant visitor as the long periods of enforced silence in many institutions. Where large numbers of children are gathered, prolonged silence day after day seems unnatural, unearthly and inhuman.

Where hundreds of boys and girls — many of them emotionally disturbed — live, work and play together in a common home, some restrictions on noise must be imposed to prevent perpetual pandemonium. Further, measures for self-control should form an essential part of any proper training program for delinquents. But what thoughtful adult could find excuse for the complete muzzling of adolescents? Yet silence was emphasized in nearly all the institutional handbooks I read — silence at meals, at work and even, in some cases, at play. Is this the way to train growing children for normal life?

Most institutions I visited, heard of, or read about make a mockery of the term "individualized treatment." Symbolic of the mass treatment, or lack of any treatment, was the bitter complaint of a boy working in the St. Charles school cannery, who showed me the number prominently printed on his institutional uniform and said:

"We're supposed to be juveniles, not prisoners. We have names but they call us by numbers."

Excessive regimentation and monotonous routine are twin evils characteristic of most training schools. Many for boys are operated along strict military lines, often under a former army officer specially chosen for his reputation as a disciplinarian. Unfortunately, the ability to handle soldiers in a military setting does not in itself fit a man for the task of preparing children for life in a normal democratic community. There are warmhearted, sincere military men trying to make the best of an essentially poor program, to be sure — men like Colonel Hays of the Lancaster school. But too many drill-minded superintendents are martinets, trying to produce pint-sized soldiers.

Children, good and bad, need discipline. But in most boys' training schools there is far too much marching. The boys march *en masse* to school, to work, to recreation, to cottage, to drill ground, to toilet. They march, march, march. And in girls' schools there is too much attention to outward manners, to robotlike responses; too little to inner security.

A fetish is made of strict adherence to routine — routine that excludes nearly all privacy. The children eat, sleep, learn, work, play in groups or herds. Many lack a locker or a chest drawer of their own where they might hoard the

buttons, pins and other little gadgets so precious to childhood.

When I asked Austin MacCormick what he considered the worst characteristic of the typical training school, he gave me a one-word answer:

“Monotony.”

The food is monotonous and often bad. The work is monotonous. There is more drudgery than trade learning for most children; many institutions depend largely on child labor for maintenance work. Schooling, such as it is, is usually monotonous. Even recreation, as programs go at some institutions, is apt to be monotonous.

Bedtime is usually at 8:30 regardless of the age of inmates. That time may be good for the younger children, but imagine youths of eighteen and twenty, coming from urban backgrounds, forced to retire when summer daylight still streams into their dormitories.

In nearly all institutions I visited, an excessive and almost fanatic emphasis was placed upon outward cleanliness. Signs of vigorous brushing, scrubbing and polishing of floors, walls and furniture are everywhere in evidence. But in some there is a sharp contrast between the highly polished furnishings and the shabby clothing of the children. I saw hundreds of boys who wore no underwear because the state felt too poor to provide it. In some institutions, boys and girls were required to wash scrupulously before and after every meal and before retiring — with a small filthy face towel changed only once a week!

The occasionally perverse effects of the excessive stress on external cleanliness was reflected in a news dispatch of



August 1947 describing the adventures of a sixteen-year-old boy who went on a burglarizing spree after escaping from a New Jersey training school. The news item stated:

The fastidious burglar who entered eight houses in Bergen County in the last two weeks and in each instance took a white shirt and a bath in addition to any cash and jewelry lying around, was in the hands of police today.

Anywhere from 20 to 40 per cent of state training school inmates, as noted before, are suffering from emotional or mental disorders serious enough to require psychiatric attention. Yet most institutions have no staff psychiatrist and many lack even trained social workers. Even when an institution boasts of a full-time psychiatrist, it is no guarantee of active treatment. Most staff psychiatrists told me they were so busy diagnosing and classifying new arrivals, preparing reports on paroled students and serving as the only medical officer for the entire staff and student body, that they had little or no time for individual treatment. Too many legislators, welfare and correctional executives and institutional heads still share the widespread hostility toward psychiatry.

The results of such an attitude were tragically reflected in September 1947, when an eleven-year-old girl was killed by a sixteen-year-old boy in a so-called "sex murder" at Malden, Massachusetts. When it became known that the boy had been paroled from a state training school, a great public outcry was raised against "easy paroles," and editorials in Boston papers ran hot with indignation. A state legislative committee criticized the training school officials for having let loose such a dangerous boy.

The training school trustees, in a report to the Governor,

revealed that the boy had been studied by two mental hospitals, which refused him admission because he was diagnosed as "not psychotic" although suffering severe emotional disorder. His commitment to the training school had followed. The trustees pointed out that not a single state training school in the State of Massachusetts had a psychiatrist on its staff.

For the past several years [the trustees declared] we have asked for one psychiatrist for the State Division of Juvenile Training. We realized that this was most inadequate, but it was the belief of the Trustees Board that, although we need a psychiatrist for each institution, it would be impossible to have this request granted. Therefore, we limited ourselves by requesting the services of one psychiatrist (for all the schools, combined). So far the legislature has refused to grant us money for this position.

No psychiatric treatment was available to the hapless youth at the training school; not even a psychiatric examination had been possible before his release. A distorted personality might have been reconstructed, the life of an innocent child saved, by timely psychiatric attention. When the boy murderer was sentenced to prison for life, the judge expressed the wish that he might "never again breathe the fresh air of freedom." When the doors of the state prison closed on the boy, the public and legislature of Massachusetts returned to their normal apathy. It took a two-year fight, subsequently, to get a sufficient appropriation to hire a single psychiatrist.

It isn't only psychiatrists who are lacking. Salaries are so incredibly low in most state training schools that qualified professionals of all categories — teachers, social workers, recreational and vocational directors — don't even bother to

apply. Several "training schools" haven't even one qualified teacher on their staffs! Custodians and maintenance workers substitute as teachers in some places.

Even in 1940 — before the war-time teaching crisis developed — one state training school for juvenile delinquents had only three teachers for 455 students — that is, a teacher for every 150 children, all representing special and often difficult problems, when a teacher for every 35 children in the *normal* school is considered inadequate, according to modern standards. Another training school had two teachers for 206 students, and a third had two for 179. The average salary of teachers in 80 training schools in 1940 was \$1,048 a year — not nearly enough to attract qualified persons. The teacher shortage that hit American schools during and after the war has been even more catastrophic to institutions.

Referring to the schooling problem in training schools, the institutional treatment committee of the 1946 Attorney General's Conference reported:

It is a recognized principle in the United States that children from six to sixteen should attend school for a full school day and full school term. . . . Children in training schools are entitled to the same educational rights. The mere fact that a child has been sent to a school for prolonged care does not thereby deprive it of its educational birthright.

How is this birthright recognized? The report says:

Some training schools are being administered by officials who have no knowledge of modern educational methods and have no staff member to whom such responsibility can be delegated. Too many school programs are traditional, inflexible, academic. . . . The space used for classes may be an ill-lighted basement. Pupils go to an "academic school" for half a day and some do not

go to school at all. . . . Teachers in too many institutions are poorly prepared and poorly paid, often overworked, without any opportunity for summer school study. Many of the vocational "teachers" are workmen about the institution, without educational preparation. . . . The state legislature too frequently looks upon the training school as a place for punishment for misdeeds instead of a school and treatment center. Accordingly appropriations made for its maintenance are utterly inadequate to provide a modern well-staffed educational program.

George Ososke, chief probation officer of San Francisco's juvenile court, expressed the general view of experts when he remarked to me:

"The public pays more to zoo employees for keeping animals than it does to training school staffs for rehabilitating children."

"Vocational training" in most institutions — notable exceptions have been mentioned in preceding pages — is a mockery of that term. It is apt to be inadequate even when not used as a disguise to conceal child labor on plain maintenance work. Children in some schools are taught shopwork with antiquated machinery and through methods a generation behind the times. Many are taught trades that are non-existent in the communities to which they later return. When they seek jobs based on institution-taught "skills" they are often jeered at. Disillusionment leads to bitterness, to the feeling of having been betrayed and made a fool of, to a desire to wreak vengeance on society.

I have already alluded to the sex problems arising from the artificial, repressed atmosphere of the typical institution.

Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin, in their *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, observe, largely on the basis of hundreds of interviews with reform school inmates:

The problem in an institution for teen-age boys is far more complex than the public or the administration or scientific students have realized. It is obvious that lifetime patterns of sexual behavior are greatly affected by the experience of adolescence, not only because they are initial experiences, but because they occur during the age of greatest activity and of the maximum physical capacity of the male. . . .

Since younger boys have not acquired all the social traditions and taboos on sex, they are more impressionable, more liable to react *de novo* to any and every situation that they meet. If these adolescent years are spent in an institution where there is little or no opportunity for the boy to develop his individuality, where there is essentially no privacy at any time of the day, and where all his companions are other males, his sexual life is very likely to become permanently stamped with the institutional pattern.<sup>1</sup>

Cottage or house parents have the closest contact with training school children. They are supposed to take the place of each child's real mother and father. This task requires a fund of loving-kindness and understanding of children.

How many people of the required quality can the public get at \$1,500 a year *per couple* — the salaries offered by some states? Small wonder that I found so many cottage parents who were embittered failures, refugees from the normal community, misfits, alcoholics, sadists and shrews. The real wonder is that I did find a surprising number of devoted and dedicated people who, in spite of disheartening difficulties, substandard wages, overwork and, often, bad living con-

<sup>1</sup> Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy and Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia, W. B. Saunders Co., 1948), p. 224.

ditions, managed to do a good and at times an outstanding job.

In one institution, a group of boys told me:

“Why should we respect our house father? Who is he to tell us to behave and not to use vulgar language? Why, he’s a drunken bum. He curses and beats us up all the time.”

In one cottage where a house father seemed unnecessarily harsh on his wards I learned from a fellow staff member that he had just lost the greater part of his semimonthly pay in a dice game with other employees. Gambling on paydays is not unusual among institutional personnel whose own lives are circumscribed, inhibited, recreation-starved, hard and thankless. Such employees also tend to take out their frustrations and feelings of inadequacy and insecurity on the boys and girls under their charge. The children, hungry for fair play and understanding—for the lack of which they came to their present plight—develop a sense of being treated unjustly, of being rejected. They respond accordingly.

The monitor or “cadet” system, where certain boys, usually the largest and toughest ones, are given powers over others, was a bane in every institution where I witnessed it—an opportunity and even a spur for frightful bullying practices. Also execrable is this custom found in some places: supervisors and cottage parents appoint certain boys or girls as spies on the others or as assistants in disciplinary measures—a practice certain to injure morale.

Another unwholesome factor is the thinly disguised or even open contempt some officials show for their charges. In one institution, when I made my routine request to speak

to groups of boys in private, the superintendent granted permission with reluctance, and warned:

“Those boys are going to tell you a pack of lies. I wouldn’t trust any of them on a stack of Bibles. They’re just a bad lot.”

The contempt reflected in these words is held by many institutional officials to whom is entrusted the fate of problem children. How can they rehabilitate children when they are convinced beforehand that their wards are hopelessly bad and that nothing can be done to change them? This doctrine of despair which pervades many an institution often filters down to the children themselves. Lacking stimulus and encouragement toward self-improvement, they sink into premature cynicism and a conviction that they are indeed irreclaimable.

Here and there, one meets house parents and other personnel who are boundless sources of inspiration to the children they supervise. Perhaps the best of these I encountered was an elderly Negro woman, Mrs. Mary Foster, who had been a house mother at the Illinois State Training School for Girls at Geneva for twenty-two years. Geneva, as noted, segregates its white and colored students. But Mother Foster, as she was known, was revered by all the Geneva students who came under her care. Her rheumatism, at the time of my visit, prevented her from jitterbugging with her girls as she once used to do. But she still participated with spirited warmth in their activities, and was prepared to share her unschooled but natural wisdom with any student seeking her counsel.

I asked Mother Foster for the key to her successful approach:

“I love them like a mother, and they know it,” she replied.

"I try to be firm when necessary, and I try to be fair always. They put their heads on my knees and I tell them stories, or they tell me their troubles. I tell every one of them: 'You're not really bad, but I just don't like the way you behaved. It gets you into trouble.'"

One of the cottage girls said: "Mother Foster never gets mad. She doesn't hate anyone."

The superintendent, Mrs. Lewis, told me:

"Mother Foster's girls seldom come back as parole violators, but a great many visit her out of gratitude and affection."

Mother Foster died several months after my visit, and many mourners wept at her funeral.

It is interesting, and perhaps significant, that Richard Clendenen, who has seen most of the state training schools in the country, found what he considers to be the nearest thing to a real home atmosphere in an institution for Negro girls. Clendenen, who once served briefly as an official of the Indiana Boys School at Plainfield, is consultant on training schools for the United States Children's Bureau. The Missouri State Training School for Negro Girls, at Tipton, Clendenen told me, lacks much in equipment, professional personnel and modern facilities. It is in an isolated location, two miles from a highway, and far from any Negro community. The unpainted interiors of the buildings present a drab and gloomy look. There were only twenty-eight girls at Tipton, and twelve staff members including the superintendent, Mrs. Collins, and her husband, who taught school. It was the relationship between the staff and the inmates that impressed, even enthused Clendenen. He found the institutional life highly informal, with a minimum of rules,



warm and relaxed relationships between staff and students, and a minimum of disciplinary measures. No one seemed overconcerned about the possible misconduct of the girls. The latter called Mrs. Collins and her husband "Mom and Dad" — and meant it. The school's small size enabled every staff member to know every girl intimately, and the staff functioned as a well-knit team. *From 1946 to 1949 not a single girl attempted to escape.* One girl did run away in 1949, almost breaking Mrs. Collins's heart.

"The nearest thing to family life in an institution I ever saw," Clendenen sums it up.

At the Minnesota State Training School for Boys at Red Wing, I encountered a male counterpart of Mother Foster — with a more or less natural gift for helping children in trouble. W. H. ("Skip") McGinnis, the guidance supervisor at Red Wing — a stocky, white-haired man in his mid-fifties — was a general counselor for the school's two hundred and fifty boys. Raphael E. Farrell, the superintendent, told me that McGinnis was invaluable as an all-around troubleshooter. The boys not only liked and respected him; they *trusted* him. As "Skip" McGinnis guided me through the institution, he explained his philosophy in terms that made sense. He told me, for example:

"I never turn down a boy who wants to talk to me. Letting a boy talk things out helps him and it educates the listener about that boy's needs and personality. What he says may seem trivial to you, but it is important to him, and that's what counts. It's surprising what just listening can do for a boy."

People like the late Mother Foster and Skip McGinnis are all too rare in our institutions. There aren't enough trained

people, or enough untrained ones with substitute qualities. A good trained supervisor is better than a good untrained one. But I have seen trained people who were failures at handling children and untrained staff members who were wonderful at it. Howbeit, you can't get enough good people, trained or untrained, at the miserable wages, working and living conditions that now obtain.

Finally, so long as the added blight of political interference hangs over such institutions — as it does in many states — not enough experts will be attracted to them or held there. The children within their walls will continue to be denied the opportunities we promise them in our high-sounding statements of purpose.

It is scandalous that children in trouble should be made the profitable pawns of partisan politics. Many states have extended the merit system, or civil service, to training school staffs. But even in some of these, the top positions are civil service exempt, and subject to the vagaries of political fortune. Such has been the case in Indiana, for example, where the schools for delinquents are considered a legitimate part of the political spoils, with jobs apportioned by party patronage. Executives in state training schools include former storekeepers, accountants, salesmen, undertakers and aldermen — usually selected for their political party affiliations rather than their skill in handling delinquent children. Even the low-paid institutional jobs are not free from the political blight: they are the cheap plums which a grateful party sometimes parcels out to the lesser ward-heelers.

Here's one important way in which the political blight manifests itself: Suppose, as a result of some public scandal

(such as the fatal beating of an inmate), a competent superintendent is hired. He starts cleaning up the place. But it takes years to develop a decent program. Often, midway in the process, the expert finds himself suddenly dismissed and his post turned over to a political hack by the party which has taken over the reins of state government. Reform is forgotten and the school returns to its rotten status until a new scandal repeats the cycle of reform and regression.

Certainly, there are institutions that can boast of particular bright spots in their programs — efficient academic, recreational and/or vocational activities, effective prohibition of corporal punishment, sufficient quantities of wholesome food, unusual quality of staff, excellent buildings, grounds or equipment. The tragedy is that the typical institution may be rich in one or a few of these advantages and poor in all others.

It is only fair to note here that, besides the relatively good institutions personally visited by me and discussed in preceding chapters, I also received impressively favorable reports of a few other state reform schools such as the New York State Agricultural and Industrial, at Industry, headed by Clinton W. Areson; the Connecticut School for Boys at Meriden, headed by Roy L. McLaughlin, and the North Carolina Boys' School at Rocky Mount, headed by William D. Clark. Austin MacCormick and Richard Clendenen were especially enthusiastic about the latter, and called it one of the nation's best. I met and was favorably impressed by all three superintendents, although I didn't visit their schools.

In the foregoing account, I have stressed the prevailing defects and abuses in our public training schools. I have

done so because they add up to an over-all condition that is incompatible with human dignity: a preventable evil that society inflicts on children; a renegeing of pledges inscribed on our statute books, in which we pay lip service to the concepts of rehabilitation and redemption as the modern substitutes for retribution and punishment. Above all, the abuses add up to a monumental and costly failure that pays off in adult crime.

*What can we do about it?*

## A Program for Improvement

WHAT, CONCRETELY, can we do to transform our public reform schools from crime-breeding rookeries into genuine rehabilitation centers? Many things. The dozen recommendations that follow could open major paths of improvement.

1. The reform schools should have what they need most desperately: more and better-qualified personnel — people carefully selected for special skills, knowledge and attitudes in handling children and, above all, a real love for them. To obtain such people we must offer better pay scales, fair working conditions, decent living conditions, a chance for advancement, and freedom from political upset or interference.

2. *All the institutions should be run for the benefit of the children; the children should not be manipulated to fit the institutions.* Too much attention is given to the physical appearance of buildings, too little to the needs of building citizenship and cultivating the assets of the children who live in them.

3. *Corporal punishment, official and "unofficial," should be abolished everywhere.* Children should also be liberated from the many forms of cruel and unusual punishments other than physical blows, which have been developed into a fine inquisitorial art in many reform schools. *Discipline* and *punishment* are not synonymous terms. Reward for good be-

havior has ever been more effective in maintaining discipline than the threat of punishment.

4. *The children should always be granted their right to decent meals.* In or out of institutions, "good" or "bad," they need wholesome well-prepared food for healthy development. There's something wrong when they turn away from food in disgust, as I observed at mealtimes in several institutions. There's something wrong when children are fed tasteless stews while their supervisors, seated at separate tables in the same dining room, have menus including roast beef and tasty desserts.

5. *A varied program recognizing individual differences and needs should replace the soul-pulverizing regimentation and monotony that feature most training schools.* Character-building, not conformity to rigid institutional routine, should be the goal.

6. *Each institution should approach as nearly as possible the atmosphere of a good home.* Among the required elements that have been listed are these: warm acceptance of the children by those in charge, including open expression of affection and interest in what the child does and feels; permitting the child to act as naturally as possible — a chance to yell, sing, talk, play, and roughhouse at times; stimulating friendly visits from the outside, and frequent visits by the children to movies, games and other affairs in the community; giving the students some time for privacy, and a chance to own and hoard their own things; providing warm and inviting dwellings that look homelike instead of institutionalized.

One point strikes me most forcefully in this connection.

It seems to me that the role of the relationships between the institutionalized child and his adult supervisors has been grossly overstressed, even by progressive thinkers in the field. Far more attention has to be focused on the relationships between *child and child* within the institution. The child-rearing studies of Havighurst and Davis in Chicago, as well as the Kinsey survey in a more specialized area, have revealed the hitherto undervalued role of the social life of children among their peers — those of their own age group — in shaping their own attitudes and behavior patterns.

No fetish should be made of “individualized treatment” in terms of child-adult mentor relations. Certainly, the program should be based on the child’s individual needs. But the manner in which that child lives, works and plays among his peers probably will influence his development far more than his relations with the adult staff. Too much attention has been concentrated in the past on the substitute parent-child relations, on the artificial “family” setup. The fact is, as Susanne Schulse, Herschel Alt and others have pointed out, that children in institutions spend most of their time living in groups, that group living is their major experience, for good or bad, and that *group* treatment — as opposed to mass treatment — must be a major point in orientation. It is just as important to help children get along with other children in wholesome relationships as it is to train them to get along with adults.

7. *The third-rate educational system found in many training schools should be raised to the level prevailing in the normal community.*

8. Since many delinquents are handicapped by severe emotional disturbances, *competent psychiatrists and other*

*psychiatric personnel should be employed with an opportunity to furnish individual or group treatment to those who need it.*

Here, however, I must interject a qualification about which I feel strongly: I do not go along with those who regard virtually every reform school inmate as an emotionally disturbed child requiring prolonged psychiatric treatment. A large number could use psychiatric counseling for better insight into their problems, but for the most part it is the socioeconomic environment, not the child, that needs adjustment.

9. *Our present mass institutions for juvenile delinquents should be brought down to the size where they actually can provide individualized treatment.* It is idle to talk of reforms while we continue to pile youngsters into large amorphous institutions which, by their very bigness, must have regimentation and mass handling to operate at all.

10. In view of the acute shortage of trained personnel in institutions for child delinquents, and since many states find it difficult if not impossible to conduct their own training programs for such people, *federal grants in aid for training personnel should be provided.* Several bills have been introduced in Congress with this end in view.

11. *Reform schools for children should be placed under the control of state child welfare agencies, rather than under correctional or institutional departments.* The whole field of handling juvenile delinquency, in fact, should be integrated into the general pattern of the state child welfare agency, which ideally should co-ordinate the work of helping children in need and in trouble.



12. *The active support of large numbers of citizens is needed to assure success to any institutional program for troubled children.* The good will of enlightened citizens must be mobilized behind adequate budgets, sound legislation, and improved school programs. Many citizens can participate directly through what G. Howland Shaw, a leading expert, calls "the art of disinterested friendship": helping build a bridge between the institutionalized child and the community by continuous personal contact. Shaw has organized and led a successful "sponsorship" program at the National Training School in Washington, where increasing numbers of well-to-do citizens are extending the hand of personal friendship to individual boys — having them as occasional week-end guests, taking them to movies, helping plan their futures. I should like to see this "sponsorship" program expanded to involve, as much as possible, local residents of low-income status with whom personal ties could be more easily established and maintained.

The development of suitable foster-home facilities for training-school graduates has been grossly neglected in most states. The California Youth Authority, in a recent five-year report on program and progress, urged extension of foster-home placement, stating:

Many of our boys and girls come from utterly unfit homes and it is useless to return them to such an environment. It is a futile waste of taxpayers' money to keep them for a year or more in an expensive correctional program and then return them to homes where conditions are intolerable.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> California Youth Authority, *Report of Program and Progress, 1943-1948* (Sacramento, 1949), p. 20.

Richard Clendenen, training school consultant to the United States Children's Bureau, in a paper presented at the 1948 National Conference of Social Work, gave some excellent examples of how individual institutions, here and there, have enriched their programs during the past year. If these scattered steps in progress could be synchronized into the typical training school program, we should be far along on the road to decency.

Here are some of the developments described by Clendenen:

Several reform schools are bringing more citizens into participation in their programs by developing joint projects with outside agencies and groups. A Southern state training school for girls, for example, helped sponsor an institute on sex instruction held for members of its staff and the parents belonging to a local Parent-Teachers' Association. The same school invited girls from a local high school to attend a course given for its own girls on personal hygiene and grooming.

One institution, recognizing the advantage in opening up outside contacts for its staff members and encouraging them to participate in activities beyond their everyday job, made it possible for its employees to serve on board committees and participate in board activities. Some institutions are helping secure fellowships for staff members to enable them to continue their professional education in case work, group work, recreation and dietetics. Several proposals have been made recently for a periodic exchange of training school staff members as an educational policy.

More training schools are recognizing the advantage of calling upon the services of related state and local agencies,

thus reaching deeper into the community in behalf of the child. They are using outside medical and psychiatric clinics, community service centers and recreational facilities. Several institutions are sending selected children to public schools in the community.

Some reform schools are recognizing the value of supplementing their vocational training — nearly always handicapped by inadequate equipment — by on-the-job experience for the older children. They are permitting boys and girls who are legally old enough and able to benefit from such an experience to work in jobs away from school. One Middle West institution helps such boys find the right job and maintains a close and continuing relation with the employers. These boys work four days a week, and devote one day to academic courses designed for them. A girls' training school permits older girls to work in the community for several weeks prior to their release. It gives the girls a chance to get realistic working experiences, to build up the knack of handling their earnings, and enables them to buy needed clothing upon leaving school, with some money left to tide them over the first week or two after leaving school.

Clendenen wisely includes this caution in building closer reform school-community relations:

In planning a freer give-and-take relationship, it must be recognized that there are limits to the child's ability to relate to a variety of persons and situations. Exposure beyond these limits will be destructive. He needs a stable way of life and some protection. The value of any development will be determined by the adequacy of planning, by the careful preparation of the child for the new experience, and by the establishment of constructive community attitudes.

An excellent point is made about the vital importance of admission practices. Nearly every reform school has a "reception center" where newcomers are received and kept for periods usually averaging two weeks. The original purpose of the reception center was to quarantine the new child, subjecting him to medical tests, examinations, inoculations, bath, haircut, to insure the boy against infecting his peers with physical ailments. Often, the chill, mechanical manner in which this "fumigation" function is performed leaves deep emotional scars on the incoming child, who, scared enough to begin with, frequently develops the notion that he or she is being prepared for the "slaughter."

The reception period is a strategic time for setting the new admittee on the right track; most of our institutions muffle it completely, and even do great damage. Clendenen tells of one state school where the boys are given a warm, friendly welcome while kept in the reception unit for ten days. One hour every morning is devoted to a free group discussion with a staff member serving as discussion leader. At one session, for instance, the incoming boys discuss their "fears" about the institution they've come to, in the course of which the discussion leader gets a chance to explain the place to them. Talking out their problems gives them a far better start than having them bottled up.

The same school, incidentally, provides group discussion sessions for children about to be released or "placed" out of the school. The boys talk about the reactions they may encounter in their home communities, job opportunities, whether a boy should tell a prospective employer about his having been in a training school, and the like. Staff members participate in these discussions.

In most state training schools, it is the custom to send the parents of inmates a stiffly written form letter telling them when they can and cannot visit, how many times they can send letters, and so on. These letters often are no different from those received by relatives of adult prison inmates. But one state school mentioned by Clendenen has developed what might be called a parent-orientation program. Instead of the form letter, the parents get a friendly, personal letter and are interviewed by the superintendent on their first school visit. The child is encouraged to show the parents over the grounds and to introduce them to the other children and staff members. The parents are made to feel that they have an important role to play in planning for the child, and that they are part of the rehabilitation team. A liberal system of week-end vacations for the children draws the parents closer to participation, and makes the child's final release much easier.

Unfortunately, these are but scattered straws in the wind.

The state reform schools, as mainly constituted today, represent a symbol of neglect, a symptom of a social disorder. Into their gates walk many potentially good and useful citizens; out of them march many future hardened criminals, tempered in the crucible of crime. It would be folly to say that the juvenile delinquency problem could be solved entire if only we developed decent training schools. The state training school is but one way station along the road that carries so many child delinquents to the terminal of adult crime. But it is a strategic junction, of vital importance in determining the child's future direction, for good or ill. Every citizen has a stake in its development. As presently operated, the typical one is a disgraceful blot on a democratic and rich

society. It is up to the general citizenry to erase that blot.

One way to do it is to build checks against juvenile delinquency in the community before the institutional stage is reached. The roots of child delinquency lie, for the most part, deep in the community — in the many homes, schools, agencies and courts that dump their rejected children on training schools, in the unwholesome environments that develop unwholesome child personalities, long before the institutional stage begins.

The truth is that every institutional inmate represents a community failure.

When my rounds of the reform schools had ended, I set out to find where their inmates had come from; who they were, and what — in the community, in the home, in themselves — had brought them to this pass.

P A R T I I

*Delinquency — Who's to Blame?*





## Anatomy of Delinquency

A SPECIAL DISPATCH to the *New York Times* dated Newcastle, England, September 2, 1949, carried this startling report:

The suggestion that a wave of gangsterism in the United States had been due to an epidemic of encephalitis or sleeping sickness was made at the annual meeting of the British Association for Advancement of Science today by Prof. Alexander Kennedy, professor of psychiatry at Newcastle University.

He said that an epidemic of the disease in the Nineteen Twenties had left a lot of gangster types. John Dillinger, he declared, was one of the victims and was left with damage to a small area of the brain. The majority of the victims, he added, became sexual perverts, systematic swindlers and persons with no moral scruples.

One ideological commodity has never been in scarce supply, namely, speculative theories on the causes of adult crime and juvenile delinquency, generically or with specific reference to a sporadic "wave." Delinquency has been attributed to everything from solar disturbances to original sin. No part of the environment — including climate and meteorology — and no part of the human anatomy, from the shape of the nose to the droop of the lip, has escaped mention at one time or another as a significant and even basic factor in delinquency. Usually the cause advanced betrays the particular "expert's" specialty or bias.

In an earlier chapter I used the analogy of the fable of the blind men and the elephant. There are a number of specialists in or contiguous to the field of child delinquency who, coming into contact with a particular aspect of the problem, tend to mistake it for the whole, hence producing caricatures when they attempt interpretations. Certain psychiatrists come to mind in this respect. I, myself, have constantly stressed the point that many delinquents are emotionally disturbed children in need of psychiatric attention, and I have ever deplored the lack of adequate psychiatric personnel and facilities in most American communities. But I regard as a typical exaggeration of the one-sided specialist the statement of a Washington psychiatrist, who declared at the 1946 annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association:

One of the major points that should be made clear immediately is that delinquency or antisocial behavior is the end result of internal conflicts which have come about through the individual's relationships within his environment. Delinquent behavior is the outward manifestation of inner difficulties of which the boy or girl is unaware. It follows that the juvenile delinquent is, from the point of view of psychiatry, a neurotic with unresolved conflicts, unconscious drives for which he is not responsible. It is impossible for him to understand them or even know that they exist.<sup>1</sup>

This tendency to overstress the "neurosis" angle is by no means universal among psychiatrists. Dr. Robert H. Felix, director of the National Mental Health Institute in the United States Public Health Service, lays proper emphasis upon unhealthy social and economic conditions as factors in delinquency, and notes that a real delinquency prevention

<sup>1</sup> Leonard M. Dub, "Institutional Treatment of Juvenile Delinquents," in *American Journal of Psychiatry*, May 1947, p. 818.

program must include action on inadequate medical and welfare services, poor housing, vicious neighborhoods, economic insecurity, substandard wages, etc.<sup>2</sup>

Pat generalizations overlook what seems to me a basic truth: that many children who commit delinquent acts, such as stealing or vandalism, are simply conforming to the *normal* pattern of the particular culture, or the subculture, of their community. The available data reveal that the delinquent acts of children are rarely individual in character; they are performed *socially*, in company with others, and very often in complete accord with the behavior expected or even demanded of them by their juvenile peers or their adult mentors. If the desire to conform, to adjust to community standards, is considered "normal," then most juvenile delinquents I have studied are eminently normal. It is the social setting, the subculture, or the general culture itself which is "abnormal" in its contradictions — not the average delinquent child.

The literature on child delinquency is replete with exaggerations of specific "causes," with oversimplifications of the general problem of delinquency. Coincidence is often mistaken for cause. Speculation wildly outruns established fact; the "scientific" statistics themselves are often faulty or entirely worthless.

Dr. William Healy, pioneer student of the dynamics of juvenile delinquency (who is not beyond criticism himself for his own tendency to overstress certain factors close to his

<sup>2</sup> Felix, "Responsibility of the Community for Juvenile Delinquency," in *Proceedings of the 1947 National Conference of Social Work* (New York, 1948), p. 380.

specialty) has posed the complexity of the problem pithily:

“Any student of delinquency knows that causes for it are so many and complex that it is logical to speak only of factors of causation. Delinquency is a behavior reaction of an individual to his particular environment. The environmental causative factors are multiple and often in combination; the factors within the delinquent himself are just as varied, perhaps even more so, and are often very complex. The individual and his environment have to be considered separately but also in their interactions.”<sup>3</sup>

The fact that the contributing causes of child delinquency are complex, however, does not mean — as some “experts” imply — that one cannot be considered more important than another, or that it is useless to try to act against any one of them. Such an attitude is as perverse as the one cause, one cure approach.

There are certain factors which crop up again and again, with monotonous and significant frequency, in the case records of typical juvenile delinquents. One of the most important research projects in the field is that conducted by the Gluecks — Dr. Sheldon, professor of law at Harvard University, and his wife, Eleanor. This project, which has continued steadily for nearly two decades, is based mainly on an intensive study of the background and after-careers of 1000 juvenile delinquents, 500 ex-inmates of a women’s reformatory, and 500 ex-inmates of a male reformatory.

The Gluecks have published several significant volumes on

<sup>3</sup> *Hearings on Juvenile Delinquency before Subcommittee of the Committee on Labor and Education, U. S. Senate, Pursuant to S. Res. 74, November and December, 1943, Part I, p. 3.*

their studies. Here are some major characteristics they found in the 1000 juvenile delinquents they studied:

In 85 per cent of the cases, the family lived in crowded areas where vice and crime were rampant.

In two out of five cases, the earnings of the father were so meager that the mother had to work to supplement the family income.

In three out of five cases, the homes "were overcrowded, dirty, poorly ventilated and shabbily furnished."

Nearly half the boys (45.1 per cent) came from homes broken by divorce, desertion, death or disease. In all, 92 per cent of the homes were, for one reason or another, "not conducive to the happiness of the children, either because a breaking up of the household took place, or because, though the home remained intact, the conjugal relationships of the parents were unpleasant, the parents were ineffectual disciplinarians or were themselves immoral or delinquent, or the children were unsupervised or neglected."

In 84.7 per cent of the cases, there was delinquency in other members of the family — parents, brothers and/or sisters.

More than three fourths (76.3 per cent) of the boys came from economically marginal or dependent families.

About 70 per cent had I.Q.'s of 80 or better, the other 30 per cent tested below 80. More than half (55.7 per cent) were listed as "mentally abnormal."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Eleanor T. Glueck, "The Family, the School and Crime," *Harvard Teachers' Record*, April 1935. Reprinted in *Hearings on Juvenile Delinquency* (*op. cit.*), pp. 16-18.

A study of 23,500 children known to the juvenile courts of Michigan in 1948 showed that only 44 per cent came from homes where the parents were married and living together. In 30 per cent of the cases, the home was broken by divorce, separation or desertion. In 14 per cent, one or both parents were dead. In 7 per cent, the parents were not married, and in 5 per cent the marriage was technically intact but the parents were not living together.<sup>5</sup>

The same study revealed that stealing was the most frequent specified reason for referring delinquents of both sexes to juvenile courts, accounting for 44 per cent of all referrals. Truancy and "incurable or disobedient" were next in order, with 11 per cent each. Among boys referred for delinquency, stealing was specified in 54 per cent of the cases. Mischief, truancy and traffic violation were next in order, with about 8 per cent each. Among the girls, "running away" was the most frequent reason (30 per cent), with truancy second (22 per cent) and sex offense third (17 per cent).

In 1942 the New York State Department of Social Welfare published a report on community problems of child delinquency in rural areas, based on a study of the "influences, conditions and factors" behind the commitments of 150 children (65 boys and 85 girls) to state training schools. The 150 cases, chosen on a sampling basis, came from 76 communities, mainly rural in character. The girls had been committed largely for sex offenses, the boys for stealing. The children averaged dull normal in intelligence but ranged from actual feeble-mindedness to superior mental ability.

<sup>5</sup> Michigan State Dept. of Social Welfare, "Juvenile Court Reporting - Fourth Annual Report, 1948" (mimeo.), p. 13.

Nearly every child lived near or below the poverty line; more than two thirds of the families had received public relief. The report stated:

Not only were most of the children deprived by poverty of adequate food, clothing and shelter, but economic need also frequently forced the mother to work outside the home and left the children without the possibility of suitable home training and supervision. . . . The houses in which the families of the children lived were as a rule poorly located, in ill repair, without modern conveniences, and inadequate for the large families living in them. They permitted little physical comfort and practically no esthetic satisfaction. Many of the houses were unfit for human habitation and dirty and disorderly to the extreme.<sup>6</sup>

Poverty contributed directly to the delinquency of the children studied, according to the report. It encouraged stealing, for instance; many of the children stole to get enough money to go to the movies, to "have things like their playmates," and to do other things that might gain for themselves a more secure status in the group.

The 150 children studied represented 145 family units. Of these, 62 of the families (43 per cent) were without the child's own father or mother. In 32 families, the father, mother or both were dead; 20 parents had deserted — 13 of the deserters were mothers; 11 had gone off with other men. The deserted husbands and wives had generally taken other partners into the homes. Lack of money was doubtless a factor in the failure to legalize such unions by divorce and remarriage. Demoralized family relationships led many of the children to accept as normal patterns of sexual behavior

<sup>6</sup> New York State Dept. of Social Welfare, *A Child Went Forth: Community Problems of Child Delinquency in Rural New York State* (Albany, 1942), 69 pp., p. 44.

that were legally or socially unacceptable. For example, one girl who had had sex experience with both her father and uncle since the age of ten didn't become aware that such conduct was unusual until she was fourteen years old; at fifteen she was promiscuous.

Drunkenness was a factor in creating many unhappy home situations; 39 fathers and 9 mothers drank heavily. In some families, however, one or both parents strove valiantly against great odds to provide satisfactory care and training for their children.

Failure of both church and school to provide wholesome buttresses against delinquency was noted in most cases; there was a notable lack of health and recreational facilities. "Constructive social service was the exception rather than the rule."

Judge Justine Wise Polier conducted a survey of the backgrounds of 541 children who came before her in the New York City Children's Court during July and August of 1938. She found that a large majority had come from economically and emotionally impoverished homes. Only one out of four was living at home with both parents. In 147 cases, the whereabouts of at least one parent were unknown.<sup>7</sup>

The Gluecks found, in their intensive study of 1000 juvenile delinquents, that the average age of onset of delinquent behavior was nine years and seven months. Rehabilitation was effected far more often among those taken in hand shortly after delinquent behavior began than among those whose delinquency persisted for some time before treatment efforts were made — indicating that many criminal careers

<sup>7</sup> See Justine Wise Polier, *Everyone's Children, Nobody's Child* (New York, Scribner's, 1941), p. 98.



could have been aborted had more cases been recognized and treated promptly.

Testifying before a United States Senate committee investigating child delinquency in 1943, Mr. I. Wallace Hoffman, chief probation officer of the Toledo, Ohio, juvenile court, observed:

“Various types of physical defects have been back of particular kinds of offenses. We have roughly 30 per cent of our children coming into court demonstrating eye defects. They become problems in school, then truants, and as a result of their truancy, fall into delinquent associations. In that type of child you could indirectly trace the delinquency back to the physical defect.”<sup>8</sup>

One could continue indefinitely citing statistical data on one aspect or another of the juvenile delinquent's make-up. It should be emphasized, however, that most deductions based on child delinquency statistics are apt to be extremely shaky. Dr. Edward E. Schwartz, director of statistical research in the United States Children's Bureau, has often pointed out the pitfalls in the way of statistical interpretation in this field.

One must always keep in mind, too, that available statistics revolve almost exclusively around the *caught* delinquents — who apparently represent only a small fraction of children committing delinquent acts. The recent Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study in Massachusetts (see Chapter 27) indicated that of 6000 offenses admitted by youths included in

<sup>8</sup> United States Senate Committee on Education and Labor, *Hearings on Juvenile Delinquency before a Subcommittee . . . December, 1943*, Part I, p. 29.

the study, only 1.6 per cent were brought to public attention by arrest or court hearing. This estimate is confirmed by other studies of "uncaught" delinquency. It appears that most children who commit delinquent acts and escape apprehension pass on to sober citizenship in adult life.

It should be stressed, too, that there is a significant class conditioning of antisocial behavior that profoundly affects the statistics. The antisocial behavior of the child of poverty-stricken parents (stealing, organized hoodlumism, and so on) is far more likely to be brought to the attention of public authorities than the common types of antisocial conduct among children in the higher income ranges such as misbehavior at school, or property damage for which reimbursement is made by parents. Delinquencies committed by the latter group may be more distressing, are equally destructive, but they are likely to fall within the limits of the law or else to be easily kept from public view.

If one essays a composite picture, or profile, of the "average" juvenile delinquent, then, it is necessary to point out that one would be describing the "caught" delinquent. There is no "typical" delinquent; all reliable studies reveal a tremendous range of difference in personality, background, physical, mental and emotional factors. But certain factors do crop up again and again in large numbers of caught delinquents and it is on this basis that the following profile is attempted:

The child delinquent is most apt to come from a rather large family in the low-income brackets, living in crowded quarters in a congested neighborhood.

He is likely to be of somewhat under-average intelligence, according to standard tests.

He is more apt to suffer from physical impairments, such as eye and ear defects, than does the average nondelinquent child.

There is about a fifty-fifty chance that his home has been broken by divorce, separation, death, disease or institutionalization of a parent or parents. When the child is living under the same roof with both parents, the family is apt to be rent by parental discord — largely conditioned, perhaps, by the pressure of unfavorable environment.

His delinquent career is likely to begin at just below ten years of age.

He is likely to be backward in school, and to truant rather often.

He is more apt to suffer from emotional disturbance than is his nondelinquent contemporary.

In a large proportion of cases, rising in direct ratio to the seriousness of the offense, other members of the family — parents, brothers, sisters — have delinquency records.

## Children Who Kill

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE *catch me before I kill. I cannot control myself.*

Chicago police, in December 1946, found this message scrawled in lipstick on the wall of the apartment of ex-WAVE Frances Brown, whose blood-drenched body lay draped across the side of her bathtub, a bread-knife stuck in her throat.

They did catch that killer who begged to be caught, but not before he had committed three brutal murders, the third being that of little blue-eyed Suzanne Degan, whose body he dismembered and scattered into the Chicago sewers. The nation gasped when the Degan girl's slayer turned out to be a clean-cut, seventeen-year-old boy — William Heirens, who was an honor student at prep school, a "model boy" at home, and a faithful churchgoer.

Heirens, the juvenile Jekyll-Hyde, could have been caught before he killed at all, if the adults among whom he lived and moved had properly discerned, interpreted and sought to correct the abnormal behavior which began to manifest itself long before he set out on his homicidal career. Precious lives might have been spared, family tragedy and city-wide terror averted, if the danger signals in the dual personality had been heeded in time. The model boy and the bright pupil was also the marauding burglar, who between the ages

of nine and sixteen committed more than two hundred senseless robberies impelled mainly by a psychosexual aberration that found release in the stealing of women's garments. The boy was caught in several of these depredations — for one of which he spent some time in a private reform school. But the underlying drives, the twisted emotions, were never properly probed until they had exploded thrice in murder.

“The danger signals,” a Chicago psychiatrist told me, “began to appear at the age of nine when Heirens was taken to Children's Court for one of the earliest of his bizarre burglaries. Practically every one of those two hundred-odd thefts was a clue to his steadily warping personality.

“At home, at church and at school he was a model boy. Abroad, first a senseless pilferer, later a human monster. His dual personality was already showing itself at nine.”

But nobody, it seems, ever delved deep enough into his troubled soul. School, church, home — there was failure all along the line. Chicago residents breathed a sigh of relief when young Heirens was sentenced for life to an Illinois prison for the criminally insane; another “sex fiend” was behind bars.

Not long after Heirens was caught, a fourteen-year-old boy named Albert horrified a little California town by the cold-blooded killing of a kindly neighbor. Albert — a frail, scared-looking child — walked into her home, asked for a cookie and, as she was reaching toward the pantry shelf, shot her in the back. When police asked why he did it, Albert answered: “I just felt like killing.”

Questioned further, the boy confessed the earlier murder of a fifteen-year-old girl schoolmate. Police had listed the death as accidental.

"I wasn't mad at Patricia," Albert explained, "I just wanted to kill her. She didn't fight much. She was alone in the cabin where her folks lived when I got there. I grabbed her arm and twisted it and pushed her into the bedroom onto the bed. Then I choked her with a rag I found on the floor. I put her on the floor and piled magazines around her. I poured the lighter fluid and set them on fire. Her hair was on fire and burning when I went out."

Albert further confessed that he had already picked out his third victim — his best friend and classmate, the son of the city manager.

"I was going to push him into the creek and drown him," he said as he sat in his jail cell. "I thought about it before. I wasn't mad at him. I just thought about killing him."

Albert's distracted mother, who worked in a laundry to support her four children, sobbed: "He never was a difficult child. But he hasn't been right lately. I think he's got softening of the brain. He ran away once when he had amnesia."

And that had been another danger signal that went unheeded: running away and amnesia are not the marks of a potential killer, but they are definite signs of a troubled mind and a distorted personality. The histories of children who kill are primarily the histories of children with emotional and mental disturbances. And many of their preliminary acts clearly cry out: *Catch me before I kill.*

According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, 924 youngsters ranging from under fifteen to under twenty-one years of age were arrested in 1948 on charges of murder — a rate of more than sixteen a week and more than two a day! (Not included in this figure are the hundreds of "accidental deaths" recorded annually among children and adolescents who kill

or are killed in play without malice aforethought, as in the tragic slipping of a noose in a hangman's game, or the innocent firing of a gun not known to be loaded.)

Why do children kill?

Part of our horror in their cases arises from the fact that most child murders lack the logical motives of typical adult homicides — the desire for monetary gain; power; lust; revenge. The child's homicidal deed is usually a meaningless crime. *Why?*

There is no all-embracing answer. Probably the most significant fact about teen-age murderers is the large proportion who come from broken homes — homes torn apart by the death of one or both parents, by divorce, by mental or physical sickness — or from homes grown hateful through lack of parental love, heartless discipline, incompatibility, unstable economic or emotional patterns, absence of security and warmth.

In 1946 I saw a heart-rending scene in the Wayne County jail in Detroit. Richard, a slender fifteen-year-old boy, neatly clad in a knitted sweater and tweed trousers, was talking excitedly with his mother. He might have been any American adolescent telling his day's adventures to an attentive parent. But this boy had confessed to murdering his father.

Richard, too, had been a model boy. But he lived in terror of his father, a policeman, who used to beat him brutally for normal pranks.

Although Richard's I.Q. was above average, his marks at school declined inexplicably. He was panic-stricken by the specter of being expelled from school and the inevitable beating from his father. In this state, Richard waylaid his father in a dim-lit cellar and shot him with a stolen gun. Had

Richard been able to talk out his problems frankly with his father, without fear of brutal punishment, an ugly patricide might have been avoided.

But was it wholly a matter between Richard and his father?

Had there been a consulting psychiatrist at Richard's school — as there was probably a doctor to examine his throat — the boy's sudden decline in marks would have suggested to him a growing emotional disturbance. A social psychiatrist could have uncovered Richard's unwholesome home life. Corrective action would have saved two lost lives.

Psychiatrists and others studying child-killer cases have learned much that baffled earlier child psychologists. And while nobody has yet discovered any distinctive traits *peculiar* to children who kill, it has been noted that there are striking manifestations of abnormal behavior patterns in most child killers, ones that are found widely in children with serious emotional disturbances. It is when these serious emotional upsets are ignored or go untreated that symptoms may become exaggerated or break out in the form of murderous action. This is not to say that every child with an untreated mental or emotional disorder is a potential killer; the point is that potential killers are drawn largely from the ranks of such children.

Dr. Ralph S. Banay, well-known psychiatrist who has probably studied juvenile homicide more intensively than any other expert, recently published a paper on twenty case histories of children involved in killings. He divided them into five main categories: (1) psychotic ("insane") children; (2) those with borderline or defective intellect; (3) children who had been emotionally starved, neglected and abused;



(4) children who are products of a chaotic and demoralizing home life in economically reduced circumstances, living in a high delinquency area; and (5) those who had been "model children" — intelligent, serious-minded, religious, studious, highly regarded in the home and the community.

Dr. Banay sharply criticizes the statutes in most states that deny children the status of juvenile delinquents when they become involved in homicidal acts:

The apparent philosophy behind statutes concerning juvenile offenders is that a child has not reached a degree of intellectual and emotional development that would qualify him as fully responsible for his acts. The laws, however, embody an obvious contradiction: for when the offense is too obnoxious or repugnant, complete responsibility is placed upon the child and he must face the full weight of the law.<sup>1</sup>

The experts will have to do a lot more research into the nature, cause, cure and prevention of juvenile murders before they can come up with *all* the answers. But on the basis of what they have learned to date, they recommend the following preventive measures to check the rising tide of teenage murders:

Wholesome sex education must be made a part of the normal educational pattern in schools and at home. A most important area of human experience is now often a dark, unwholesome quagmire in which the bewildered child is caught fast. (Dr. Foster Kennedy, one of the three psychiatrists who examined William Heirens after his conviction, told me that the failure to give the boy wholesome sex advice was an important factor in warping his personality. The boy quoted

<sup>1</sup> Ralph S. Banay, "Homicide Among Children," in *Federal Probation*, 1947, p. 18.

his mother as telling him, at ten years of age: "If you touch a girl, you may get a horrible disease.")

Every school system should have adequate psychiatric and social-work services for pupils regarded as problems. Parents should familiarize themselves with community mental hygiene resources, and demand more if there aren't enough.

Every large community should have at least one child-guidance clinic staffed by a competent psychiatric team — consisting of psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker and other trained personnel.

Extensive research should be conducted in the physical, mental, emotional and environmental factors that result in child delinquency generally, and in homicidal behavior particularly. Such studies should certainly include the possible influences of certain types of movies, comic books, radio programs and press reports on the impressionable minds and emotions of children. However, as noted elsewhere, this writer remains unconvinced by some of the highly hysterical and alarmist "scapegoat" literature that has flooded the popular prints from time to time, blaming one or another of these factors as the main cause.

We are desperately in need of adequate psychiatric facilities, especially in schools, where emotional disturbances in children could be detected promptly and treated effectively. Even where psychiatric resources are now technically available, they are so limited in trained personnel and so overwhelmed by demands for service that they are usually unable to give full and effective attention to children who come under their care.

Meanwhile, one of the main blocks to proper treatment

for emotionally disturbed children who might become involved in tragedies is the reluctance of many parents to admit and seek treatment for these conditions. Many a parent who would not hesitate to seek medical advice for a physically sick child hesitates — sometimes with disastrous results — to seek counsel for children with obvious emotional ills. There is, for instance, the case of Barbara, who manifested both physical and mental disturbances simultaneously.

Several years ago a bright and pretty fourteen-year-old Los Angeles schoolgirl suddenly changed in behavior and appearance. A glandular swelling appeared on her neck but nobody sought medical treatment for it. Barbara began to turn from an alert intelligent child into a sluggish pupil, morose, withdrawn, suspicious. Her trim figure became dumpy as she gained nearly sixty pounds within a year. The sudden change alarmed school officials, who called Barbara's mother in for consultation. The mother was a hospital worker whose husband had abandoned her shortly after Barbara's birth. Barbara saw her hard-working mother but seldom, and moved frequently from one boarding home to another.

The school authorities strongly urged the mother to take Barbara to a psychiatrist for examination and possible treatment. But she rejected their advice. Later, when Barbara's behavior became increasingly abnormal, her mother did take her to a psychologist. He observed that the girl was laboring under serious mental stress and suggested treatment in a psychiatric clinic. They actually made an appointment, but neither mother nor daughter ever showed up. A chance to prevent a murder was lost.

One spring morning not long afterward Barbara knocked

at a neighbor's door, calmly declared that she had killed her mother and asked that the police be called. When they arrived, they found Barbara's mother in a blood-soaked bed, having been stabbed nine times by her daughter as she lay asleep. Barbara is now an inmate of a California state hospital for the insane. She could have been caught and perhaps cured before she killed. A mother's prejudice against psychiatric counsel led to her own doom.

A remarkable psychiatric report was rendered in February, 1949, to a Philadelphia court in the case of Seymour, a seventeen-year-old youth who confessed slaying a twelve-year-old boy by stabbing him about fifty times with a knife and a pair of scissors, then further mutilating the victim's body. The city was stunned by the details of this particularly brutal "sex murder." The court appointed a panel of three psychiatrists to study and report on Seymour's mental status prior to pronouncing sentence on him. The teen-age slayer's history showed manifestations of abnormal behavior dating back to the time he was five years of age. The psychiatrists, in their report, stressed the failure to seek treatment for these abnormalities in time, and also noted the lack of child mental hygiene facilities. The report, drawn up by three University of Pennsylvania psychiatrists — Dr. Edward A. Strecker, Dr. Frederick H. Leavitt and Dr. Joseph Hughes — went beyond the usual routine finding as to "criminal responsibility" to include a sharp criticism of present-day handling of children with behavior problems.

The three psychiatrists performed the principal function for which they had been appointed by the court: they found that Seymour was "at the time of the commission of the alleged crime and is now capable of distinguishing between

right and wrong within the meaning of the legal interpretation of such capacity" and that, in their opinion, the boy was neither psychotic (medically insane) or feeble-minded. They gave their diagnosis of the boy's case as "constitutional psychopathic inferiority" and expressed the opinion that "by reason of his personality, his previous behavior and the nature of the crime of which he is accused and its motivations, Seymour would be likely to commit similar crimes unless adequately restrained." They recommended, therefore, that "society be completely and permanently protected from his serious antisocial behavior tendencies for the remainder of his life." Seymour's act, they believed, was "motivated by strong sadistic, homosexual impulses culminating in homicide."

The boy was spared execution, but was sentenced to life imprisonment "in solitary confinement and at hard labor" in the state penitentiary.

It appears unfortunate that the learned psychiatrists did not see fit to include an opinion concerning the possibility of having Seymour's antisocial tendencies corrected by adequate treatment. It may be profitable at this point to discuss briefly the highly controversial term, "constitutional psychopathic personality," which has provided a battleground on which many psychiatric wars have been fought. Many psychiatrists condemn the use of the adjective "constitutional" and many, indeed, condemn the use of "psychopathic personality" as a diagnostic term having no acceptable definition and therefore no recognizable meaning. It has important significance for our subject, because many persons who commit murder, adult or juvenile, are classified as "psychopathic personalities."

In juvenile delinquency, the "psychopathic" child has often been defined as a "naturally bad" boy or girl, impervious to therapeutic treatment. In general, the term is applied to persons who apparently are deficient in, or lack entirely, a sense of moral responsibility. In fact, what is now called "psychopathic personality" used to be known as "moral insanity." Psychiatrists who use the term are generally agreed on these symptoms: antisocial tendencies arising from an underlying neurosis; a blunted sense of morality, especially in terms of consideration for the rights and feelings of other humans; and a tendency to act in terms of immediate gratification of impulses, heedless of the possible consequences of a particular act.

The Strecker-Leavitt-Hughes report acknowledged the difficulty of defining the diagnosis of "constitutional psychopathic personality." It stated:

There is a type of human behavior manifested by those who for want of a better term are called Constitutional Psychopathic Inferiors who, while able to distinguish between right and wrong behavior, are still not willing or able to exert inhibitions against antisocial behavior as strong or effective as those which can be exerted by the average person.

In our opinion Seymour — belongs in this category.

It would be a grave error to assume that Constitutional Psychopathic Inferiority is clearly understood and readily diagnosed. Actually, among all conditions which psychiatrists encounter, it is the least well understood and the most difficult to diagnose and treat. Actually, too, it is diagnosed far too frequently and quite often mistakenly. The diagnosis cannot be made on the basis of any test nor on any single behavior manifestation. It is not an intellectual defect (feeble-mindedness), since usually the Constitutional Psychopathic Inferior has average or superior intelligence.

The three psychiatrists described constitutional psychopathic inferiority, in a general way, as characterized by "considerable impairment of the capacity to interpose over a long period of time strong and effective inhibitory barriers against antisocial behavior, marked in various psychopaths by emotional instability, inadequacy, impulsive behavior, disregard of ethical and moral considerations, truthfulness, decency and social responsiveness."

The cause or causes of constitutional psychopathic inferiority are largely unknown, the psychiatrists pointed out.

Personally [they added] we do not believe that Constitutional Psychopathic Inferiority is due to organic disease of the body or brain nor do we believe it is a mental disease in the sense of a psychosis. The behavior of a Constitutional Psychopathic Inferior seems to represent an attempt to unconsciously compensate, often by antisocial behavior, for strong inferiority reactions inculcated into the personality during childhood.

Among the factors which might be operative in the production of such behavior, it is likely that one is a serious lack of the ordinary mental hygiene of childhood in an environment which does not contain the conditions which favor the attainment of emotional security and maturity.

The psychiatrists included in their report a well-timed warning against hasty, unwise and unjust passage of so-called "sex psychopath" and "criminal psychopath" laws, the demand for which often follows upon hysterical public reaction to "sex offense waves." Too often such legislation reflects the unrealistic belief that a particular problem can be solved easily by passing a law.

I was particularly struck by this pregnant passage in the Strecker-Leavitt-Hughes report on Seymour:

While we do not believe it would be intelligent or common-sense thinking to expect parents or those in charge of children to be able to predict antisocial behavior in them and to be held responsible for its occurrence, yet we do believe there are situations in which parents or guardians of children have culpability. If there has been repeated, continued and serious antisocial conduct in children it is the personal and social duty of parents to utilize every means available to seek such skilled help as may be needed to uncover reasons for the behavior and to arrange for prompt treatment. In the kind of serious situation indicated, if parents do not fulfill their personal and social obligations, they are contributing to delinquency. This would naturally apply only when there has been a wanton disregard by the parents of their duty to society.

True, emotional volcanoes seething beneath the surface in potential teen-age killers are not always discernible. But too often they *are* sensed and understood by elders, only to be minimized or treated too little and too late. There's the tragic story of Edwin — who became a murderer at thirteen. The tale of how he attacked and slew a ten-year-old girl in Dutchess County, New York, made sensational newspaper headlines a few years ago. I did some intensive research on Edwin at the time, wrote a series of articles on the case, and covered his first-degree murder trial.

Edwin started life with handicaps. His maternal grandparents both died in a California mental hospital. Chronic alcoholism dotted his paternal side. Edwin's father, a merchant seaman, often strayed from home during the lad's infancy. The boy's parents were divorced when he was nine. His mother remarried, this time to another merchant seaman who was also away from home most of the time. Edwin, unanchored, was boarded out frequently by his hard-working



mother. In one of the foster homes, the foster-mother tried to cure him of enuresis by throwing him into an ice-chilled bathtub every time he wet his bed. He grew up above normal in intelligence, but with increasing emotional difficulties. He ran away often, once from his Northern home to Florida at the age of eleven. He stole occasionally. He came before the Children's Court several times. Two years before he killed, he was sent to a psychiatric hospital for examination, because his neurotic behavior had become pronounced. The examining psychiatrist recommended continued treatment. But the suggestion was ignored. *A potential killer might have been caught and cured then.*

A year later, Edwin again came before the Children's Court, this time on a charge of chronic truancy. The court psychiatrist examined him, found grave signs of emotional disturbance and recommended that he be committed to the children's unit of a state mental hospital. Application was actually made, but the hospital officials reported that the institution was overcrowded. Edwin was placed on the waiting list, but no further efforts were made to get him treatment. *Another chance was lost.*

The horrible murder occurred the following summer. Edwin received a prison sentence of thirty years to life. He was committed to a men's reformatory from which, after making two attempts at suicide, he was transferred to a state prison for insane criminals.

Who was more to blame for the taking of a little girl's life — the emotionally crippled boy, or organized society which at least twice failed to take appropriate action in the face of manifest danger signals?

There was a happier denouement to another juvenile kill-

er's trial I covered — the case of the “baby-sitting murder” where fourteen-year-old Jackie faced a first-degree murder charge for the confessed slaying of a three-year-old girl for whose parents he was serving as a baby-sitter. Jackie, like Heirens, belonged to the “too perfect” type of emotionally distorted children. Fortunately, he was defended by an able criminal lawyer — James D. C. Murray, who had taken an unusual interest in helping children in trouble and who manifested a remarkable understanding of the dynamics of child behavior. The case was tried before an enlightened jury and a socially conscious community. The boy was acquitted on grounds of emotional instability and sent to the Cedar Knolls School for emotionally disturbed children at Hawthorne, New York. There, under sound treatment, Jackie at last reports was making fine progress.

Far different was the story of Edward who, at sixteen, was the central figure in a sensational “sex murder” case in Westchester County, New York, where two little girls — sisters — met horrible death at his hands. Edward came of a family that had declined from a very respected place in the community to the level of hillbilly existence. His father spent several long terms in prison. His mother was burned to death in a fire that destroyed the family home when Edward was thirteen. The three children, including Edward, were boarded out by local relief officials to a succession of foster homes, some of them distinctly unfavorable. Edward found neither stability, security nor parental love in any of these substitute homes. At fourteen, he had developed such pronounced emotional abnormalities that he was sent to a psychiatric clinic for observation. The psychiatrist who examined him advised close supervision of the boy by social

workers over a period of years, but nothing was done to follow up on this advice. Less than two years later, Edward perpetrated his gruesome and senseless crime, for which he died in the electric chair.

Similar case histories might be strung out indefinitely. They invariably reveal that teen-age murders arise from twisted minds and emotions that might be straightened out by prompt and effective application of expert knowledge and skills. Sometimes the twisted minds and emotions of adults in the child's environment (parents, for instance) need treatment. Sometimes the general environment itself must be corrected for the salvation of the personality it warps. Sometimes the scars of emotional crippling are permanent and irremediable. Then it may be best to place the child in an appropriate institution for his own safety and that of society. It is not always possible in the state of our present limited knowledge of personality and society to recognize and erase the mark of Cain which an evil destiny brands on some of our children. But it behooves an allegedly advanced civilization to heed and respond to that anguished cry:

*For heaven's sake catch me before I kill.*

## The Parent as Culprit and Scapegoat

BILL WAS the kind of boy you like on sight — about seventeen, with frank eyes and a shy warm smile. He was one of the five hundred and seventy students at the National Training School for Boys, in Washington, D. C., a federal institution for juvenile delinquents who have come in conflict with federal law. As I talked with Bill I wondered, as I often wondered during my training school rounds: How did such a boy wind up in such a place?

I inquired about Bill's background. Superintendent Harold E. Hegstrom fetched from his files a letter from Bill to his parents, as copied by a school censor:

I am feeling lower than the lowest thing on earth, and I think the two of you should have something on your consciences too.

When the two of you went out that Saturday, nobody asked me to come along. So I just stayed home and sat around and thought. Just put yourself in my place for a while. How would you feel if your own mom and dad acted as if they didn't love you? Believe me I love both of you with all my heart but you never gave me the chance to show it. Instead you always fought between one another and wouldn't even sit in the same room together.

I only want one favor. If I get permission from the parole board I want your signature on the papers so I can join the service. Please don't ask for me to come back home because I will not do it. If a home has to be the way ours has been I would just as soon live in hell.

Bill's history told the details. He had brooded awhile that Saturday night after his parents walked out on him in search of a good time. (Bill was then fifteen.) Then he left the house, got into the first parked car he found and drove until police picked him up in a neighboring state.

Bill wanted to join the Army. . . . He was already enrolled in that tragic army — the juvenile army of the rejected. His was a case of parental rejection, and I came across many like him in our reform schools. During my tour, I collected a number of letters like his that often reveal more than statistics about the basic facts of rejection and deprivation. Here is one:

DEAR SIS,

That was a swell letter you sent me. I bet I have read it a hundred times and every time I cry like a baby. I wish I had taken your advice, but I don't think this will ruin me because when I get out of here you are going to have a manly man for your brother.

Suppose you wonder why I don't ask about Dad. Well, because he started to laugh loud in court when I was sentenced up here, but tell him it is nice out here. It is like I ever hope heaven to be on earth and tell Dad to laugh that off if he can.

If that particular training school seemed like heaven to that boy, one could only wonder what kind of hell his home must have been for him.

Another letter, from an eleven-year-old inmate:

DEAR MOM,

Just a few lines to ask a favor of you. I don't know what you plan to send me for Christmas, but whatever it is I want you to put it into two boxes. One for me and one for my best friend, Harry Jones. You see, he has no home and he won't get a box

for Christmas and you know how a kid feels when everybody else gets a box and he doesn't. It doesn't have to be much, just a bit of this or that. Goodby, your son, JOHN.

But neither John nor his friend got a package that Christmas. In fact, more than half the boys at the institution received no Christmas gifts from their families. One more sign — one of the cruelest — of rejection.

I am not suggesting that all the children in our reform schools are misunderstood angels. There are many bad actors among them — children who have committed every conceivable offense, including murder. The personalities of some are by now so distorted that they appear to be beyond reclamation through any measures now known or available. Yet many — now hopelessly lost — have been lost after a long history of rejection and deprivation.

I sat by while a group of eight inmates of a school for delinquents swapped ideas on how they would help prevent *their* children from becoming delinquents.

"I would give my son a good place to live and a decent home," one fourteen-year-old said. "When I'm a father I'll spend all my spare time with my children and try to understand them."

But another boy objected: "Lots of parents don't even understand themselves. How can you expect them to understand their children?"

I could only wish that the combined wisdom of those two boys could penetrate into every American home.

At one midwestern state training school I found four boys, aged ten. I asked for their case histories. Each reflected a bad home environment as a factor in delinquency:

Jackie had been in juvenile court five times since he had turned six years of age. He admitted pilfering from five automobiles, purse snatching, breaking into three stores and burglarizing a bowling alley. He frequently truanted from school, was used to late hours and could be found on the streets "most any time." He was a tiny, appealing child with a cherubic countenance in spite of the enormous police record he had established during his ten years, including a year's residence at this reform school.

Jackie's father was a drunkard, and so was his mother. His father had given Jackie enough whisky at the age of five to get him drunk — "just for the fun of it." He also encouraged the boy to smoke during his infancy. The home was unfit for a child; Jackie had preferred the streets.

Tommie first came into juvenile court at the age of seven as a runaway. He had been to court four times by the time he was nine, when he was finally committed to the reform school. He admitted to stealing at least twenty bicycles, to numerous acts of shoplifting, and had often truanted from both school and home. He often spent his nights sleeping in theaters, and on piles of materials for buildings under construction.

Tommie was born out of wedlock. He was abused by his stepfather, and was whipped frequently by his mother. The stepfather repeatedly told Tommie he didn't like him. Tommie had been placed out in the home of his maternal grandmother for several years. Two uncles and a cousin were fellow residents of Tommie's in the reform school at the time of my visit. Another uncle was in a state prison, and an aunt was in the state reform school for girls. Tommie

told me he was never going to get married because "married people always fight." His own home was electric with friction and brawling.

"I've been in jail four times already," Tommie told me proudly, evidently intent on building up a lengthy record in the shortest possible time.

Andy had appeared in court only once, after trying to break into the home of the juvenile court judge, who committed him to the state school. Before that, however, Andy had hit a man with a club in an attempt to rob him, had threatened to burn a theater down, was a chronic truant from school and had run away from home on numerous occasions. Andy's father had deserted the mother shortly after marriage. The mother then lived with a man for six years before she remarried. Andy lived with his mother and stepfather, both of whom rejected him. The case record stated he was one of eight children belonging to his mother, "but it is not known how many are his full brothers and sisters because the woman's private life has been quite complicated."

Joe was first haled to court at seven for stealing chickens and selling them. He subsequently was involved in numerous petty thefts, and burglarized two stores and a gas station with his brother. Joe refused to stay at home. He lived in an old barn, stealing food and blankets for his needs. His parents were divorced. Both were chronic alcoholics; neither was interested in the children. Nor was the stepmother. The case record noted: "Neighborhood and home standards are low and supervision is lax. Father never inquires about Joe, but beats him whenever he is in a bad mood."



I had learned enough to appreciate the basic truth of the old saw that the home is the first line of defense against juvenile delinquency in only a qualified sense. I had seen enough case histories and traced enough backgrounds to be profoundly disturbed by that dangerously fallacious quip of the late Mayor LaGuardia of New York, to the effect that "the worst home is better than the best institution."

I knew that good parents could shore up a child against the pressures of a bad environment. I knew also that bad parents could effectively counteract the influences of even an otherwise wholesome environment.

But I was still definitely opposed to that school of thought that fixes the blame for juvenile delinquency mainly, sometimes even exclusively, on "bad parents." I had seen the rise and fall of many "punish the parents" movements in the wake of "juvenile crime waves," and I had failed to find a single instance where juvenile delinquency was reduced by punishing these parents.

In San Francisco, some years ago, a practice was adopted whereby parents of child delinquents were compelled to attend evening classes in proper child-rearing. This development was hailed in many newspapers and some national magazines as the "answer" for the juvenile delinquency problem. On a recent visit to San Francisco, I talked to several judges about the progress of this school for parents. They told me it had been discontinued as a flat failure.

Recently a small community in Oregon announced to the world that juvenile delinquency had been reduced by ninety per cent as the result of an ordinance authorizing the jailing of parents of child delinquents. I didn't get a chance to track down this particular claim — in terms of numbers of children

involved or the effect of good times on the delinquency rate. But every delinquency expert I discussed it with was highly skeptical of the claim, pointing to many similar attempts in the past, all starting with great fanfare and ending up in miserable failures.

The parent must bear a measure of responsibility for child delinquency in the family. But it is not sufficiently appreciated that the parent, too, is a product of a particular environment, as the child itself is. Today, we find the bewildered parent tagged in this, as in other aspects of modern life, as our Number One Scapegoat. But how often is the neglectful and depriving parent himself or herself the flotsam on the sea of ill fortune, the warped product of a neglected and deprived childhood?

Let me illustrate. In 1947 a fourteen-year-old boy was caught on a New York City tenement roof shooting at passers-by below with a B-B gun. His mother, a divorcee, was found by police indulging in a drinking bout in a cheap tavern. Investigation revealed that she had drifted from bar to bar, from the apartment of one casual male friend to another, taking the child along with her. The sordid details of this "wanton woman's" behavior shocked the nation. The juvenile court judge, invoking a rarely used law penalizing a neglectful parent or guardian for contributing to a child's delinquency, sentenced the mother to a year's term in the penitentiary. His decision was acclaimed in righteous editorials throughout the nation and won hearty public approval. The cry went up in many quarters: "Delinquency would disappear if we sent all parents to jail."

But a subsequent study of the mother's own life history disclosed a tragic past. She had passed through a horribly

restricted childhood and at fourteen was forced into a loveless marriage with a man twice her age. Her marriage was a long nightmare, ended by divorce. She was an emotional wreck at thirty-two when she wound up in prison as a neglectful mother. Shortly after her commitment, a psychiatric examination revealed that she was a victim of a double psychosis — schizophrenia and paresis. She was quietly transferred to a mental hospital, where her chances of recovery were deemed poor. What that woman had needed was not scorn, but understanding. The public which had vigorously applauded her imprisonment scarcely heard about the sequel in a mental hospital.

In an opinion delivered from the same New York City bench, Children's Court Judge Dudley F. Sicher, in July 1949, went far beyond the legal technicalities of one particular case to repudiate completely the parent-punishing philosophy earlier expressed by his confrere. Judge Sicher pointed out that the principal aim of the juvenile court was to help children, not to punish people. He cited many authorities to prove his point: that no child had been saved by punishing a parent, and that such action never had any appreciable effect on the juvenile delinquency rate.

A year earlier, Judge Paul W. Alexander of the Lucas County Juvenile Court in Toledo, Ohio, had published in the United States Government publication *Federal Probation* a brilliant analysis of 500 actions against "delinquent parents" in his court during the decade 1937 to 1946. Judge Alexander was inspired to make his survey by the nationwide interest in parent punishing aroused by the New York City case.

"It happens that we in Toledo's juvenile court have been

punishing parents with ever-increasing assiduity for more than ten years," Judge Alexander wrote. He divided "delinquent parent" cases into five main types:

1. Runaway parents — those who leave their children with inadequate or no supervision.
2. Vicious parents — those who expose their children to vice.
3. "Aiders and abettors" — parents who directly encourage delinquency in their children.
4. "Triangular parents" — those involved in extramarital affairs to the general detriment of the children.
5. Inadequate parents — those who fail in the child-rearing duties of parents through ignorance, misunderstanding, weakness. [This last category, Alexander notes, is by far the largest and most important — comprising, indeed, nearly all "delinquent parents."]

What was the effect of Toledo's decade of parent-punishing in curbing or "stamping out" juvenile delinquency? Here is Judge Alexander's conclusion:

"We find no evidence that punishing parents has any effect whatsoever upon the curbing of juvenile delinquency."

The California Special Crime Study Commission on Juvenile Justice, in its final report rendered June 30, 1949, presented another resounding repudiation of the deceptive and dangerous philosophy embodied in the pat and popular slogan: "There are no delinquent children — there are only delinquent parents."

"In the majority of cases," the California Commission reported, "parents of children appearing before juvenile courts are confused and ineffectual. They have not intentionally contributed to the delinquencies of their children. They need and want help."

Yes, the home is the first line of defense — but what of the necessary buttresses to that first line? Parents, too, may live, work and breed in environments that stunt their own destinies. A committee of experts reported at the 1946 Attorney General's Conference on Juvenile Delinquency in Washington:

Crowded living quarters cause tensions and conflicts among family members which in time affect the emotional security and stability of the child. These same conditions also make for a lack of privacy that affects the psychological development of the child. . . .

Due to undesirable home conditions, children are forced to spend their time on the streets. Deteriorated neighborhoods provide an environment in which delinquent behavior flourishes. The shortage of an adequate supply of good low-rent housing therefore contributes to conditions which lead toward delinquent behavior.

Even where the parent is delinquent, the roots of the child's problem must often be sought beyond the home — in the community itself, and sometimes beyond it in the national and international arena, and in the very nature of our society.

What makes a *good* home life?

How can parents help prevent juvenile delinquency?

First, by making a good home for their own children. But *how* can they make a good home — what formula can they follow?

The Committee on Home Responsibility of the 1946 Attorney General's Conference drew up these fourteen essentials of the "good home":

A good home for children may be a one-room apartment, a trailer or a twelve-room house, but it is a *good* home for a child if . . .

1. He is loved and wanted — and knows it.
2. He is helped to grow up by not having too much or too little done for him.
3. He has some time and some space of his own.
4. He is a part of the family, has fun with the family and *belongs*.
5. His early mistakes and “badness” are understood as a normal part of growing up; he is corrected without being hurt, shamed or confused.
6. His growing skills — walking, talking, reading, making things — are enjoyed and respected.
7. He plans with the family and is given real ways *to help* and *feel needed* throughout childhood.
8. He has *freedom* that fits his age and needs; he has *responsibilities* that fit his age, abilities and freedom.
9. He can say what he feels and talk things out without being afraid or ashamed; he can learn through mistakes as well as successes, and his parents appreciate his successes rather than dwell on his failures.
10. As he grows older, he knows his parents are doing the best they can; they know the same about him.
11. He feels his parents care as much about him as they do about his brothers and sisters.
12. The family sticks together and the members help one another.
13. *He is moderately and consistently disciplined from infancy, has limits set for his behavior and is helped to take increasing responsibility for his own actions.*
14. He has something to believe in and work for, because his parents have lived their ideals and religious faith.

## Battle over the Comic Books

As THIS is written, the day's newspapers scream in front-page banner headlines:

**BIGGEST MASS MURDER IN HISTORY – CRAZED VET KILLS TWELVE!**

Columns of text tell how a twenty-eight-year-old war veteran of Camden, New Jersey, went on a rampage with a Luger gun, shooting down, with deadly accuracy, men, women and children who came across his path on a Camden street where he lived. At his house, a Bible was found open on a table in his room. His mother said he used to read the Bible for hours. Neighbors said that for months he had been often seen reading a Bible as he walked through the streets. The preacher in his church told reporters that he had been one of the most faithful churchgoers and students in the Bible class.

The "mad killer" had gained the reputation of being a "religious fanatic." But nobody thought of blaming the Bible for the tragedy. No newspaper editorials denounced the Bible as an "intolerable stimulant to crime." No civic group cried for Biblical censorship. No Bibles were burned; there were no movements set afoot to ban the Bible. This in spite of the fact that the Camden incident was preceded a short time before by the murder, in a church, of a priest by another "religious fanatic" whose room was found littered with Bibles and religious tracts.

Throughout 1948 and well into 1949, on the other hand, an extraordinary crusade was waged against comic books as a "major cause of child delinquency." The Savonarola of the movement was a well-known and brilliant psychiatrist, Dr. Fredric Wertham. In impassioned speeches and magazine articles, Dr. Wertham railed against the comics. He brought forth as evidence scores of lurid "crime comic books," which, he maintained, were poisoning the minds and warping the emotions of American children. He had dozens of case histories of children who had committed crimes of violence, even murder. Wertham advanced the startling charge that these crimes had been inspired directly by the reading of comic books.

Others took up the cry — educators, police authorities, legislators, civic leaders, political officeholders, women's clubs. The anti-comic book crusade spread through the country with the speed of a virulent contagion. At first, the movement took the form of having resolutions condemning the comics adopted by sundry organizations. As the movement grew in fervor, local laws were passed banning the sale of comic books in a specific area. Demands were made for the immediate nation-wide suppression of comic-book manufacture. In numerous places, incensed groups seized all the comic books they could lay hands on, piled them high on a bonfire, and burned them amidst elaborate ceremonies. The New York state legislature passed a bill setting up an official state censorship commission, but the bill was vetoed by Governor Dewey. Groups of parents solemnly pledged never to let their children read comic books as their contribution to the prevention of juvenile delinquency.

Comic books, in short, became the major scapegoat in the



never-ending search for a one cause, one cure solution to juvenile delinquency. They took their place besides the press, the radio, the movies and other media which, from time to time, have been cried up as the Nation's Number One Stimulant to delinquency and crime.

In September 1948 Dr. Wertham and I shared a platform at the annual meeting of the National Association of Juvenile Agencies in Boston. We discussed different aspects of child delinquency. Dr. Wertham's address was devoted to an impassioned denunciation of comic books as a major source of juvenile crimes of violence. He cited several cases of child killers who had declared that their acts were inspired by reading the comics.

The validity of his charges and findings was promptly challenged by Dr. Frank Curran, a fellow psychiatrist who for years had headed the adolescent ward at New York's Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital, where he had made an intensive study of the motivations and behavior patterns of children involved in homicides. Dr. Curran declared he had never encountered a case where comic books were a factor in motivating children to kill.

Dr. Wertham later showed me a number of comic books he had picked at random from newsstands. Some were lurid enough to chill the blood. One, for instance, was climaxed by a close-up drawing of the villain about to poke an icepick into the heroine's eyeball. I had my own sharp criticisms of comic books — to be detailed later — but in spite of the psychiatrist's persuasive arguments, I remained unconvinced that the comics had added significantly to child delinquency, violent or otherwise. I recalled how, not long ago, a group of obsessed psychiatrists, social workers and teachers had

demanded the abolition of Mother Goose rhymes on the ground that they were invariably bloodthirsty and tended to pervert little angels into sadists and lechers. I recalled, too, a similar movement to ban Grimm's fairy tales on the same ground. And I remembered, out of a score of easily recalled passages from the fairy tales, the Giant's terrifying statement in "Jack and the Beanstalk":

Fe, fi, fo, fum  
I smell the blood of an Englishman.  
Be he alive, or be he dead,  
I'll grind his bones to make my bread.

Millions of children all over the world have read or listened enthralled to these bloodcurdling tales, without any noticeable effect on the delinquency rates. It seemed significant, too, that at the very moment the alarmists were charging that the comic books were increasing child delinquency, the rate was actually declining.

Psychiatrists differ on the emotional response of children to crime-filled comic books. In contrast to the alarmist stand of Dr. Wertham and others, some psychiatrists even see beneficial results in such reading. The latter tell us that crime comics give vicarious release, or catharsis, to the pent-up aggressions in children, somewhat analogous to the Aristotelian catharsis which audiences are said to experience in reaction to well-formed dramatic spectacles.

Perhaps the soundest psychiatric explanation of the impact of comic books on children is the one, based on actual research, which holds that emotionally healthy children are unharmed by them, but that they may aggravate the already morbid feelings of emotionally disturbed, insecure children.

It is true, of course, that a number of children who have committed acts of violence, including homicide, have attributed their offense to comic books they have read. In many cases, such explanations have been advanced in answer to leading questions such as this one: "Did comic books have anything to do with the offense you committed?" What would be more natural for a bewildered and tense child than to grasp at any lead affording an easy explanation for an act he might not understand himself? I do not doubt that, in rare instances, a homicidal technique is actually impressed on a suggestible, disturbed mind by a comic-book story — as it might by a radio thriller, a movie, a newspaper item, or even a Biblical incident. But to single out the comics as *the* menace to juvenile rectitude is as unrealistic as to single out any other medium of mass communication or entertainment for chief blame. Nonetheless, I am gratified that Dr. Wertham's crusade, however narrowly based, succeeded in driving some of the most objectionable comic books out of circulation. I have my own criticism of the generality of comic books I have seen. I am appalled by the blunting impact these colored monstrosities may have on the cultural development of our children.

I am mindful of the fact that we adults tend to foist our own dried-up, funless concepts of "cultural reading" on children who should be allowed broad scope in pursuing their own juvenile pastimes. Still, a random sampling of comic books I picked off newsstands assures me that those who have ignored this form of juvenile literature have tended to underestimate its potentially perverse effect on juvenile culture *generally* while exaggerating its importance as a *specific* factor in delinquency.

In the majority of these misnamed "comic" books, the females are scantily dressed with all curves suggestively accentuated. It isn't the scant clothing that is objectionable but rather the sly, smutty suggestiveness of the pictures. The majority, too, are suggestive of an unconscious but virulent jingoism and racialism: nearly all the heroes are square-jawed Anglo-Saxon American types; nearly all the villains are represented as prognathous "primitive" Negro stereotypes or swarthy, evil-looking foreigners.

One such book I read demonstrates pictorially to the child reader how to gouge eyes with the thumb, choke off the windpipe, kick an opponent in the stomach or shins, flatten his arch with the heel, bite his ears, kick him in the liver area or deliver a punch to his spinal cord — all with scientific precision. The book presents this information under the artful guise of "self-defense," with the explanation that this is the way T-men (Treasury Department agents) render their enemies *hors de combat*. The normal urge of a child to experiment can make such information dangerous.

The furious and often hysterical crusade on the comic books did have some salutary effect. It frightened some publishers into toning down the most scurrilous stereotypes used. It even impelled some of the more sober manufacturers to organize in 1948 an Association of Comic Magazine Publishers as a self-censoring body, somewhat akin to the Johnston office in Hollywood, to strike a balance between the palatable and the profitable. But the basic defects remain.

"Action" is the all-consuming theme of nearly all comic books. Action is usually expressed through crime, acts of violence and gory deaths. Jungle law prevails in them. The characters are the killers and the killed, the hunters and the

hunted. Aggression and sadism are key motifs. Good always conquers evil in the end, but invariably by means of brute force rather than persuasion, love or wisdom. The suggestible child, if he learns anything from the comic book, learns that one has to be hard and tough and wily to win in this world.

There are other cultural arguments against these books. Their language usually is atrociously primitive, with frequent resort to slang or outright gibberish. Reading them is hardly likely to develop knowledge and control of the English language for use in later life; and time spent on these comic books, with the reading habits thus produced, may keep the child from the many great juvenile classics accumulated down the ages.

A very good case, indeed, could be built up against the comic books as a menace to juvenile culture. But no convincing case has yet been developed against these books as a major or even significant factor in child delinquency, in spite of the mounting pile of literature on the subject.

It is undeniable that the comic books play a significant part in the cultural life of the average American child. Stemming from the newspaper comic strips, these picture magazines have proliferated into a mass industry since their first appearance in the mid-thirties. Today, the annual sales of comic books in this country amount to the phenomenal total of 600,000,000 copies. Miss Josette Frank, an authority on the subject, estimates that 70,000,000 Americans purchase such magazines annually.<sup>1</sup> Copies are commonly traded by children, so that each must average about three readers.

<sup>1</sup> Josette Frank, *Comics, Radio, Movies — and Children* (Public Affairs Pamphlet No. 148).

It is further estimated that 98 per cent of the child population aged 8-12 years are regular readers of comic books. It is surprising to learn, through a recent survey in a mid-western city, that nearly half the adult population of 21-30 years of age reads comic books regularly.

But the child — or adult — who spends time regularly reading comic books is likely to spend even more time listening to the radio, with its stress on stories involving crime and violence. He will also go regularly to movies, where the same themes are emphasized. And he will find crime and violence dominating the pictures and texts of the daily newspaper to a degree viciously distorting their place in real life.

Virtually every medium of mass entertainment — radio, movies, press, popular periodicals and books — reflects recognition on the part of its promoters that crime pays off well in dividends. It is significant that, when the cheap mass-circulation pocket book idea was conceived and executed, mystery books immediately sprang far in the lead as consistent best sellers.

The prominent place of crime-and-violence themes was not *inaugurated* by the comic books; it was *continued* by them.

No valid point is made by emphasizing that a certain juvenile delinquent confesses that he or she is an avid comic-book reader; so are nearly all children. The comics, after all, are but one segment of the general juvenile culture to which the average American child is exposed.

## “Who Is My Judge?”

AT THE National Training School in Washington I met George. He was the son of a World War I veteran killed in an industrial accident. In the small mining community where they lived, his mother had tried to support him and his nine brothers and sisters by making dresses. One day George and three companions — all under fifteen years of age — went swimming. On the way home they broke into a Boy Scout camp mess hall and stole some food. The camp happened to be located on federal property. So George and his pals were brought before a federal district court judge. While the boys waited in court for their case to be called, they listened to the trial of a man charged with manslaughter. The man was found guilty and sentenced to three years in the penitentiary. The case of the boys was next on the docket. They looked at the judge hopefully. If an adult got only three years for “murder,” they figured, their act of petty pilfering would rate a month or two at most or, with luck, a reprimand and freedom. The same judge sentenced each of the boys to five years at the federal reform school. They left that courtroom bewildered, embittered and vengeful.

In 1948 a thirteen-year-old boy was sentenced to life imprisonment at hard labor for participating in an armed robbery which netted \$4.84 in cash. A Lexington lawyer, shocked by the mechanical procedure which led to this harsh judgment, took an interest in the case. He found that no-

body connected with the court had even bothered to check on the boy's background before his trial, conviction and sentence. The lawyer finally managed — *after* sentence was pronounced — to have a county social worker sent to the boy's home to investigate. What the welfare worker uncovered was a tragically long history of deprivation suffered by a frail, sickly, emotionally upset and terribly insecure child. "The boy needs love, security and sympathetic understanding," the worker reported.

Largely on the basis of this report, the youngster's life-term sentence was set aside and he was sent to the late Father Flanagan's Boys Town. But were it not for a sympathetic lawyer's intercession, that boy of thirteen would have faced a bleak lifetime at hard labor behind prison walls.

It was mainly to prevent such handling of children on the cold basis of "criminal justice" accorded to adult offenders that juvenile courts were set up. Today, an estimated 275,000 children involved in delinquency cases pass through these courts annually, in addition to the hundreds of thousands of dependent, neglected and handicapped children "processed" in the same courts.

The fiftieth anniversary of the first juvenile court in the United States — that established in Cook County, Illinois — was celebrated in 1949. Many professional papers were read and published during the year on the general theme of "Fifty Years of Juvenile Court Progress." But close observers of the *actual operation* of our typical juvenile courts today — as distinguished from the theory and philosophy of the institution — shook their heads skeptically and wondered how much actual progress had been achieved in the half-century.



They were aware of the great gap that often existed between practical achievement and ideal goals.

Dean Roscoe Pound once observed that the creation of the juvenile court marked the most significant advance in the administration of justice since the Magna Carta was signed in 1215. As originally conceived — apart from the physical separation of the child from the adult offender — it inaugurated the concept of the court as a social rather than a penal or police agency. Its main purpose was to help, not to punish, even those found to be delinquent. It repudiated as a contradiction in terms the idea of a "juvenile criminal" or "child crime." It was to reach out beyond the police system into the community for co-operative effort with child-care and other social agencies. Those who came before it had the status of wards of the state. Hearings were to be instituted by petition rather than by formal complaints or indictments as with criminal cases. Hearings were to be informal. Each case was to be decided on an individual basis, and disposition was to be made on the basis of the particular child's personality regardless of the character of the offense. The juvenile court system, ideally, represented what Pound called the "socialization of justice." Others have called it a symbol of "personalized justice."

Juvenile Court Judge Paul W. Alexander of Toledo, in his 1944 presidential address before the National Council of Juvenile Court Judges, observed that children's courts, like the children they are set up to serve, "are more often than not housed in dark, dingy, dirty and inadequate quarters." Alexander proceeded to explain why the juvenile court judge must bring to his job qualities not required of other judges, in these words:

“He must be motivated by the spirit of altruism and self-sacrifice; he must be imbued with a love of humanity in the flesh, *en masse* and individually; he must be impervious to a constant barrage of human wilfulness, weakness and woe, and never become case-hardened. . . . When issues of fact arise he does not have a jury to whom he can pass the buck. He may not even be slow to anger — he must be a total stranger to it. . . . He must have — at least it would be nice if he could have — the wisdom of Solomon, for the answers to his problems are not to be found in any lawbook. It is one thing to know the law. It is something else again to know how to apply it in juvenile court, for there must be applied not only man-made law, but the moral law and the laws of social science, psychology, psychiatry and in general the laws of human nature.”

Most of us would be satisfied with fewer attributes of the demigod. We would settle for a man who has been specially trained for the delicate and difficult task, who has some insight into child psychology and social forces, and who has a genuine interest in and liking for children.

But what is the true portrait of the typical juvenile court judge, who holds in his hands the destinies of children, whose judgment can make or break a child?

A number of juvenile court judges are wise, understanding and child-loving. One thinks of the great pioneer, the late Judge Benjamin Barr Lindsey of Denver and Los Angeles. On the contemporary scene one conjures up perhaps a score of outstanding jurists, like Justine Wise Polier, Dudley Sicher and Hubert Delany of New York; Paul W. Alexander of Toledo; Gustav L. Schramm of Pittsburgh; and George W. Smyth of Westchester County, New York.

But many more are ill-trained, and ill-fitted for their tasks. The blight of partisan politics hangs heavy over the juvenile courts. Most of the judges are chosen by election, with the electorate knowing little or nothing about the qualifications of candidates. When selection is made by appointment, it is most likely to be determined by political affiliation rather than juristic fitness. The late Mayor LaGuardia of New York, in an oft-quoted statement, frankly declared with reference to his appointment of a juvenile court judge later identified as a rabid supporter of a notorious "hate group": "When I make a mistake, it's a beaut."

In most communities boasting separate juvenile courts, their judges are regarded as forming the lowest echelon in the judicial hierarchy. Appointment is likely to be considered one of the lesser plums to be tossed to party-faithful lawyers. The "better class" attorneys seeking judicial honors usually disdain running for a juvenile court office; it has no glamour and offers a very poor springboard for promotion to higher courts. The benches of high status are most apt to be in those courts dealing with property rather than with human lives. In many ways, the juvenile court is one of the most important in the community, but it is the least appreciated, the most niggardly financed, the most abused. It takes a lot of heart, humanity and self-sacrifice for a first-rate jurist to accept the role of juvenile court judge, and to stick to it for any length of time.

Many judges — in a system where they rotate in presiding over juvenile court, as a minor part of their judicial duties — make no secret of the fact that they dislike and even detest that function. There are many who look with loathing at the "nasty little brats" who parade before them. There are

sadists among them, who wreck many a child's life. There are those who delight in playing cat and mouse with the frightened child brought into their chambers. There are those who make a fearsome pulpit of their bench, opening up vistas of hell, with fire and brimstone, to the terror-stricken child; they measure their success by the amount of hysteria produced. There are pontifical sermonizers who impose their platitudes endlessly on their helpless juvenile audience; and there are the smug Pollyannas who are convinced that problems of delinquency are solved by telling the erring child to "go and sin no more" or to read a Bible chapter a week for six months. Many of these judges can turn horribly baleful looks on children who return to court even after being exposed to a syrupy sermon. Their vengeful demeanor is apt to damage a child's personality irreparably.

Those who mistake sentimentality for love — who are content to set children adrift in their sick environments with a fatherly lecture or a recital of saccharine poetry — are often as dangerous as the frankly sadistic.

I know some juvenile court judges who admit they have never visited the institutions to which they commit children. Others are remarkably ignorant of community resources for handling delinquency problems and make no effort to learn what they are and what they do. As a result, these men frequently place children in environments certain to ruin them. Many still regard social workers, probation officers and psychiatrists as unnecessary and even harmful frills. Some even bar these professionals from their courtrooms.

The very nature of the juvenile court clothes its judge with personal power given to no other judge. This power can be wielded safely only by specially qualified men and women.

In other hands it becomes a dangerous impetus toward justice by personal caprice.

Many juvenile court judges are extremely responsive to political pressure. A ward heeler's request may have more weight than a probation officer's report or a social agency's recommendation. Political expediency may tip the scales one way or the other even when a child's life is at stake. Several years ago, in a midwestern city, I was discussing with a probate judge the case of a fifteen-year-old boy charged with homicide. This judge had in his hands the power to remand the boy either to juvenile court or to criminal court, where the boy would be liable to a first-degree murder trial.

"What are you going to do with the boy?" I asked.

The judge replied, reflectively and off the record:

"It's a tough decision. I'm right in the middle of a campaign for re-election. The public is aroused by this killing. I'm sure to lose lots of votes if I send the boy to juvenile court. I'll just have to remand him to the criminal court for trial. It's too bad, but I'll have to do it."

The lesser personnel of juvenile courts are usually chosen on the basis of faithful service to the party in power rather than that of special qualification. In a place where the child meets destiny at a most critical moment of his life, he is apt to find himself surrounded by sneering, uncomprehending, cynical political hacks.

The probation officer is a key figure in the juvenile court setup. His report on a child's background and prospects — followed usually by his personal recommendation — serves as a main basis for the judge's disposal of a case. His follow-up work may be the keystone in a child's rehabilitation.

But many courts lack probation officers. In others, untrained and ill-suited volunteers perform the function. In still others, the jobs go to the lowest levels of ward heelers as political rewards. The late Chief Justice Charles E. Hughes of the United States Supreme Court, said of the appointment of probation officers: "There is no room here for more place-hunters or political derelicts." Judge Alexander, in his aforementioned speech before the National Council of Juvenile Court Judges, said:

"Generally speaking, a juvenile court cannot be expected to rise above its chief probation officer. From this it follows that a court cannot be expected to rise above its judge, as the judge is responsible for the officers.

"The most glaring instances coming to my attention of a judge selling his court down the river for political reasons are one who insisted upon a taxi driver for his chief probation officer, another who appointed a barber, and another a dog-catcher. The most impressive reason advanced before a legislative committee for retaining the taxi driver was that he ought to make a good probation officer because he knew all the country roads!"

Judge Alexander added, with further reference to the juvenile court judge:

"He is caught between the upper millstone of duty and the nether stone of self-preservation. Yet that is the situation judges will be placed in as long as America continues to elect its judges and tolerate the spoils system. Although a candidate's party affiliation cannot conceivably have the remotest bearing on his judicial qualifications, it is still taken for granted in most jurisdictions that he must have a party affiliation. In other words, to be elected he must have

organized political support. The price he pays for this support is patronage — jobs for the faithful.”

Thus the delinquent child again becomes the helpless pawn of party politics. The juvenile court becomes another station along the Via Dolorosa of our rejected children.

In 1923, after two years of intensive study, a committee appointed by the United States Children’s Bureau drew up a set of juvenile court standards which was adopted by the bureau and the National Probation Association. That set of standards — covering the function of the court, qualifications of the judge, jurisdictional scope and auxiliary facilities — has been accepted as proper, with slight amendment, during the past quarter-century. A model Juvenile Court Act was drawn up by the National Probation Association on the basis of these standards. Not a single state has a juvenile court law measuring up to this model in all respects, even today. Only 19 of the 48 states even approximate these standards. Professor Paul W. Tappan, in an excellent study of court jurisdiction,<sup>1</sup> notes that only New York and New Jersey among all the states provide numerous juvenile and domestic relations courts differentiated from the remainder of the court system, with some degree of specialized and expert personnel. In 40 states the juvenile authority is part of some court serving other functions as well. Most of the latter also have criminal jurisdiction, with the juvenile “business” comprising only a small fraction of the total work. The juvenile courts are usually located in the same building as courts of

<sup>1</sup> “Children and Youth in the Criminal Court,” published in the special Juvenile Delinquency issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science*, January 1949, pp. 128–36. This informative issue was edited by Professor Thorsten Sellin.

adult jurisdiction, and sometimes in the same room as the criminal court, used for juvenile hearings only during a certain period of the day or week.

In most states, the jurisdiction of juvenile courts extends to children up to eighteen years of age; but the upper age limit is sixteen in some, seventeen, nineteen, and twenty-one in others. Furthermore, there's a catch in nearly all juvenile court laws which opens up a wide area of confusion and conflict. In most states, children charged with certain types of offenses (capital offenses, for instance) may or must be tried in adult criminal courts. It happens occasionally that jurisdiction over a particular juvenile offender becomes the center of bitter conflict between juvenile and criminal court officials. Some states exempt certain counties from their child delinquency laws, allowing the latter to set up their own age limits. Thus, a seventeen-year-old boy caught stealing in one Florida county is adjudged a juvenile delinquent and brought to children's court; another seventeen-year-old boy apprehended for the same act in the neighboring county is adjudged an adult and tried in a criminal court.

Juvenile courts are supposed to be courts of equity. But in many the procedure is barely if at all distinguishable from that of criminal courts. The "juvenile court" becomes a fatuous fiction when a judge steps down from his criminal court bench, walks into another room of the building and, wearing the same robe, fixed with the same mind-set, holds court for children. Tappan describes the establishment of a "juvenile court" in a certain Florida county not long ago where a judge was hired at a salary of twelve hundred dollars a year and a probation officer at seventy-five a month. A few months later the jurisdiction of this children's court



was turned back to the county judge, and the probation officer's duties to the sheriff. Tappan asks, pointedly:

"How beneficial to child welfare was the establishment of this juvenile court — or many another similar adventure? How much was lost by its abolition?"

The panel on juvenile courts, administration and detention facilities of the 1946 National Conference on Juvenile Delinquency drafted a series of recommendations for improving the prevailing system. Here are some of the major ones:

1. Every state should review its juvenile court law, comparing it with the Standard Juvenile Court Act with a view toward bringing the existing law into line with the model, insofar as possible.

2. Every community should have available to it a juvenile court whose protection and services are accessible to all children who need them, regardless of whether they live in urban or rural areas. This court should have:

(a) Jurisdiction broad enough to permit it to deal adequately with children's problems, and with adults contributing to them, including jurisdiction in nonsupport cases.

(b) A judge selected because of his special qualifications for juvenile court work, including character, legal training, knowledge of social problems and resources, understanding of child psychology and ability to deal successfully with children and their parents. Separate courts with full-time judges are preferable in counties containing large cities or where it is possible to create juvenile court districts combining the work of several rural counties.

(c) The services of social workers qualified by personality, training and experience to deal with children, selected through competitive examinations, and provided either as part of the court's own staff or through co-operative arrangement with another agency such as the Public Welfare Department.

(d) Adequate physical facilities and equipment that facilitate the work of the staff and provide privacy in interviewing parents and children and for hearing cases.

(e) Procedures that are equity and not criminal in nature.

(f) Policies with regard to intake and to detention that are clearly understood by the court and the law enforcement and other agencies that use the court.

(g) Detention care facilities, institutional or foster family, operated by the court or in close relation to it so that children and youth who need such care may be held apart from adult offenders and outside of jails.

(h) Provision for social study prior to court hearing, which includes study of the child himself, his physical, mental and emotional development; study of his environment; an estimate of the essential causal factors responsible for his behavior; and in the light of this estimate recommendations for treatment.

(i) Hearings in children's cases held privately and promptly, and with as little formality as possible.

(j) Dispositions based upon the need of the child or youth for treatment and in the carrying out of which all necessary and available resources are utilized.

(k) A record and filing system that provides for essential legal and social records and for the safeguarding of these records from indiscriminate public inspection.

One of the most important recommendations of the panel — one urged frequently by most experts — calls for passage in every state of a juvenile court law, statewide in application, establishing jurisdiction and procedure similar to those of the Standard Juvenile Court Act. It also urges appropriations by the responsible state or local bodies to assure adequate administration of the law.

(It has often been suggested that juvenile courts be established and operated as state court systems, in order to assure uniformity and availability. But only three states have

thus far adopted the *state* juvenile court system — Connecticut, Rhode Island and Utah.)

The panel also called upon the United States Children’s Bureau, the National Probation and Parole Association and the National Council of Juvenile Court Judges to increase their research, consultation and information services.

Finally, it urged civic-minded citizens to unite in taking responsibility for seeing to it that basic juvenile court legislation is enacted in their areas and that the court system be operated in keeping with modern concepts of child care.

This chapter would be incomplete without brief reference to the extension — at least in *form* — of the *socialized justice* idea implicit in the juvenile court to other areas of judicial procedure. Almost coincident with the rise of children’s courts was the development of family or domestic relations courts, where family problems that formerly were brought before criminal courts are now often adjudicated on a social and nonpunitive basis. In many localities, juvenile and family (or domestic relations) courts are united in a special judicial system.<sup>2</sup>

Another significant development has been the establishment of socialized courts, with a minimum of legal procedure, for youthful offenders in the “twilight zone” between juveniles and adults. Various known as youthful offenders’ courts, boys’ courts, girls’ courts, wayward minor courts, adolescent courts and the like, they extend to older youths (usually between seventeen and twenty-one years of age)

<sup>2</sup>For an informative summary of the status of these setups, read Alice Scott Nutt’s article, “Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts” in the *1949 Social Work Year Book* (New York, Sage Foundation).

the same informal processes, seeking to avoid the stigma of crime wherever possible, as those governing juvenile courts. That their lofty goals are not always attained in full is reflected in recent critical reviews, as in Paul W. Tappan's *Delinquent Girls in Court* (New York, 1947), describing the faulty handling of adolescent offenders, mostly sex delinquents, in New York City's pioneer Wayward Minor Court, now known as Girls' Term Court.

A significant development in youthful offenders' courts is the growing utilization of "deferred prosecution," whereby prosecution of a case is held in abeyance for a definite period, with suspension of all legal process, contingent on the offender's good behavior. The case is closed, without any court or criminal record, if good behavior (supervised by "unofficial probation") is maintained during the period; but the original complaint is processed forthwith should a subsequent delinquent act be committed within the stated period. Known originally as the "Brooklyn Plan" (it was initiated in the United States District Court of Brooklyn, New York City), "deferred prosecution" has been used in many federal cases coming under the Federal Juvenile Delinquency Act.<sup>3</sup>

The socialization of juvenile and youthful offenders' courts continues, but the pace of progress during the past half-century gives us no cause for smug satisfaction.

<sup>3</sup> See Conrad P. Printzlien, "Deferred Prosecution for Juvenile Offenders," in *Federal Probation*, March 1948, pp. 17-22; also Federal Bureau of Prisons, *Annual Report, 1948*, p. 14.

## Scandal in the Jail Cells

OF THE 3000-odd local jails in this country, 4 out of 5 are rated by federal prison inspectors as unfit for human detention. Yet it is conservatively estimated that every year from 50,000 to 100,000 children are confined in these jails, where they usually mingle in indescribable filth with adult drunks, prostitutes, drug addicts, sex perverts and even murderers. One state alone, in a recent year, reported 4000 children in its county jails. This very day, according to one leading expert, anywhere from 1000 to 5000 children are in jail cells awaiting trial or transfer, or sweating out a sentence.

Were our jails cleared of their human inhabitants, many would be condemned as too insanitary to be converted into pens for pigs or barns for cattle. They are the worst of all our penal institutions — the ones that have most stubbornly resisted reform efforts. Still, in many parts of the country, we do not hesitate to thrust children into these vermin-ridden crime-breeding dens.

James V. Bennett, chief of the Federal Prisons Bureau, is no namby-pamby, starry-eyed idealist. He is a hard-headed penologist of many years' experience. In describing our local jails as a witness before a United States Senate committee a few years ago this is the language he used — language he would be justified in using today:

“The situation is a disgrace to the nation. I need not tell

you how demoralizing these institutions are. In a word, they are shocking beyond description. The situation is one which accounts in no small degree for the large number of juveniles who continue in delinquency and who eventually become adult criminals. . . . I am convinced that if we are to attack the problem of juvenile delinquency, one of the most important places to start is by creating decent detention facilities for juveniles."

The principle that juvenile delinquents should be treated separately from adult offenders has become firmly established in the United States. But we still subject thousands and thousands of children to the humiliating, terrifying and often morale-shattering confines of jail cells while awaiting trial or other disposition — sometimes for a year and longer. This happens even in many states which have laws on the statute books forbidding the detention of juveniles in jails. It happens in many large and wealthy cities and in many more smaller towns. One of the most depressing sights I witnessed was the huge "juvenile tank" on the top floor of the Los Angeles County Jail, where scores of youngsters were herded like trapped rats in heavy-barred cells. And this was considered a "model jail," ostentatiously clean, with at least separate quarters for children.

In most instances where juveniles are jailed the excuse is given that there are no other detention facilities for them. Sometimes, however, the real explanation lies in a spirit frankly punitive and even sadistic. A children's court judge in a large Eastern city, for instance, recently expressed agreement with the declaration of a midwestern judge that forty-eight hours of solitary jail confinement for every juvenile offender would do away with repeaters!

Incredible as it may seem, some county jails — including those in the unfit-for-adults category — confine children ten years of age and under! The conditions of youngsters in jail are graphically illustrated by reports from federal prison inspectors. Here are some examples, cited at the 1946 National Conference on Juvenile Delinquency:

“In a city of almost a million people the city authorities have not provided a proper place for holding children. In that jail that day there were seventy-two children, aged sixteen or younger. They sleep in the same cells with adults, they eat in the same dining room, they associate with them during the long dragging hours of the day.”

Another federal inspector tells how he found boys and girls crowded into small cells in a county jail, waiting the long summer through for the juvenile court to convene at the end of August. Some had already served three months in jail, without a hearing, for petty thefts for which an adult would be given thirty days at most.

Still another “dirty, revolting” jail had children under sixteen as one fourth of its inmates. One boy had been brought in thirty days earlier by two railroad policemen.

“The boy’s mother was dead, the father was doing his best to keep the family together,” the inspector reported. “The boy was trying to do his part by salvaging bits of coal from the railroad tracks.”

A runaway girl, not long ago, was picked up by the police in a certain town. She confessed that she had escaped from a county prison farm. Her story revealed that the prison farm was terribly overcrowded with woman prisoners, that privacy and sanitary protection were completely lacking, that homosexual attacks on the younger girls were rampant. The

girl described conditions of bad food, filth and vermin, idleness, craven and bestial behavior.

A probation officer who heard the story wrote to a colleague in the city whence the girl had run away, and suggested that he look into the charges.

He received this reply: "I don't need to investigate. It's everything she said, and worse."

Jail inspectors are, almost without exception, a pretty hardened group — they have to be, to stomach the conditions they encounter in their calling. But read this excerpt from one inspector's report:

Today I found a ten-year-old boy in a cell one door removed from two older prisoners. The youngster told me he had been picked up for refusing to go to school and had been committed to jail by the juvenile court judge. I was deeply touched by the plight of this little boy, who cried and begged to be released, promising me that he wanted to go back to school.

From another report on a jail in an unnamed state:

There were in the county jail yesterday fifty-three juveniles seventeen years of age and under. There is no wonder that murder, violence, perversion, cruelty and torture go on. Sometimes thirty boys are locked in a dark cell-block together. . . . The citizens need not be surprised if, after being treated like animals, they behave like animals in the jungle. God only knows what is going on there — the sheriff and the jailers don't.

It is disgraceful for any community to be forced to say it sends its children to jail because it has no better detention facilities. It is even more disgraceful for a community to belong to that category referred to by the Juvenile Detention Committee of the 1946 Conference in these words:

"In many communities the jailing of children continues



because it is believed in. . . . The myth that to jail is to reform still has a firm grip on some authorities and on large segments of the population.”

Hundreds of children now held in jails are there because they have been committed to state reform schools which are too overcrowded to receive them. By the time the reform school gets these jailed children, rehabilitation already has two strikes against it. Many of the reform school children I talked to — especially in the California institutions — were particularly embittered about lengthy detention in jails prior to their transfer. Those in California felt most unjustly handled, because the time they had spent in jail was not taken off their minimum reform school “sentences.”

The aforementioned Detention Committee of the 1946 Conference called attention to a particularly sordid aspect of the exploitation of troubled children for profit when it observed:

The fee system whereby payment is made at a daily rate for the care and feeding of each jail inmate has resulted in much unnecessary jail detention. It is to the obvious advantage of the sheriff to keep the jail as nearly full as possible and to have children who are arrested during the evening held for release the following morning.

## Detention Homes — Children in Cold Storage

MANY COMMUNITIES, ashamed of locking up children in common jails, have established special "detention homes" where alleged juvenile delinquents (as well as homeless, dependent and neglected children) may be kept pending appearance in court or disposition after court hearings.

These communities think their duty done when they have separated the child from the adult offender. Yet Sherwood Norman, field consultant of the National Probation and Parole Association, after a nation-wide study of detention homes recently, was impelled to say:

"Most detention homes in America today are suspiciously like children's jails, in spite of the well-meaning people generally in charge."

A survey conducted several years ago in California, by Ruth S. Holman and Ralph G. Wales for the California Advisory Committee on Detention Home Problems, concluded:

The verdict is almost unanimous that detention homes fail in meeting the needs of the various communities.

Norman gives, as one example of the "better" detention homes, a place where twenty to thirty boys and girls of all ages up to seventeen — neglected, dependent and delinquent — were locked up day and night without supervision. The

girls, mixed indiscriminately, roamed the second-floor quarters locked away from the rest of the building. The boys, including an eight-year-old neglected youngster, a ten-year-old feeble-minded boy and the sixteen-year-old member of a burglarizing gang, milled around their locked quarters day and night.

As Norman observed:

“The detention home does what it was planned to do — it keeps youngsters away from adult offenders, keeps boys away from girls, and its barred windows and brick walls have stood firm against most escape attempts. Although boys’ and girls’ quarters are in terrible disrepair and both gloomy and barren, the place can be made clean enough to meet the eye of the visiting board.”

In another detention home Norman found more than thirty girls, aged nine to sixteen, living in a perfect fishbowl under watchful eyes day and night. They were allowed no private possessions, no private words, no private actions. No girl could own a bobby-pin for fear it might pick a lock. By day, the girls scrubbed, polished and dusted endlessly save for a repetitious routine of cards, checkers and comic books in the “dayroom.” At night, their clothes were taken away and locked up.

Each girl had to line up in silence, be counted and searched, several times a day. She had to line up to use the bathroom at stated intervals. The average girl spent three weeks in this place of “cold storage.”

Norman, toward the end of 1948, inspected the detention facilities in a large midwestern city. This city has a model juvenile court setup. It has excellent judges and a fine psychiatric clinic for disturbed children. But its juvenile deten-

tion home is a typical "cold storage" jail with no leisure-time program for its forty children, long hours of pent-up silences, practically no furniture but benches and beds, and with inadequate medical supervision. Children infected with venereal disease are locked up in the adult jail during treatment.

The Juvenile Detention Committee of the 1946 National Conference on Juvenile Delinquency disclosed in its report many cases of cruelty toward children in such places.

In one detention home, a county physician found dark blue bruises about four inches wide on a fourteen-year-old boy held for a court hearing. The superintendent admitted using the paddle. In another case, a twelve-year-old boy was found beaten with a belt by some older boys because he had neither money nor cigarettes to give them.

"What good does it do to take boys out of jail if we put them instead into carelessly run detention homes where kangaroo courts spring up again and again?" the report noted.

The committee's report described two variations of the typical detention home. The first kind is featured by poor building, lack of segregation, understanding and low budget, with all types of children mixed "in bull pens and crime schools." The second kind has a fine building as a show place, with too many children handled by an untrained staff.

The result [concludes the report] is a vicious system or regimentation completely at cross purposes with everything we know about making useful citizens out of erring youth. . . . These are the majority of detention homes in the United States.

We are disturbed when children meet with barrenness, hostility, cruelty and immoral influences in their own homes. And yet in detention homes, such as those described, thousands of

children a year meet concentrated conditions of barrenness, hostility, cruelty and immoral influences, and are confused about what society — the law, or the court — really wants for its children.

In 1945 Dr. Fritz Redl, the noted psychologist specializing in child delinquency problems, visited the Detroit City Detention Home, through which every year some eight thousand children passed, as a member of a committee on youth problems appointed by Detroit's mayor. Immediately after the visit, he wrote a blistering report significantly entitled "How to Mangle a Soul." Dr. Redl's report teemed with such descriptive language as "emotional starvation," "physical frustration," "torture through silence," "choking the mind," a "cold-storage warehouse for children." His critical adjectives could have been applied appropriately to the great majority of detention homes.

Yes, the typical detention home is part of the belt line on which society manufactures hardened criminals from the raw material of reclaimable children in trouble.

In my rounds, I saw only three detention homes that could be rated as good. One of these, Juvenile Hall, operated by the city of Los Angeles, could be called good only by comparison with the bad, or typical, detention homes. Its director, David Bogen, impressed me favorably. He was a warm, outgoing personality with enthusiasm and a fundamental sense of decency. But he was coping with a paradoxical situation of increasing difficulty. Superficially, Juvenile Hall looked like a beautiful place, with Spanish-type architecture, lovely patios and inviting palm trees. But within the seven acres it covered, the "cottages" were bulging with three hundred children — dependent, neglected and delinquent, of

all ages and in all conditions of emotional stress. Bogen told me that it was ill-suited, architecturally, for its purpose from the start. Barbed and wire netting fenced in the place to cut down escapes. Gloomy-looking isolation cells were used for the more difficult children, and harshly repressive methods were used on others. The limit for keeping children in Juvenile Hall was supposed to be two weeks, but many children were kept there for months at a time because of the lack of other facilities, delays in trial or transfer, and other reasons. The institution usually was overcrowded; the overflow were being thrown into the common jail.

For a place harboring 300 children, Juvenile Hall was weirdly quiet at the time of my visit. The faces of most of the children were touchingly sad, and the unseemly silence helped to explain why.

At Juvenile Hall, as in many other detention homes (and jails), there were many children who had committed no wrong act but were, indeed, the victims of adult crimes. They were being detained as material witnesses in adult criminal cases. The California Special Crime Study Commission on Juvenile Justice, in its final report of June 1949, alluded to this situation:

When adults are on trial for crimes in which children are involved it frequently happens that children are held in detention over long periods of time while waiting to give testimony. . . . When care is not exercised to protect the welfare of the child, trials are delayed and postponed over long periods of time during which the accused is usually free on bail and the child remains in detention long after his own welfare requires his release.

As a step toward minimizing this evil, the Commission recommended that "criminal courts give priority to the hearing

of cases in which minors held in detention are material witnesses.”

In contrast to the flashy exterior of Juvenile Hall, New York City's Youth House, in the heart of the East Side slum district, looked like a horrible place in which to stuff children. It was located in the middle of a typical slum block, surrounded by decaying tenement houses — about the worst imaginable location for such an institution. It was hastily converted to its present purposes in 1944 from an old private home for mal-adjusted youth. Its barred windows and many padlocked doors added measurably to its depressing, oppressive appearance.

Yet Youth House was generally considered to be the best detention home in the country, a place eagerly visited by experts in child care from far-off areas. Within its walls, I found, many children were getting more love, understanding and trust during their average two or three weeks' stay than they had ever received in their entire lives.

Youth House was lifted above its bad environment, above its own tenement appearance, by a triumph of the human will — by the dynamic quality of its director, the enthusiastic teamwork of its staff and an unusual sense of understanding on the part of its board of directors. It was pervaded by the spirit of tactfully directed love for children long deprived of love. It was a living proof of how much people who care can do under severe handicaps. If its physical setting shamed the world's wealthiest city, its spirited program and impressive results afforded a solid pedestal for pride.

I sat by while a Youth House social worker held an orientation group session with a batch of newly arrived boys, fresh

from children's court. She explained they weren't there for punishment, but for help. A few institutional rules were outlined, as were the house's school and recreational program. The social worker smilingly invited questions, and answered them frankly. The faces, confused and scared at first, gradually lost their tension.

Youth House was divided into several dormitories, based on age groupings and behavior problems. Each had a rumpus room where boys could relax after school hours. The play was supervised, but not regimented, and major stress was placed on cementing group relations.

Youth House maintained its own school — Public School 611, operated by the City Board of Education as part of its regular system, where specially selected teachers temperamentally suited to work with troubled children provided an enlightened program. A Youth House counselor was always at hand to discuss problems with any boy seeking advice.

Youth House was the result of a scandal that shocked New York City in 1944 when a series of newspaper articles by Miss Evelyn Seeley exposed inhuman conditions in shelters operated by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. This exposure led the municipal authorities to withdraw financial support from those privately operated, quasi-public shelters and to establish their own facilities for the temporary care and custody of dependent, neglected and delinquent children. Youth House was hastily set up to receive boys aged seven to sixteen awaiting hearings at or disposition from the city juvenile courts in the boroughs of Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens. Its first month was well-nigh catastrophic, with ninety-three boys escaping from the



place in mass breakouts. That's when they barred the windows and padlocked the doors.

In 1948, there were only three escapes from Youth House. But runaways weren't checked mainly by the bars and bolts. The most important deterrent to breakouts was the dynamic program developed after that disastrous beginning.

The man mainly responsible for developing that program was Frank J. Cohen, a youthful social worker who directed Youth House. Cohen was an unswerving disciple of the philosophy of nonpunishment.

"No boy is punished here for any reason whatsoever," he told me. "We don't whip anybody, or deprive anybody of food. Most of these kids have had a bad enough beating from life before they got here. We don't gush over them. We don't overwhelm them with sentimental sympathy. But we let them know we trust them, and that we'd like them to trust us. Often, a boy's stay in Youth House marks his first contact with real trust and understanding. Most of them respond after a while."

The day before my visit to Youth House, a twelve-year-old boy had suddenly punched another boy on the jaw, for no apparent reason. The aggressive child was taken into the director's office, where he sullenly invited punishment.

"I don't care what you do to me," he said.

Director Cohen told him there would be no punishment, and invited the boy to talk it over. In a few minutes, the lad was in tears, telling how his mother had reneged three times in succession on promises to visit him. He had sat for hours, with mounting tension, waiting for an expected visit. The explosion occurred when he realized his mother wasn't coming. Cohen phoned the mother immediately, put the boy on

the wire, obtained a *sure* promise to visit, and sent the boy out, greatly relieved.

Disturbed and beaten-up children were not, of course, converted into juvenile angels in the two or three weeks they spent at Youth House. Some were troublesome hellers all during their stay. But whatever the provocation, nobody was punished. The director or one of his staff members talked to the offending child, encouraged him to reveal "what was eating him," allowed him to let off steam, and tried to give him insight into his obligation to play fair and square in his community, Youth House.

"We try to build our program on mutual trust, and it works," Cohen explained.

And one saw the truth of that statement mirrored in the faces of the children. Those newly arrived were suspicious, resentful, frightened, tense. The tension gradually eased, the cold armor of distrust thawed out under the warm rays of unreserved friendliness. The average child at Youth House left knowing that he didn't live in a completely hostile world, that there are some decent and understanding people in it, that one didn't have to keep his dukes up constantly to ward off enemy blows, and that there were ways of living together in trust and friendship.

How long that feeling lasts — why, that is another matter. Two or three weeks is a brief interlude in the life of the developing child. From Youth House he might go to a state or private reform school, or to a foster home, or back to his own home and the old environment — all way stations where he would linger longer on his road of destiny.

But one thing would be certain: the stay at Youth House wouldn't have harmed him. He wouldn't have wasted his

brief time in bitter idleness or demoralizing repression. He would have been given a glint of hope, a fleeting insight into his personality and his problems, an encounter with people he could trust and who trusted him. That encounter, however brief, would be constructive. If it had any impact at all on his developing personality, it would be an impact for good.

I experienced an equally favorable reaction when I visited Girls' Camp, New York City's detention home for girls operated as the distaff annex of Youth House. Girls' Camp, established in 1945, was located on a twelve-acre site on Welfare Island in the East River, surrounded by assorted municipal hospitals and a home for the aged. In this strange setting, as at Youth House, intelligent direction and loving care combined to develop a first-rate program for children in trouble. The camp had served as a convalescent day-care center before its reconversion.

The girls at the camp (there were seventy there) generally had deeper emotional problems than the boys at Youth House. Most of the girls had been rejected by their own parents, who brought them into court with complaints like these:

"She's just no good. We want her to be put away. And we don't want her back. We're through with her."

"I can't control her. She won't go to school, and won't obey her parents and won't help me in the kitchen. And she runs around with too many boys."

"She's a bad child, and I've had my fill of her. Send her away. I don't want to have anything more to do with her."

Most of the boys, on the other hand, got tangled up with the police, were defended by their parents, and had at least the comforting thought that they were wanted at home and

would have a home to return to when their "trouble" with society was settled.

Parental rejection is much harder for children to bear than is conflict with the impersonal law. That makes the problem of handling delinquent girls all the more difficult.

Girls' Camp received its charges at a critical moment in their adolescent careers. They arrived at the camp tense and confused, often hopeless and helpless. They were waiting for something to happen, not knowing what, and were building up defensive, devil-may-care attitudes. The world, including their own family, was against them. They were susceptible to waves of hysteria. Their morale was almost completely shattered. Life seemed pointless and aimless. They developed a mask of indifference and even of callousness, to shield themselves from further emotional blows.

The staff that met them at Girls' Camp enveloped these youngsters with love and understanding. Seldom had I seen a staff so driven by decent attitudes toward children in trouble. The director, Miss Alice Overton, was a trained social worker with long experience in handling girls with problems. Like her superior, Frank Cohen at Youth House, she had a realistic understanding of troubled adolescence, free of sentimentalism and idealistic nonsense. Her past experience had not made her callous to the needs of children. She knew that punishment and the fear of punishment had never worked as a rehabilitative device. She shared with Cohen the nonpunitive approach to delinquent behavior. That approach worked at Girls' Camp as it did at Youth House.

Miss Overton had surrounded herself with a staff of young and vigorous workers, believing in the same tenets of treat-

ment, and applying those tenets with impressive teamwork. The girls themselves were made to feel a part of this rehabilitative team.

“For once in her life, the Camper has social status,” Miss Overton explained. “She finds herself in a society which needs her effort in order to function.”

Both Youth House and Girls’ Camp provided me with a perplexing paradox: experts generally urge, and justly so, that children be checked out of detention homes as speedily as possible. But in such rare places as these two, the pity is that the girls and boys cannot be maintained for months instead of only two or three weeks. Many children could be permanently buttressed for a good life by longer exposure to the thawing-out programs that prevail there. It is hard on topnotch staff members to see the youngsters taken away just as the results of wholesome treatment are becoming manifest.

Youth House and Girls’ Camp were the shining exceptions to the general rule of drab, debilitating detention homes. Would that they were speedily followed as examples by the others!

Both the United States Children’s Bureau and the National Probation and Parole Association have available expert consultation services on the building and operation of detention homes. It’s a pity that more communities do not avail themselves of these services.

The Juvenile Detention Committee of the 1946 National Conference on Juvenile Delinquency recommended that every state, through its appropriate agency, accept responsibility for a state-wide program of detention covering plan-

ning, developing and subsidizing where necessary detention facilities for all the juvenile courts of the state, including those in smaller towns and rural communities. It also urged that state licensing, inspection and supervision of local facilities be effected.

What are the vital elements of a good detention home? After consultation with experts, including Sherwood Norman, the most knowledgeable man in the field, I drew up this formulation:

1. A detention home should not be a general dumping ground for children in trouble. Many children now confined in such places could be better released to their own homes or to foster homes pending investigation and action of the juvenile courts. The number of detained children should always be kept at a minimum.

2. Save where a detention home was a dynamic treatment program, its wards should be released from its custody in the shortest possible time.

3. The most important factor in a well-functioning detention home is a well-rounded staff of *trained* people who like children and know how to get along with them. A palatial detention home would be but a jail without such people.

4. A community's detention home should be especially designed and constructed for its functions. Too many are merely makeshift conversions of places built and used for other purposes.

5. A detention home should be a tide-over place for children in trouble, with an active program of study and treatment based on the realities and limitations of short-term detention.

## The Rejecting Community

A SUPERINTENDENT of a state training school observed, as we were thumbing through some institutional records:

“People blame us when our graduates go wrong. They forget that every child who comes here already represents a failure in the community — of the home, the school, the church, the social agencies, the deprivations, the unwholesome pressures, the sick environments. Even the best of training schools can't be expected to pass miracles.”

Before the child reaches the training school, he passes through a court. We have already noted prevailing weaknesses in our juvenile court system, and the rejecting attitude of many judges. But even good judges are often helpless in the face of community ignorance, apathy and outright rejection. Judge Justine Wise Polier, of the New York City Children's Court, states the problem pithily:

The inability to meet the real needs of children brought before him as neglected or delinquent often leaves the judge with a sense of futility. At such times he is forced to question his role and examine the extent to which he has become a showpiece to cover the tragedies that smash the lives of children or as part of a human conveyor-belt system that passes children on from place to place, out of sight, so that they may not disturb the community's sense of well-being. . . .

The court today is dealing with children who have suffered from neglect at home, in their schools, and in the community. This neglect often has warped their development physically, in-

tellectually and emotionally. No magic or moralistic words from a court can provide such children with the care they need, with a sense of worth, or the feeling that they are wanted in their homes and their communities.<sup>1</sup>

The typical training school, bad as it is, still is only a terminal point in the long chain of rejection leading back to the heart of the typical community. Some experts estimate that at least half of the twenty-three thousand children now confined in state reform schools could have been spared institutionalization if their communities were adequately provided with social agencies for handling their special problems. These children need not have been sent to reform schools if there had been enough adequately trained probation officers to give minor offenders guidance at home, enough facilities for taking care of children during parents' working hours, enough good foster homes, and enough volunteer workers dedicated to the task of helping prevent delinquency or rehabilitating children in trouble.

In rural communities especially, such agencies are frequently lacking. Inordinate numbers of juvenile offenders in such areas are committed to public reform schools solely because local agencies for child care are lacking.

Negro children who get into trouble are special victims of inadequate community facilities for handling delinquents. It is a shameful fact that many social agencies refuse to extend their services to Negro children. The problem child who has a colored skin is thus doubly rejected in his community.

Many a child is rejected by his community long before a juvenile court or an institution has a chance to reject him.

<sup>1</sup> Justine Wise Polier, "A Day in the Children's Court, as One Judge Sees It," in *Federal Probation*, December 1948, pp. 3-7.



Incredible as it may seem, a sizable proportion of the boys and girls in most public reform schools are actually dependent or neglected children who have committed no offense whatsoever. They are committed to training schools because the community is unable or unwilling to provide for them otherwise. They go into a reform school unstained, but often emerge fully trained for criminal careers.

Austin MacCormick not long ago encountered a particularly shocking case of unjustifiable detention in a certain reform school, where he found two beautiful sisters, sixteen and eighteen years of age, with absolutely no delinquency records. Upon inquiry he learned that they had been left full orphans five years earlier by the death of their father, a World War I veteran. The county authorities, with patriotic fervor, were anxious to do something special for the orphans of a veteran — so they sent them both to the state school for juvenile delinquents. There they remained, in an especially repressive setting, with nobody in authority knowing exactly what to do about them.

Many girls and boys with serious mental disorders and defects are committed to reform schools because there is no room for them in public psychiatric institutions or because of rigid unrealistic laws limiting admission to those adjudged legally insane. At the Preston School of Industry in California I was shown the record of a fourteen-year-old boy who had been transferred to the school from the Napa State Mental Hospital. The hospital had diagnosed him as suffering from a severe psychoneurosis. One symptom of his neurosis was a compelling desire to run away. The hospital psychiatrists said they could not keep the boy in their overcrowded, understaffed children's pavilion, but strongly urged that he *not* be

sent to a reform school: he was a neurotic, not a delinquent; the doctors felt that confinement in a reform school would have a destructive effect on his personality. Nevertheless he was committed to the Preston training school where no psychiatric treatment was available. At Preston he was locked up in the disciplinary barracks as a chronic runaway.

The head of an Eastern training school told me:

“We have so many severely disturbed youngsters here that sometimes I think I’m running a psychiatric hospital. Unfortunately, we have no psychiatrists, so we have to use barred rooms in that isolation unit back there.”

Were there adequate facilities in the community for treating mentally and emotionally sick children, they would not need to be sent to reform schools — where repression and punishment only aggravate their sickness, and where they often disturb and disrupt training programs for delinquents.

I found another aspect of community rejection reflected in the training schools. One institutional superintendent showed me records indicating that fully one fourth of his delinquent wards had serious reading problems. Many children are ridiculed as stupid by their peers, their teachers and their parents when they are merely suffering from hearing and eyesight defects that are easily correctible. Who is to blame for the fact that these youngsters often develop feelings of frustration and inferiority, turning into chronic school truants and subsequently becoming involved in serious scrapes? Surely part of the blame belongs to the schools which failed to detect their handicaps — and to the community which tolerated such laxity.

In 1949 I had occasion, as a reporter, to study intensively

the case history of Andrew Sheridan, one of two hired gunmen who died in the Sing Sing Prison electric chair for a murder connected with the waterfront racket. Sheridan, in infancy, had sustained an eye injury which left his vision seriously and permanently impaired. Though of normal intelligence, he never learned how to read, became the butt of ridicule by schoolmates, was considered "dopey," and became a chronic truant. He traveled the standard route of professional criminals who wind up in the electric chair: juvenile reform school, reformatory, state prison, and death house. There were a number of causal factors in his criminal career, but his relatives, his early parole officers, and prison clinicians were convinced — as I was after reading the records — that his ill-treated and misunderstood visual defect was a major contributing factor. Had the community expended a modest sum in remedial schooling for the boy, Andrew Sheridan . . . who knows? . . . a human soul might have been saved for useful citizenship, together with an estimated score of lives snuffed out by his hired gun, not to speak of the tens of thousands of dollars spent by society in trials and prison upkeep during his long criminal career.

Much has been written about our teacher shortage, dilapidated school buildings and equipment and the prevalence of old-fashioned courses of study. As long as we fail to meet the challenge of such conditions, we cheat our children — we contribute to child delinquency as much as the schools do when they fall short of their goal of character training.

When children get too troublesome, the community tends to thrust them behind remote institutional walls where it can forget their existence for a spell. Interest is reawakened

only when some dramatic event — usually of a tragic nature — propels the institution before the public eye.

Take the case of Pikeville, for example. The Tennessee State Agricultural and Training School for Colored Boys at Pikeville was described by Osborne Association investigators in 1940 as “the most desolate and forbidding” institution for delinquents covered in their nation-wide survey. It stands on a mountaintop, seven miles from the nearest highway. The site was chosen because a coal mine is nearby, and ever since the school was established in 1917 the child inmates have mined coal.

For years reports made by horrified experts on conditions at Pikeville failed to arouse a response from the local citizenry. Then, in November 1944, the wife and daughter of the Pikeville superintendent — white persons — were murdered. At last the citizens were aroused. A posse marched on the institution and lynched a sixteen-year-old inmate suspected of the crime. After that they sank back into their accustomed somnolence. In 1945, a committee of citizens led by Bishop E. P. Dandridge inspected the institution and reported to the Governor of Tennessee. Their report stated:

The dining-room was cold, with broken windows and doors, gloomy, dirty and bad-smelling. The food was prepared by the boys themselves. The arrangements were unsanitary. There were no tables. The boys sat on long rough benches, and their plates and bowls were placed on horizontal boards fastened on the back of the bench. The boys ate in silence.

The dormitories were cold, dirty and disorderly. In one room there were forty-three beds for ninety-three boys. Many beds had broken springs or no springs, and in many cases the mattresses rested on the floor. Each bed had a blanket and a mattress — unspeakably filthy. The boys said they slept naked, two or three

in a bed, and this was confirmed by the guards. There is no school of any sort at present. There is no vocational training. There is no religious instruction.

Many civic organizations in Tennessee, white and Negro, tried without success to get legislative sanction for removing the state training school for colored boys to a more appropriate site. However, the Pikeville reform school still stands on its gloomy mountaintop, virtually inaccessible to visitors, but conveniently close to a coal mine.

Every slum district is a concentration point of juvenile delinquency. In Washington, Federal Prisons Bureau Director James V. Bennett said:

“I cannot recall that we have had at the National Training School a single boy who comes from any home in the Chevy Chase area. We receive boys mostly from marginal areas and marginal groups, from homes that can be improved only by concerted community effort, or from situations which are the unfortunate or accidental outgrowth of our social or economic order.”

In Chicago, Clifford R. Shaw told me of the findings of his classic area surveys which demonstrate dramatically the relationship between bad housing, poverty and discrimination against racial, religious and national minorities on the one hand and juvenile delinquency on the other. In certain well-to-do sections of Chicago not a single case of child delinquency came into the courts. In other sections — crowded slum areas near the heart of town — one out of every five children was arrested as a delinquent in the course of each year. And in the worst slum areas, Shaw estimates that as high as 95 per cent of the children are delinquent. Only a

fraction of these are caught. The slum breeds crime as certainly as insanitary conditions breed disease.

The Chicago surveys by Shaw and his associates show also that the amount of delinquency cannot be traced to the racial or national backgrounds of the people living in these slums. The abnormally high rate has remained constant down the decades as Irish have moved out and Germans moved in, as Poles and Italians succeeded Germans, and Negroes succeeded Poles and Italians in turn. On the other hand, as groups have attained better economic status and moved out of the blighted areas delinquency among their children has declined appreciably.

Recently a remarkable survey was made in a New Haven public housing project. The delinquency records of children aged seven to seventeen belonging to families living in the project were carefully studied for some years before and after they moved into the new project. It was revealed that the amount of delinquency was cut in half four years after the families had moved from their slum homes to the housing project.

Any nation and any community which tolerates the social swamps that breed delinquency is rejecting the children exposed to their miasmatic poisons as surely as any parent ever rejected a child.

The Gluecks,<sup>2</sup> in their monumental study of the life histories of 2000 criminals, found that 88.2 per cent of juveniles who appeared in juvenile court continued criminal careers in adult life. They found this figure particularly disturbing, because the 1000 juvenile records they studied (the other 1000 were ex-inmates of reformatories for young men and women)

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 19, Note 4, and paragraphs preceding.

passed through a modern juvenile court — at an age averaging 13.5 years — which had the benefit of consultation from a famous child guidance clinic in Boston. It was obvious to the Gluecks, as it must be to all who read their findings, that the high recidivism rate reflected fundamental failures in community services and agencies for handling juvenile delinquency.

## Mobilizing against Delinquency

IF PIOUS pretensions were transmutable into social action, and high-sounding declarations of purpose convertible into sound deeds, juvenile delinquency would have long ago disappeared as a serious social problem. Perhaps no problem in the whole range of correction and social welfare has witnessed so little performance in proportion to promise, such a proliferation of do-nothing committees and commissions launched on sporadic waves of public interest and left adrift in a sea of public and professional apathy. In many communities I visited, I found that a highly touted "crime prevention bureau" was actually nothing more than an impressive letterhead and a gilt name inscribed on a doorplate.

None can doubt the deep-rooted and widespread public interest in the child delinquency problem. But that interest is too often dissipated in idle speculation, anarchic discussion and misdirected effort. The prevailing confusion over the causes of delinquency too often leads to ill-founded attempts at cure and prevention. The market is wide open for the sale of panaceas, especially if they are offered at cut-rate prices. With rare exceptions, public officials give most fervid adherence to programs with high publicity potentials and low financial expenditures. The search for elusive scapegoats (the parents, comic-book publishers, and others), upon whose shoulders the burden of social guilt can be transferred, de-



tours many a well-meaning reform movement into a dead-end street.

In few other fields of social endeavor are the plain lessons of history so persistently ignored and its demonstrated errors so often repeated. In few others are so much failure and frustration covered by so monumental a façade of community organization. The countless reports by "fact-finding" and "action" committees on "delinquency and crime" that have been gathering dust these many years would fill a large-sized library. Innumerable projects in the study, treatment and prevention of delinquency have been set up on a local, state and national scale during the past few decades. Most of them have been as transient as comets, flashing across the front pages while the "heat was on" the authorities to cope with a recurrent "crime wave," only to disappear quietly beyond the horizon as soon as public clamor ceased.

A major trend that has developed in recent years might be summed up in the word "co-ordinating." Nobody even remotely aware of the vast amount of confusion, duplication, overlapping and wasteful anarchy in the juvenile delinquency field could fail to approve of more co-ordination of effort. But, as used — or misused — recently, the word "co-ordinate" has been enveloped with a magical aura; too many people, lay and professional, have become convinced that to co-ordinate is practically to solve. The idea of a community co-ordinating council, synchronizing the efforts of interested agencies in combatting juvenile delinquency, is basically sound. Hundreds of such councils have sprung up through the length and breadth of the land. But the observer justly asks, in each instance: Who is doing the co-ordinating? What is being co-ordinated? What is the orientation of the "co-

ordinating" group? How, and to what extent, is it being supported financially? Is it really empowered — and prepared — to do a genuine job of co-ordination?

On the basis of what he has observed, this writer is convinced that most community "co-ordinating councils" are merely paper organizations with "token" activities or none at all. Some are not only useless, but actually harmful, in that they lull the public into believing something is being done about a serious problem that really is being neglected. They present the illusion of "forward action" when the responsible authorities are marking time briskly on a treadmill.

The co-ordinating council approach has been developed to an extraordinary degree in California, mainly through the stimulation of the State Youth Authority. Its beginnings antedate by many years the creation of the YA in 1941. The idea was originated a generation ago by that remarkable pioneer in police science, August Vollmer, when he was chief of police of Berkeley, California. Vollmer preached that the police should concern themselves mainly with the prevention of crime rather than the apprehension of the criminal. He solicited the co-operation of the local schools and other agencies in a concerted preventive attack on the delinquency problem. Berkeley was the pioneer experimental station for the community council idea. It was gradually taken up by other towns, notably by Los Angeles, under the leadership of Karl Holton during the 1930's, when the latter was chief probation officer of that city. The Los Angeles community council became perhaps the nation's most active co-ordinating agency against delinquency. Later, when Holton was appointed first chairman and director of the California Youth Authority, he developed a field program for stimulating com-

munity council organization, and placed this program high on the agenda of YA activities. One of the four main functions of the YA is to provide "assistance to local communities in the organization of services for children and youth, with the objective of preventing or decreasing delinquency among youths." The YA has a staff of experts trained in the delicate task of mobilizing community resources against delinquency. These experts are sent into communities as consultants and active organizers, upon request. The community council setup in California is spotty, with several councils acting effectively and harmoniously and others torn by agency rivalries or weakened by lack of organized interest.

Inevitably, as it delves deeper into the preventive field, the community council must increasingly reach beyond the police or correctional aspects of delinquency into primary problems of schools, living conditions, welfare services and the like. Friction between existing agencies often results, sometimes with disastrous consequences. Child welfare agencies tend to resent the "intrusion" or "invasion" of correction-oriented agencies into their preserves.

The ever-expanding activities of the California Youth Authority, together with the pressure for the establishment of similar state-wide bodies elsewhere, has thrown into focus a sharpening conflict between welfare and correctional agencies for primacy in certain areas of child care. This conflict was touched upon in a previous chapter. There can be no doubt that the California YA, on the whole, has done an outstanding job under brilliant and energetic leadership. But the YA, in California, has operated and expanded in the face of a poorly developed child welfare system, a system remarkably weak for such a generally progressive state as California.

It is significant that California's Special Crime Study Commission on Juvenile Justice, in its final report rendered June 30, 1949, points up this paradox in an otherwise glowing account of the YA. This report states:

In California probation departments, under the name of "delinquency prevention," are doing work which in some states well advanced in child welfare is done by county welfare departments. Uncritical acceptance of our existing ways of doing things may easily lead to unbalanced services, for children and families.<sup>1</sup>

Four other states have followed California in adopting, in modified form, the youth-authority idea — Minnesota (1947), Wisconsin (1947), Massachusetts (1948) and Texas (1949).

In Minnesota, I found Governor Luther Youngdahl highly enthusiastic about the State Youth Conservation Commission — created by the legislature in 1947 — when I discussed the juvenile delinquency problem with him in the fall of 1949.

"The YCC means real integration in the child-care field between correctional and welfare people and agencies," Governor Youngdahl told me. "We know the main emphasis must be placed on the social, not on the penal side. We want to get away from the training schools and other manifestations of the institutional philosophy. I am keenly aware of the danger that 'jurisdictional disputes' may develop, and I'm watching the situation closely. This is going to be a teamwork job. The emphasis will be on community organization for prevention, and that means taking account of many factors in child life not directly involved with delinquency.

"To put it on a purely economic basis, without reference to the more important human factors, I figure that every dollar

<sup>1</sup> Report cited, p. 58.

we spend in prevention will eventually save at least five dollars in punishment and treatment.”

Mr. A. Whittier Day, chairman and director of the Minnesota YCC, told me how the new agency, during its first year of operation, had placed on probation 40 per cent of the 545 boys and girls committed to its care by the courts. Before the YCC was created, nearly all such children were committed directly to the state training schools. The new liberal probation policy, Day said, had resulted in reducing the population of the Sauk Center state school for girl delinquents from 317 the previous year to 154.

Like the California YA executives I had interviewed, the Minnesota YCC officials spoke with a crusading zeal, conscious of the fact that they were participating in pioneer experiments. But like their California counterparts — and to an even greater degree — they were painfully aware that the entire program they envisaged was imminently threatened by two ominous facts — shortage of money and shortage of trained personnel. Of the two, the first was felt most acutely in Minnesota, since the operating budget was ridiculously small to support the ambitious program outlined in legislative statutes. As had happened so often before with impressive sounding agencies created by legislative acts, the agency was faced with the possibility of slow starvation through financial deprivation.

When my itinerary took me to Wisconsin in 1949, I learned that the Youth Services Division within the State Department of Public Welfare — created in 1947 through a highly modified and restricted version of the American Law Institute's model youth correction bill — had been buffeted about and battered as a result of an intense jurisdictional dispute.

When one of the recurrent public scandals involving the Wisconsin State Training School for boys at Waukesha broke out in 1948 — with sensational revelations of brutality, neglect and mismanagement — control of that training school was transferred from the fledgling Youth Service Division to its sister Division of Correction within the parent agency, the Public Welfare Department. The rivalry between the two divisions was still bitter, and the struggle for jurisdictional areas still intense, at the time of my visit.

The Massachusetts Youth Service Board, created in 1948, was the result of a legislative compromise that left the enabling law so mangled that it bore little resemblance to the American Law Institute's model bill on which it was supposedly based. The board's functions are vaguely defined, its operation poorly financed. Nonetheless, in spite of grave handicaps the present board is trying to reorganize a backward system and has already made modest gains.

Texas established a State Youth Development Council in 1949, vested with control of the state training schools and authority to conduct studies on any matter affecting the state's children and youth. This council has thus far displayed a commendable tendency to take a broad rather than a narrow approach to delinquency as a symptom of general unmet needs in the child population.

The New York legislature in 1945 created a temporary State Youth Commission — consisting chiefly of state department heads — with the aim of curbing war-stimulated delinquency. Its original life-span was two years. The commission was empowered to render financial assistance — on a 50-50 matching basis — to localities “so that adequate and effective children's services can be locally provided.” It was

also authorized to "plan and put into effect a program which will promote the welfare and protection of children."

The life of the commission was extended in 1947, and again in 1950, for three more years. The agency has not quite come up to the task of planning and putting into effect a state-wide program for curbing juvenile and youth delinquency, but its financial grant has helped many localities to expand existing services for children, mainly in the recreational field. The commission's appropriation for this purpose in 1949 was \$1,900,000, available on an equal matching basis to localities for specific projects.

On a local basis, the City of Chicago has been for years the scene of two interesting experiments in community organization against delinquency. One is the Chicago Area Project, founded by Clifford R. Shaw in 1932 and headed by him since. The project was established in six slum neighborhoods of Chicago with relatively high delinquency rates. According to Shaw, the project has sought . . .

. . . to encourage and aid the residents of these communities to organize themselves into co-operative self-help units and through these groupings to initiate, finance and manage programs of social and educational activities; to assist local institutions and public officials to enlarge and make more effective the services which they render to the community; to take action to suppress or eliminate from the community any conditions and practices contributing to delinquency; and to attempt to establish such relationships with individual offenders and delinquent groups as might facilitate their assimilation into the conventional life of the community.

In short, the procedure has been one which sought to arouse in individual citizens a sense of their responsibility for the welfare

of children and a realization that their united efforts offer the most promising prospect for providing security, protection and the constructive satisfaction of the needs of the children and young people.<sup>2</sup>

The project is based on the idea of neighborhood democracy, working from the bottom up instead of imposing programs from the top down. Its sponsors remain in the background, on the assumption that they are working *with* rather than *for* the people in the community. They seek out constructive leadership from within the area population, hold themselves available for consultation and other forms of assistance, but leave decisions to the local leaders. Through the community committees sponsored by the project, Shaw says, much local latent talent and leadership ability has been discovered and utilized. The committees have demonstrated vitality and stability, he adds, with an ability to gather increasing strength through the years in spite of constantly changing membership. Good results are claimed for the committees in the rehabilitation of child and adult offenders paroled to them from correctional institutions.

Similar in concept but much broader in organizational activities and aims is the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council in Chicago, founded and spark-plugged by Saul D. Alinsky. Located in the low-income districts adjacent to Chicago's stockyards, the council's stated purpose is to "unite all of the organizations within the community known as 'Back of the Yards' in order to promote the welfare of all residents of that community regardless of their race, color

<sup>2</sup> Clifford R. Shaw, "Methods, Accomplishments and Problems of the Chicago Area Project; a Report to the Board of Directors, 1944" (mimeo., 23 pp.).



or creed. . . .” Whereas Shaw seeks out leaders for committee activity, Alinsky strives for mass participation on an almost primitive grass-roots basis. Alinsky manifests a vigorous — one might say almost a violent — distaste for and suspicion of standard social agencies, indicating that the people can handle their own problems, on a community basis, without the “meddling” of outsiders. His passionate belief in grass-roots democracy is outlined in his book, *Reveille for Radicals*.<sup>3</sup>

The passion to co-ordinate, coupled with the magic allure of “crime prevention,” has often led to injurious friction, wasteful duplication and, at times, to disaster. Here is an example:

In June 1947 a Citizens’ Crime Prevention Commission of the Greater Atlanta (Georgia) Area was organized at a meeting of civic leaders called by the Solicitor General of Fulton County. A news story in the *Atlanta Constitution* the previous day (June 1, 1947) had read:

A wide-sweeping citizens’ movement to check juvenile crime in Atlanta will get its sendoff Monday when the Citizens’ Crime Prevention Committee holds its first meeting. . . . The group, organized by Fulton Solicitor General Paul Webb, will meet to study plans for a practical program of community action aimed at halting and preventing juvenile delinquency.

It was stated that the new group would not duplicate the work of existing agencies, but rather supplement such efforts. Before long, however, the Citizens’ Commission *was* duplicating the work of other agencies, creating frictions and antagonisms, and oversimplifying the whole problem of child

<sup>3</sup> University of Chicago Press, 1947.

delinquency with the effect of confusing the public. A well-meaning project, launched by well-intentioned citizens, was once more serving to hamper the attack on juvenile delinquency.

The most effective community-wide citizens' group dealing with the child delinquency problem that I have observed is the Citizens' Committee on Children in New York City. The Citizens' Committee has managed to unite a large number of informed laymen and professionals — physicians, educators, social workers, judges and others — into an effective working team for the improvement of protective and other health and welfare services for children. Headed by three women of extraordinary ability — Miss Charlotte Carr, Mrs. Joseph P. Lash and Mrs. David M. Levy — the committee operates on a study-and-action basis. Besides engaging in long-range planning for children, it conducts day-to-day activities — consulting with public officials on current child-welfare programs, mobilizing public opinion for adequate budgets and desirable legislation and sponsoring research projects leading directly to concrete action. Often its findings are turned over to responsible officials and agencies, with recommendations, and are published only if the desired action is not forthcoming. One of its most effective investigations — a survey of existing shelter care for neglected and delinquent children — was never made public, but it gained the goals it sought. The committee has been especially concerned with improving and expanding foster-home care for children in need and in trouble, as alternative to institutionalization. One of its latest studies, an investigation of truancy in public schools, revealed that much truancy arises from poor curriculum, lack of teacher interest in chil-

dren, and inadequate attention to the special needs of children with physical or emotional ailments. This study bids fair to change drastically the handling of truancy problems in New York's school system.

One of the most significant community-wide experiments in delinquency reduction was a ten-year "control" study of the influence of available treatment facilities in preventing juvenile delinquency. Known as the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study, it was launched in 1937 under the inspiration and through the financial assistance of the late Dr. Richard C. Cabot of Boston, famous alike as physician and philanthropist. Dr. Cabot, a pioneer in the development of teamwork between medicine and social service, had often wondered if some controlled experiment testing the effect of treating child delinquency could not be developed along the same lines often used in medical experiments.

Dr. Cabot helped devise and obtained the necessary financial backing for such an experiment to be tried out in the town of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Later the neighboring town of Somerville was added, and the project became known as the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study (CSYS).

A total of 650 schoolboys in the Cambridge-Somerville area were selected from a list of 1500 boys under twelve years of age who were classified by their teachers as "difficult" or "probably pre-delinquent." The 650 boys were equally divided into two groups, matched boy for boy on the basis of close parallels as to economic, home, personality and other factors. As each two "twins" were paired off, a coin was tossed to see which would be placed in the "treatment" group and which in the "control" group. The 325 boys in the "treatment" group were placed under the supervision of 10

men and women, each trained in social work or an allied professional field. It was hoped that by wise and friendly counsel (each counselor had a case-load of about 32 boys), together with the application of social case work, these "probable pre-delinquents" could be saved for useful law-abiding careers. The 325 boys in the control group, each closely matching a treatment boy, were given no help or guidance by the project. The status of the 650 boys was to be intensively studied at the end of a 10-year period, with the aim of learning how successful such treatment could be as a preventive device.

At the end of the 10-year period (treatment was ended in 1945, the follow-up study done in 1947), the average age of the group was about 20 years (it had been 10½ years at the start). Edwin Powers, director of the CSYS, in a report published in 1949, noted:

A number of these youngsters who were in the lower grades of the elementary public schools when first known to the study are now married and fathers of a second generation. Some are earning good incomes, some are unemployed, some are officers or enlisted men in the Army or the Navy, a few are still in school, while others are in reformatories or prisons.<sup>4</sup>

How did the treated group compare with the control, or untreated, group? Did the CSYS project prevent delinquency?

It was found, at the end of the 10-year period, that about one third of the treated boys were well adjusted socially and — apparently — emotionally. Some improvement was

<sup>4</sup> Edwin Powers, "An Experiment in Prevention of Delinquency," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, January 1949 (Vol. 261), p. 78.

noted over the original situation in about 40 per cent of the treated cases.

Taken alone, the results with the treated boys would appear to have spelled success for the project. *But the after-study showed that about the same percentage of the "control" boys — those who received no special help — had turned out well, too!*

As Powers observes in his report:

A T-C (treatment-control) comparison of official records made within a few years after the termination of the treatment program shows that the special work of the counselors was no more effective than the usual forces in the community in preventing boys from committing delinquent acts.<sup>5</sup>

The conductors of the experiment took solace in one fact: the proportion of treated boys involved in serious delinquencies was less than in the untreated group. At this writing, an intensive study is being made to seek out possible flaws in the Cambridge-Somerville experimental project, and to seek deeper into its possible significance on treatment programs generally.

Another significant experiment in the organization of community preventive and treatment services in the delinquency field was launched in 1937 in the city of St. Paul, Minnesota. The St. Paul experiment was conducted by the United States Children's Bureau, with the co-operation of many local public and private social agencies. Its purposes were mainly two-fold:

<sup>5</sup> *Idem.*, p. 87. See also Helen L. Witmer's paper, "Judging the Results of the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study," presented at the 1949 National Conference of Social Work (mimeo., 23 pp.).

1. To study the prevention and treatment of behavior problems in children.

2. To demonstrate the value of early identification and treatment of incipient behavior problems (including delinquency) in children, before such problems reach an acute stage.

The Children's Bureau selected a particular area in St. Paul, sufficiently limited so that the project staff could become familiar with the community with relative speed. The project — known officially as Community Services for Children — was staffed by several case workers, a psychologist and a psychiatrist. The project was continued for six years (1937-1943). It operated along two major lines:

1. To help orient community child-serving agencies on the importance and methods of finding and treating behavior problems in the incipient stage.

2. To have children with behavior problems referred from schools, police and other agencies to the staff, which acted as a direct treatment, referral and liaison agency for the community. Emphasis was placed on the need for "seeing the child whole," instead of compartmentalizing his problems.

Shortage of staff prevented the project from realizing its original goal to work thoroughly with all child-serving agencies in the area, and organizational differences caused uneven utilization of existing facilities. But at the end of the project, the United States Children's Bureau was able to make this moderate assessment of its results:

The experience of the project shows that minor and incipient problem behavior in children can be identified by the community and that if adequate community services are effectively coordinated much of this problem behavior can be corrected and

modified or, if not susceptible to correction, prevented from developing into more serious forms. . . .<sup>6</sup>

In the nation-wide field the United States Children's Bureau has been an effective force in stimulating improved services for children, including delinquents and pre-delinquents, on an integrated basis. Its field consultants have helped set up and reorganize many useful community projects. It has played an active role in organizing the decennial White House Conferences on Children, which have served as effective forums for discussing general problems touching on delinquency and for inspiring progressive action.

Perhaps the most ambitious single effort at co-ordinating activities against child delinquency on a national scale was the National Conference on the Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency, held in Washington for a three-day period during November 1946, at the call of Attorney General Tom C. Clark. Eight hundred experts, representing many fields within and impinging on the area of juvenile delinquency, participated in the conference. At the end of the sessions, final reports of fifteen panels were submitted and approved. The fifteen panel reports comprised discussions of these subjects: community co-ordination; institutional treatment of juvenile delinquents; juvenile court laws, administration, and detention facilities; role of the police in juvenile delinquency; recreation for youth; housing, community development, and juvenile delinquency; youth participation; citizen participation; mental health and child guidance clinics; case work and group work services; church

<sup>6</sup> *Children in the Community; the St. Paul Experiment in Child Welfare* (U. S. Children's Bureau, Publication No. 317, 1946), p. 158.

responsibilities; home responsibility; statistics; and rural aspects.

These carefully drafted reports, later published in printed or mimeographed form, contain a wealth of excellent observations and recommendations for action. The "action" recommendations of all panels were gathered into a single 136-page booklet, which can be purchased from the United States Government Printing Office in Washington.<sup>7</sup>

Before adjournment, the National Conference created a continuing committee, consisting of thirty-three members, with authorization to "take necessary action to develop and execute plans and programs for the implementation" of the conference recommendations at federal, state and local levels. But, after a vigorous start during which a number of state and local conferences on child delinquency were held under its inspiration, the continuing committee became moribund, and it was finally disbanded in February 1949.

<sup>7</sup> U. S. Dept. of Justice, *Recommendations for Action by the Panels of the National Conference on Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency* (Washington, D. C., 1947).



## Our Crime-breeding Culture

THE UNITED STATES, as Dr. William Healy has observed, is today "the most crime-ridden civilized country in the world." In no other country is the "crime problem" so widely and persistently discussed. In no other have so many "crime-control agencies," public and private, been set up. In no other, proportionate to population, is the crime rate so high, notwithstanding the expensive and time-consuming efforts to put it down.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation estimates that 1,686-670 *serious* crimes were committed during the year 1948. A serious crime occurred somewhere in the land every 18.7 seconds, on the average. During every 2-hour period the clock around, 3 persons were feloniously slain. Each day, 255 Americans were victims of aggravated assault or rape, and 150 robberies were committed. In the course of an average 24-hour period 1032 places were burglarized, 463 automobiles were stolen and 2672 miscellaneous larcenies occurred.<sup>1</sup>

We boast of our bigness in many things. We are proud of our "firsts" among the nations. But we are not proud of our primacy among civilized nations in the matter of crime rates.

The figures have significance for the subject of our study:

<sup>1</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Reports for the United States and its Possessions; Annual Bulletin, 1948* (Washington, 1949), p. 73.

most of those crimes were committed by persons whose careers as lawbreakers dated back to childhood.

What gives the United States the unenviable pre-eminence in criminal activity reflected by FBI statistics?

We have discussed various theories of the causation of delinquency and crime. We have presented some figures on diverse factors that seem to be woven into the web and woof of the delinquency pattern. But we have touched only fleetingly, thus far, on what, I am convinced, is a major pervasive factor in America's juvenile delinquency picture — the impact of the culture itself.

It is a common tendency, in discussing the problem, to focus attention on the "local" factors — the home, the school, the social agencies, the police, the courts, the correctional institutions, the church, or housing and other neighborhood living conditions. All these are important and sometimes decisive factors in delinquency and its control. But too often we overlook the forces that transcend the local community — the forces inherent in our over-all cultural pattern itself.

Ours is a crime-centered culture, important elements of which persistently tend to encourage and to condone criminal activity.

Consider: Crime, as noted earlier, is an ever-popular theme in the productions of our media of mass communication and entertainment — the press, the films, the theater, the radio, and now television. We have already made this point in our discussion of comic books. Look at your radio program for today: it is not unlikely that the greater part of an afternoon's program for child listeners consists of features centered on crime and violence, and that the same may be true of the evening program for adults. In every medium of mass

communication, the purveyors have apparently embraced the policy that crime has a sure-fire fascination for the lowest common denominator among the potential public. It is a moot question as to whether the commercial mass communication media of modern times developed the public appetite for crime themes or merely fed an existing demand. Whatever the origin, the fact remains that the subject consumes an amount of public attention enormously out of proportion to other important factors in American life.

In spite of all the pious lip-service paid to the motto, "Crime does not pay," it is obvious that our traditional attitudes have tended to glamorize the criminal career and even to make heroes of our most notorious criminals. This attitude certainly predates the movies, the comic books, the radio and other media of mass communication. It is reflected, in a significant sense, in the folk tales and ballads that have been woven around characters like Jesse James and Billy the Kid. The threadbare cloak of Robin Hood has often, with little or no historical justification, been thrown around the corpses of cold-blooded killers, with confusing consequences on the impressionable minds of children. Take the opening verses of the familiar ballad about Jesse James:

Jesse James was a lad who killed many a man;  
He robbed the Glendale train.  
He stole from the rich and he gave to the poor;  
He'd a hand and a heart and a brain.

Poor Jesse had a wife to mourn for his life;  
Three children, they were brave;  
But that dirty little coward that shot Mister Howard  
Has laid poor Jesse in his grave.

In the same tradition one might cite the modern ballad, written by the well-known folk singer, Woody Guthrie, about Pretty Boy Floyd, who terrorized the Southwest during the 1930's and was listed as "Public Enemy Number One" by the FBI before his career was terminated by a hail of police bullets:

The outlaw took to the country  
To live a life of shame.  
Every crime in Oklahoma  
Was added to his name. . . .

There's many a starving family  
The same old story told —  
How the outlaw paid the mortgage  
And saved their little home . . .

As through this world you wander,  
As through this world you roam,  
You won't never see an outlaw  
Drive a family from their home.<sup>2</sup>

In both examples, it will be noted, the criminal activities are stated in the ballad, but the facts are overlaid with legends of such deep sentimental appeal that sympathy is strongly drawn to the criminal as hero.

The tradition of the lawless frontier has often been evoked by experts seeking an explanation of our extraordinary tolerance, and even glamorization, of many forms of criminal behavior.

The daredevil exploit, certainly, has invariably been an object of wide admiration, whether perpetrated by an adventurous bankrobber or a pioneer in transatlantic aviation.

<sup>2</sup> Used by permission of the author Woody Guthrie.

The stories of the old Wild West — be they told in the widely circulated dime thrillers, or in standard school textbooks — also do not build a respect for law and order among children regaled with tales glorifying the senseless killing of Indians and the rape of their lands.

At times an entire community or a regional area or perhaps the whole nation will tolerate and even sanction certain forms of criminal behavior, including brutal murder. One need only cite, as examples, the occasional lynching of Negroes in the South the perpetrators of which are not only known but have been photographed in the criminal act — and yet they go scot-free after a pretense of a trial or no trial at all. The mass violation of the Volstead Act throughout the Prohibition Era is a classic instance of nation-wide lawlessness. Today, millions of Americans regularly place racing bets illegally with bookmakers, knowing that they are not only breaking the law themselves but directly supporting huge combines of gambling racketeers operating as crime syndicates and spreading corruption far and wide.

In 1949 I had occasion to conduct a journalistic inquiry into the nation-wide network of organized crime, the results of which were published in a series of articles in the *New York Post*. I observed, at the time, that organized crime has entered a new and more perilous phase. It no longer is controlled by crude, gun-wielding gangsters. The erstwhile gangs have become “syndicates.” They are now big business. Often they operate under the protecting cloak of “legitimate enterprise.” They corrupt not only politicians and police officers but respected businessmen.

Organized crime has graduated from the underworld. Its lords no longer seek the protection of dark alleys but operate

their enterprises from luxurious offices. They hobnob with bankers and industrialists and with famous leaders of the entertainment world. They throw parties and dinners at which judges and other pillars of society appear as if at command performances. They buy and sell judges; they make and break mayors. They control entire local governments. They are powerful influences in state and national politics. They invest in million-dollar real estate enterprises. They have big-name partners and big business fronts.

The names of the big "syndicate" leaders are familiar to many Americans. Millions know about their illegal enterprises. Gambling is undoubtedly the main focus of interest for the criminal syndicates. It affords tremendous profits to the overlords of crime with relatively little risk. These overlords exploit the very common impulse of large numbers of Americans to bet on almost anything. Their major concentration is on horse racing. A relatively few syndicates control most of the illicit sports-gambling rackets in the country. They own and operate networks of race tracks; they own and distribute nationally circulated tip sheets. They operate great networks of "boiler rooms" where bets are laid and race-track results are announced by telephone. They have many thousands of small-time "bookies" on their payrolls. Police officials in many large and small communities are on regular salaries from these overlords and their "subcontractors."

The major operations of these syndicated crime operators are seldom reflected in the standard crime statistics. Murder, rape, burglary, larceny, forgery and other types of measurable crime have been left largely to the solo criminals. The depredations on the public reflected in these statistics represent a very small fraction of the tremendous financial "take"

of organized crime. It is the solo and amateur entrepreneurs in crime who fill our reformatories and prisons and who crowd our courts. The real rulers of the underworld seldom see the inside of a prison, save on occasional visits to apprehended underlings who have had the misfortune to slip out of the strong protective network of the "syndicate."

There is a vast area of criminal activity which appears to be almost immune to the legal and penal sanctions we have set up elaborately against other areas of crime. It throws the whole concept of equal justice into disbalance, with undeniable impact on already distorted public attitudes. Professor Edwin H. Sutherland, the noted criminologist, gave the name of "white-collar crime" to this type of activity. He defined a white-collar crime as "a violation of the criminal law by a person of the upper socioeconomic class in the course of his occupational activities."<sup>3</sup> Included in the category of white-collar crime are frauds committed by bond salesmen and investment brokers, the plunder of public property by huge corporations, the vast traffic in adulterated foods and drugs and in fraudulently advertised patent medicines, with occasionally fatal results to their victims, the wide persistence of illegal fee-splitting among physicians, the illegal giving and taking of graft and bribes in contract negotiations, criminal dishonesty in the legal profession, embezzlement in business, and others. It is estimated that during the grave emergency in World War II more than half of all American businessmen were involved in violations of laws affecting price controls and priority material regulations.

<sup>3</sup> Edwin H. Sutherland, "Crime and Business," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, September 1941 (Volume 217), p. 112.

Such crimes rarely reach the criminal courts; when prosecuted at all, they usually are processed through the civil courts, with little or no loss of social prestige for the culprits even when the case goes against them. A great many cases that pass through the civil courts are prosecutable under criminal statutes, but the socioeconomic status of the offenders is often a determining factor in saving them from the stigma of the criminal trial.

White-collar crimes [says Sutherland] are very prevalent in present American society. No index or rate of white-collar crimes has been officially constructed, but their prevalence has been shown abundantly in many industries by congressional and other investigations of banking, insurance, investment trusts, the stock market, receiverships and bankruptcies, public utilities, railways, shipping, munitions, oil, lumber, milk, meat, tobacco and flour milling. . . .

The financial loss to society from white-collar crimes is probably greater than the financial loss from burglaries, robberies and larcenies committed by persons of the lower socioeconomic class.<sup>4</sup>

More important than the financial loss occasioned by white-collar crimes are the devastating effects on public morale and the promotion of social disorganization when such crimes go unpunished. Public cynicism is spread, reaching down to the juvenile level. The double standard in crime-handling is accepted as normal. What is punished as a crime in one social class is tolerated and even praised as a "sharp piece of trading" in another. The anthropologist seeking clues to American culture in the everyday idiom will find something of significance in the popular question posed between two strangers in the process of getting acquainted:

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.



“What’s *your* racket?”

The same anthropologist might also find significance in an oft-repeated comment:

“You’ve got to give him credit for one thing: he was smart enough to get away with it.”

Our crass materialistic culture places its main emphasis on “getting someplace” with but light regard for the means used in “getting there.” Relatively few among us seem to be particularly shocked by the fact that so many of our Great Fortunes, possessed by the super-respectables of our society, were built by methods that earned their architects the apt description of “the Robber Barons.” Our society is saturated with forms of frank dishonesty, widely accepted as “legitimate” in one or another of our socioeconomic ranks. Professor Thorsten Sellin has observed that millions of dollars are lost annually to our transit and telephone companies by the use of slugs in coin slots. Nation-wide surveys undertaken several years ago by the *Reader’s Digest* indicated that 80 per cent of garage mechanics and 60 per cent of radio repairmen are guilty of frauds upon their trusting customers. “Honest graft” is a self-contradictory expression, but its widespread use affords another significant index to cultural values that play a part in our high crime rate.

As a people, we tend to select those laws we choose to obey and to disregard others with little if any guilt feelings. A case in point is the flagrant, mass and chronic violation of traffic laws by automobile drivers. Again, great numbers among us, in all walks of life, consistently cheat the government in criminal fashion with respect to income tax returns. We often hire accomplices to help us in this moral and legal crime, and we often proceed to boast of our criminal act to our family and friends.

Such aspects of our culture are not calculated to suppress criminal tendencies but rather to stimulate them. I would stress the point that we are here discussing *certain aspects* of our culture, not the culture as a whole. Without this qualification, the foregoing discussion would be, not description, but caricature of our culture. The American culture is complex, complicated and contradictory, growing out of many roots and reaching out in many directions. Needless to say, it has a great deal of beauty, of inspiring idealism, of unique accomplishment. But we would be blind, dangerously blind, not to recognize and properly evaluate those sordid factors in our cultural complex that add up to the civilized world's highest crime rate.

They are the ingredients that poison the cultural wells at which our children drink. They tend to confuse the child, to distort the behavior patterns of many, to activate the process of disillusionment, cynicism, neurosis and delinquency. Professor Donald R. Taft, an outstanding criminologist, has summed up the situation pithily:

We may say that a culture which is dynamic, complex, materialistic, with inconsistencies between precept and practice, with tendency to rate members in accordance with their group membership rather than their individual qualities; a culture which produces slums, breathes the gang spirit, exploits the disadvantaged classes, represses wholly compelling drives, and tolerates behavior in economic and political fields approximating that which it also punishes as crime, so that it may almost be said that each of its members has his racket — such a culture with any given population components would seem liable to produce much crime. This we observe in America.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Donald R. Taft, *Criminology*. Copyright 1942 by The Macmillan Company and used with their permission. Page 288.

The child grows up in a double-faced world, with respect to attitudes toward lawbreaking. In home, school and church, he is taught that honesty is the best policy, that right makes might, that justice is blindly equalitarian, that crime does not pay, that virtue triumphs over sin. In the life around him, he finds that the race for prestige and profit often goes not to the swift, the strong and the wise, but to the crafty and the unscrupulous. He finds the notoriously dishonest enjoying the fruits of affluence in a society that puts a premium on material status. He finds that often an act becomes a crime only when the perpetrator gets caught; the same act can become a matter of boastful pride if the perpetrator manages to "get away with it." In the crowded, crime-breeding slums he often acquires an early sophistication about the "fix" — about the cordial and mutually profitable relationships between neighborhood criminals, law-enforcement officials and politicians. His environment is pervaded with the exudations of our crime-centered, crime-breeding culture.

Under the circumstances, the wonder is not that so many children become delinquent, or otherwise socially disoriented, but that so many manage to grow into sober adult citizenship in spite of omnipresent invitations to corruption.

No realistic program for reducing delinquency to a minimum could possibly be complete without consideration of the need for changing our culture. If we would make our world safe for wholesome childhood, the social cesspools must be cleaned, the social swamps drained; and not the physical environment or the community mores or the troubled individual alone, but the infected culture also.

I have little patience with those experts who stress ex-

clusively the individual child as the focus of preventing delinquency, who are skeptical of "mass" or environmental approaches to the problem, who raise the timeworn question:

"Why is it that, in the same environment — poverty-stricken or otherwise — one child becomes a delinquent and others in the same family or in the same neighborhood do not?"

We do know already that those forms of antisocial child behavior known collectively as "juvenile delinquency" are chronically epidemic in certain areas and are usually associated with certain conditions of living. We can act constructively on that available knowledge *now*, without waiting for the ultimate answers to every question, even those that are legitimate subjects for long-time research.

The epidemiologist in public health does that precisely. He knows, for instance, that there is a connection between such infectious diseases as malaria and yellow fever, on the one hand, and swamplands and stagnant waters where disease-carrying insects spawn, on the other. He knows that epidemics are likely to erupt, or to become chronic, in populated areas where the known disease-producing factors exist. He knows that an epidemic will not necessarily strike down every inhabitant in that area. He knows that some people are susceptible to malaria or yellow fever, and that others are not. He knows that the "susceptibles" may be stricken with varying degrees of virulence, some with mild effects, others perhaps fatally. He would like to know what are the basic factors in susceptibility and immunity, but he doesn't know yet. This gap in his knowledge — which he keeps trying to fill — does not deter him from applying effectively known methods of mass protection. He drains the

swamps and/or destroys the disease-bearing insects. With the elimination of the associative conditions, the disease disappears.

The public health man knows that not all diseases are so readily amenable to environmental manipulation. He has the individual child vaccinated against smallpox, and immunized against other diseases for which similar preventives are known. But wherever possible he uses the mass environmental approach as the cheapest (at least in the long run) and usually the most quickly effective. He keeps using the knowledge he has and keeps seeking the further information he lacks. He does not use one approach or one tool exclusively; his attack on physical disease is many-sided.

Why can't this epidemiological approach be applied as effectively by the expert in social health as it is by the expert in physical health?

Obviously, in this area, our problem extends far beyond the delinquent parent, beyond the delinquent community, to a delinquent society. Any nation that tolerates the social swamps that breed delinquency is rejecting the children exposed to their miasmatic poisons as surely as any parent ever rejected a child. Bishop Bernard J. Sheil of the Chicago archdiocese has ably posed the broader problem:

"All of us dealing with child welfare talk about the necessity for adjusting the child to society," Bishop Sheil notes. "But to what kind of society are we adjusting the child? We have a society in which material success is held up as the highest goal. We have a society in which spiritual and moral values are held in contempt, while the rewards of dishonesty and injustice are more prodigal than ever. In our society countless human beings are deprived of the very necessities

of life and millions of people dwell in hovels that a barbarian would reject. We aim at immediate satisfaction and are feverishly anxious for frivolous pursuits. Is it wise to attempt to adjust youth to such an environment? The problem is not one of adjusting young people to the world; it is, rather, a question of adjusting the world."

In those wise words lies the kernel of the problem, the heart of the ultimate solution. If we are brave enough to cope with fundamentals, we must face our world squarely, evaluate it calmly and set about resolutely to eliminate the polluted wellsprings that poison large numbers of our children.

We must think in terms of a better society, of replacing crime-breeding slums with low-rent housing fit for our future citizens to grow up in; of abolishing that social disease we call poverty; of creating more meaningful social values and moral goals than the shoddy ones that possess so many of us in everyday life; of eliminating the racial and religious discriminations that produce antisocial tensions and resentments; of building community interests in terms of the *society of the child* as well as the society of the adult.

It involves a large-scale operation for developing social health; we have not flinched at harder tasks in the quest for material wealth.















*(Continued from front flap)*

child, rather than hinder him as they now so often do.

The book describes programs in many states, pulling no punches as to what the author has found good or bad in them. Deutsch visited such "reform schools" as the Washington National Training School for Boys, the Illinois Training School for Boys, the "little Alcatraz" at Sheridan, Illinois, Ohio's Boys' Industrial School, the Kansas Girls' Industrial School, the New York State Training School for Girls, and California's reform schools. He found that various varieties of reform, imprisonment and punishment were being practiced, and he questions whether any of them meet the requirements, to say nothing of the ideals, of twentieth-century America.

For parents, teachers, social workers, psychiatrists, judges, this book is a summing up with new light on the huge problem with which they are so vitally concerned. For the average citizen it can mean realization for the first time that he has an important part to play in remedying waste and neglect of young human beings.

*Jacket design by Samuel Bryant*

# ALBERT DEUTSCH

## *Author, Journalist, Lecturer*

Albert Deutsch became the first daily health and welfare columnist in American journalism when he joined the staff of the *Newspaper PM* in 1941. Previously, he had spent a decade in social research, including five years as Research Associate in the New York State Department of Social Welfare. Subsequently, his daily column appeared in the *New York Star*, the *New York Post* and the *Daily Compass*. He gave up his column in August 1949 to seek wider audiences in the popular magazine field. His many crusading campaigns in both the newspaper and magazine fields have gained him national prominence.

Albert Deutsch is the author of **THE MENTALLY ILL IN AMERICA — A HISTORY OF THEIR CARE AND TREATMENT FROM COLONIAL TIMES**, a standard work in American psychiatry, first published in 1937; **THE SHAME OF THE STATES**, dealing with the shocking conditions in American mental hospitals; and **OUR REJECTED CHILDREN**, dealing with the juvenile delinquency problem. He is editor of **SEX HABITS OF AMERICAN MEN**, a symposium of expert comment on the Kinsey Report; co-author of **THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC WELFARE IN NEW YORK STATE, 1867-1940**; and editorial board member and contributor for **ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF AMERICAN PSYCHIATRY**.

Winner of the Lasker Press Award in 1949 for "public information leading to public action in the field of mental health," in the same year Mr. Deutsch received the Polk Award from Long Island University's Journalism School for outstanding reporting in the field of public welfare. In 1946 the National Committee for Mental Hygiene gave him a special citation, declaring: "No newspaper writer is more clearly identified with the field of mental hygiene than is Albert Deutsch." He received special citations from the American Newspaper Guild's Heywood Broun Award Committee in 1945 and 1946 for his series of articles on veterans' hospitals and mental hospitals, respectively. In 1947 the New York Newspaper Guild honored him for "the most distinguished and effective humanitarian crusading in American journalism." *Time* magazine has called him "a power in U. S. medical journalism." Mr. Deutsch was born in New York City in 1905.