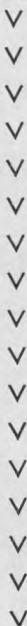


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# UNDERSTANDING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

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MODERN MEDICAL SCIENCE has long since developed beyond the stage in which only the surface indications, or symptoms, of an ailment are treated. The physician of today probes for the underlying cause of disease.

Manifestation of the many complex forms of social maladjustment among children and youth which has been stamped with the term, "juvenile delinquency," should be recognized as a symptom of social and emotional illness. We can attack it effectively only by searching out and correcting the basic flaws in adult social practices which leave the younger generation a prey to the social illnesses that result in what is called juvenile delinquency.

This booklet offers guidance in observing and in understanding the many factors that lie behind the antisocial behavior of children. It is built on the study and experience of child-welfare workers, mental-hygiene workers, social scientists and many other workers trained in observing the growth and development of children. It should prove of value to those concerned with improving the chances of youth for better social adjustment.

Oscar R. Ewing

*Federal Security Administrator.*

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# Understanding Juvenile Delinquency

## What Causes Delinquency?

### Three Boys In Trouble

Jimmy Smith is in trouble again. He and Tom Kelly and that Taglione kid. They were caught stripping tires off a sports roadster.

They "borrowed" it at first just to go for a ride. That was Jimmy's idea when he spotted the key in the ignition. Served the fool owner right for leaving it there. The stripping came later—after they had stopped off at the chili parlor for a hamburger and Peter Taglione had bragged to the big fellows about how they'd done 70 and whipped around corners and scared the women pop-eyed. Jimmy was going to drive the car back as soon as he hit the jack pot on the slot machine. The big fellows thought that was goofy. Supposing the cops spotted him on the way back? No use taking chances. White-walled tires were worth plenty. Knifey Joe knew a guy who would buy them. He'd show the kids where—for a cut on the deal. Jimmy was a little leary of the idea at first. Knifey sneered, "G'wan home, punk. Don't be a sucker." Jimmy was convinced.

But the cops pulled up and nabbed Jimmy before he even had the first tire off. Peter ran, but he didn't get far with that gimpy leg. Tommy stood still and gave himself up without a struggle. Seemed like, for a second, he was glad to get caught.

#### Jimmy

It looks like the "reform school" for Jimmy. It's his fourth time in juvenile court. And after the "reform school" . . . ?

Jimmy's a handsome lad, going on 16 and big for his age. He might have made a good tackle on the high-school team. That is, if he had ever reached high school. Jimmy quit grammar school in the eighth grade. It was against the law, but the school was glad to be rid of him. He only made trouble, anyway.

Jimmy had hated school from the day he began, and he started to play hookey almost at once. Not that he wasn't bright. There wasn't a smarter kid in the neighborhood. But for such a restless, active boy sitting in a seat all day reading about lambs and fairies and trips to the country was more than he could stand. And later having to learn about the inches of rainfall in Tibet and how many gallons of paint it takes to paint a house! Heck, who wanted to know about that anyway? His old man had once been a painter and where had it gotten him? A bad lung, out of work, drunk most of the time.

Besides, Jimmy never liked his teachers. They were always scolding him. There was one in the fifth grade who was nice. She was young and seemed to understand him. She made him monitor and let him help her with the blackboard. When she found him playing with an airplane model he had made instead of studying his grammar, she didn't holler and send him to the principal. She kept him after school and talked to him about airplanes and how he could join a group at the church where the boys learned to make different kinds of models. He didn't say anything but he knew he wouldn't go. Only sissies went there—and besides the stuff cost money. Jimmy didn't skip school once that year.

But that teacher was transferred, and the next one was a sourpuss. His big brother, Jack, whom Jimmy adored, had been in her room long ago and had made her life miserable. When Jimmy started "acting up" in class, she said he was no good and would end up in the penitentiary just like his brother. Jimmy quit after that and wouldn't go back until the truant officer found him one day hanging around the railroad tracks and took him to "Juvenile." They kept him in the detention home 2 weeks. A lot of doctors asked him fool questions and made him play with blocks. They told the judge he needed supervision and something they called "a good relationship." After that, the probation officer came around once in a while to check up on how he was behaving and warn him to be "a good boy."

After Jimmy left school, he bummed around a bit. Made an occasional dollar delivering orders for the corner liquor store and directing guys to Mamie's joint. Sometimes he would pick up a good tip on the races hanging around the back of the cigar store.

Jimmy ran away to another city and tried to enlist in the army, but the recruiting officer found out how young he was and wouldn't accept him. He hung around the strange city, sleeping in the subway and snitching food. But the police picked him up one day, and the Travelers' Aid arranged a ticket back home. After that, he was itching more than ever "to do something."

but he didn't know what. He got into more fights all the time. It was shortly after this that he and Tommy and Pete stole the roadster.

The probation officer said it was all Jimmy's father's fault. Getting drunk on pay days—when he was working—and beating up his wife and kids. Jimmy had hated his "old man" ever since he could remember. His first memory was of getting kicked by his father.

Some people were inclined to blame the mother. She was a poor house-keeper and didn't budget the family income wisely. (But how can you keep a good house with rooms so small and dark that you gave up trying, with your back always ailing, and a new baby every year, and never enough money to stretch out the week?) The neighbors whispered that sometimes Mrs. Smith took a swig herself—but you know how neighbors talk. They said she didn't look after her kids right. There was Lola, only 17, with her high heels and mascara, running around with the boys since she started grammar school. Lately she'd been working as a waitress at the tavern near the steel plant. She told Mrs. Brown's girl that she spent last week end with her boy friend in a hotel.

In court Mrs. Smith pleaded that her Jimmy wasn't a bad boy. It was that terrible neighborhood they lived in and the kids he ran around with from the time he was small. When he was only 5 they taught him to snatch bananas from the fruit man and take stuff from the 10-cent store. They'd knock over a push cart or strip brass from an abandoned building. He really didn't do these things to be mean. It was just that he had a lot of energy and no place to use it right. When he started to "get into real trouble," his mother would scold him and pray over him. Sometimes she would tell his father. Mostly, though, she hated to do that because he'd beat Jimmy up so bad. She didn't know what to do. It had been the same way with Jack. And Lola. For all she tried, nothing seemed to go right with her kids.

### Tom

When he was a little boy everyone thought Tom Kelly would grow up to be a doctor or lawyer. He was such a serious little fellow, so quiet and polite and so thoughtful of his mother. Tom came from decent folk. His father was a streetcar conductor, who worked nights, never drank or ran around. When he came home after work, he would go to sleep. In the afternoon when he woke up, he would read the paper and maybe listen to the news or the ball game over the radio. Then he'd go to work again. Mrs. Kelly took pride in their home, which was almost paid for—kept it neat as a pin. She had only the two children—Tom and his brother Bud. Bud was born when Tom was 2. Everyone fussed over Bud because he was such a cute baby, always gurgling, with deep dimples and laughing eyes. Even Mrs. Kelly seemed to prefer Bud, though she would deny it

vigorously if you asked her. But she was always showing Bud off when people came to visit and quoting the smart things he said. Tom would look on with that serious expression of his.

When Tom was 5 he began to wet the bed. Mrs. Kelly didn't know what was wrong with him. She would spank him for the bed wetting, but it didn't do any good. Finally, she took him to a doctor. But he couldn't find anything wrong with the boy. Once when Tom was about 8 his mother discovered that he had been stealing pennies from her purse to buy himself candy. She tried to shame him by pointing out that Buddy would never do a thing like that. When Tom was 12, the bed wetting stopped, but he still was a "nervous boy." He bit his nails and had a habit of sometimes jerking his head back. And he would toss in his sleep and grind his teeth.

Tom never had trouble at school, but neither did he receive honors as Buddy did. Buddy was president of his class and captain of the baseball team. He took the lead in the school play, and when he was awarded a scholarship for his art work, his mother was the happiest woman in the world.

Tom had no close friends and played mostly by himself. He would have wonderful daydreams of triumphing over Buddy, over his schoolmates, over everybody. First he would dream that he was the fastest cross-country pilot, breaking all records. Then he was a G-man, tracking down counterfeiters, becoming a hero. Would his mother be surprised when she saw his picture in the paper!

Last summer Mrs. Kelly sent Tom to camp. She thought it would build him up and make a "real boy" of him. He wasn't very happy at camp and hoped his mother wouldn't make him go back next year. Maybe it was because he couldn't do any of the things as well as the other boys—like swim or box or pitch horseshoes. Once when two of the boys were teasing him and called him a sissy, Jimmy Smith came by and chased them away! He said he'd knock their tops off if they didn't leave Tommy alone. Jimmy was only a year older than Tom, but he sure was tough. Tom heard one boy say Jimmy had a "record" and that the probation officer sent him to camp to reform him. But Tom didn't care. He thought Jimmy was great and hoped they could be pals. Jimmy didn't like the place either. Too many rules, he said.

### Peter

Peter Taglione was a runt. He looked like 10 though he was really 14. Something must have happened to him when he was small. Maybe it was the fits he used to have as a child, or the auto accident when he was 8, which left him with 10 stitches in his head and one leg shorter than the other. Peter couldn't learn so well in school either, and had to be in the "dummy room."

Peter's mother worked as a charwoman in a downtown hotel. She tried to be good to Peter—poor, crippled thing. But earning a living for three small children didn't afford her much time to pamper them. The father, they say, died in an insane asylum. He had been a mean one. He would scream at the children and beat them. They would hide when they'd hear him coming. They say that right before he was sent away he ran after Peter's sister with a butcher knife.

Peter liked to watch the other children play duck-on-the-rock and cops-and-robbers. Sometimes when he was by himself, he'd play he was "Little Caesar." "Stick 'em up!" "Mow 'em down!" "Bang! Bang!"

Once Peter found a pocketbook with \$5 in it. He bought candy for all the kids in the neighborhood and was the hero of the day. Peter liked to run errands for the big fellows on the block. For that they let him hang around while they sat on the curb and exchanged stories of their exploits. As he listened, he felt certain that some day he would be a tough guy too—like Jimmy Smith. Maybe some day even like Knifey Joe.

#### NATURE AND EXTENT OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Jimmy and Tom and Peter are but three of the thousands of children who pass through the juvenile courts every year and are labeled "delinquent." Of these the boys, for the most part, are charged with "stealing," and "acts of carelessness and mischief"; the girls—and about one out of every five children brought before the juvenile court is a girl—with "running away," "being ungovernable," and "sex offenses." In general, these children range in age from 10 to 18 years, though occasionally a boy or girl younger than 10 or older than 18 is referred to the court. The largest number of children are in the 14- to 16-year age group.

In addition there are thousands of difficult children who never get into court, though they may present behavior problems and personality disturbances quite as serious as those of the children who do. Some of these maladjusted children are handled by attendance officers or visiting teachers at schools, some by child-guidance clinics or social agencies, some by the police without referral to court. Others go unnoticed until too late. Some children may escape a court experience because their families can obtain special care for them; children whose families do not have resources, on the other hand, are more likely to be referred to court or to be sent to institutions when they develop serious behavior problems. To a large degree it is a matter of chance and of family or social resources whether the child is brought to court or spared that ordeal.

Whatever the exact figures of the extent of juvenile delinquency, we know that every year thousands of American youngsters "get into trouble." We

cannot say with certainty whether juvenile delinquency is increasing or decreasing throughout the country as a whole because of the absence of reliable and comprehensive data over a period of years. Such statistics as are available have shown no alarming tendency to increased "juvenile crime," as newspapers perennially claim.

Our Nation may face the prospect of a rich harvest of juvenile misconduct if we fail to take care of our children. And the delinquent of today may be the criminal of tomorrow. The material waste of crime and delinquency is appalling; it is estimated that it amounts to billions of dollars every year. And the material waste is, of course, nothing as compared with the moral and social waste.

As parents and teachers—as citizens—we are deeply concerned with preventing juvenile delinquency and eradicating its roots if we can. But before we can cope with the problem effectively, we must examine the seeds out of which it sprouts and the soil that nurtures it.

### WHAT MAKES A CHILD DELINQUENT?

What causes juvenile delinquency and what can we do to prevent it? Why does one boy succumb to the temptations of an unlocked car or unprotected goods and another ignore them? The delinquent act itself is no clue. Jimmy, Tommy, and Peter were involved in the same offense; yet, as we saw, their backgrounds and their physical and mental make-ups were quite different.

We know that most of the delinquents who come before the courts are underprivileged children from impoverished, overcrowded homes in deteriorated neighborhoods where demoralizing conditions, such as low-grade poolrooms and taverns, cheap dance halls, gambling "joints," and houses of prostitution are rampant. Many of these children run about in gangs and have learned from others in the neighborhood how to steal a car or rob a drunk. Is the cause, then, poverty? Slum conditions? Bad companions? Then why is not everyone who has lived in slums delinquent?

Many delinquents are malnourished and undersized. Many suffer from physical defects. Many seem dull and are retarded in school. Is delinquency then caused by physical or mental deficiency? But there are many healthy, bright delinquents, and only a small proportion of mental defectives get into trouble.

Does the influence of gangster movies, detective stories, and radio thrillers cause juvenile delinquency?—a question that worries many parents. Probably not, for many children attend such pictures regularly and listen to such radio programs almost every night before going to bed and yet never become delinquent.

A large proportion of delinquents come from miserable homes—homes that have been broken by death or desertion of a parent; depraved homes, where the mother may be immoral and the father alcoholic or criminal; homes where the foreign-born parents' old-world culture clashes with that of the community to which the child is constantly exposed; homes where social values are cheap or altogether lacking. Is it, then, bad home environment? Cultural conflict? False standards of behavior? Then why does one child become a thief and another in the same family become a useful citizen?

These are but a few of the questions that have puzzled all students of delinquency. They indicate the complexity of the problem. If we recall the three boys, Jimmy, Tommy, and Peter, we quickly realize that one single answer to "why" will not do.

Countless studies of delinquency have been made and countless causes listed. But setting down relevant factors, even in an individual case, is only the beginning of the search. We must understand what part these factors played in shaping the particular delinquent's personality—whether or not they became a dynamic force in his feeling and thinking, propelling him into misconduct. Take, for example, the oft-listed factor of poverty. One child may react to his poverty by feeling resentful toward the world and will perhaps steal in order to make up to himself for what he feels he is unjustly deprived of. His brother, on the contrary, may be spurred by the selfsame situation to achieve legitimate success. A child like Peter Taglione may react to his handicap by feeling inferior and may withdraw into fantasies about his physical prowess, or he may actually engage in tough, delinquent behavior as a compensation for his weakness. Yet we all know many examples of physically handicapped people who have done extremely well.

In short, there is no one cause of delinquency. There are many contributing causes, and for each child they vary in significance. To understand the delinquent behavior of an individual child it is necessary to learn all about him. We must know about his physical and mental make-up. We must know about the social and psychological forces that have played upon him from the time he was born. Above all, we must know how he *feels* about things, if we are to understand what makes him the kind of person he is and what prompts him to do the kind of things he does.

### THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

There are many kinds of delinquents. Among some groups, for example, certain kinds of stealing though known to be illegal are regarded as a normal means of existence. Take children living near railroad tracks who are sent

out by their parents to take coal from stalled freight cars in order to have heat for their homes, or even, perhaps, to sell. These children are, of course, legally delinquent. Yet in their stealing they are conforming to home and community customs that conflict with those of the larger social group. (For a discussion of delinquent children of this type see *Delinquency Areas*, p. 15.)

The delinquents who challenge our thinking most, however, are those children who refuse or are unable, for one reason or another, to conform to society's demands. This raises the question: How do children learn to conform to "the rules"? What is the process by which they become responsible individuals? How does it happen that some children fail in this, and therefore never really grow up?

### Teaching the Rules of the Game

Children are not born with a sense of right or wrong. They must develop it. They must learn to repress impulses that are socially disapproved, as, for example, the desire to take something that belongs to someone else, or the urge to strike people or to destroy things when they are angry. They must be taught to behave according to prescribed conventions. It is the family that does this most important work for society—the work of "civilizing" the child.

How does the family make over the child from a self-seeking creature demanding immediate satisfaction for his wants to a law-abiding citizen who subordinates his personal desires to the interests of the social group? We do not know exactly, but intimate studies of children have given us some insight into the process. Children try to be like the persons they admire and love. We are all familiar with the little boy who takes on his father's gestures, the little girl who assumes the tone of her mother when she is scolding her baby brother. Children not only imitate their parents' external behavior, accepting the loved parents as an ideal, but they also absorb their traits and standards of behavior.

Now, the parents, in teaching the child to behave properly, must impose certain restrictions upon him. In turn, the child, wanting to keep his parents' love by being "good," and fearful of losing it and being punished if he is "bad," unconsciously takes over as part of himself the teachings and prohibitions set by his parents. These guide his behavior and forbid him, even after he is no longer supervised from the outside, to do those things that his parents, and indirectly society, disapprove of. In other words, he develops a conscience. The kind of conscience a child develops depends upon the kind of adults he has patterned himself after, and, more important, upon the emotional feeling between him and the adults closest to him—namely, his parents.

### Early Conflicts

Studies of delinquents show that often it is here in their early development that there has been a hitch. Some delinquents have unconsciously patterned themselves after a loved person who himself is delinquent. Jimmy's worship of his brother, Jack, who was sent to prison, was one of the factors accounting for his behavior.

Many children, particularly during their babyhood when they were first asked to accept society's restrictions, had an unhappy emotional relationship with their parents that kept them from making the parents' standard of behavior a part of themselves. Doctors Healy and Bronner<sup>1</sup> in a study of delinquents and their nondelinquent brothers and sisters found that the essential difference between the two groups lay in the fact that the nondelinquents had satisfying relationships with their parents in their early life while the delinquents did not. Many of these delinquent children felt unloved and developed a lasting sense of injury or hostility toward the world. Some, on the other hand, had been so pampered—"spoiled"—in their childhood that they had never learned to control their impulses properly or to accept discipline. Away from the indulgent protection of their families, they were unable to make the adjustments necessary for social living.

The antisocial behavior of still other delinquents, whom we call "neurotic," is often the outward expression of conflict between their "bad" impulses and their consciences. We sometimes find that delinquents and even criminals who suffer from this kind of emotional disturbance seem to want to be punished. Some students of the problem go so far as to say that these persons commit offenses and unconsciously manage to get caught because they want punishment to relieve their guilty feelings about matters not even connected with the offense. This may seem farfetched; nevertheless it has been found to be true in many cases.

Tommy's delinquent behavior might be regarded as an expression of an internal conflict. Though his father was a law-abiding and well-meaning fellow, he showed little interest in the boy, and it was the mother, the dominating figure in the home, to whom Tommy felt most attached. But Tommy must have had mixed feelings about her. Often he must have felt very angry indeed toward his mother for favoring Bud. At the same time he must have felt guilty over his "bad thoughts" about her, as so many children do when they feel "mean" toward their parents. And he must also have felt confused in his attitude toward his little brother. Often a little child resents the birth of another because he feels replaced in the affection of the parents. He wishes the baby were dead and perhaps may even want to do away with it himself. But having been taught that it is "wicked" to have such impulses, he represses them. The conflict between his feelings

<sup>1</sup> Healy, William, and Augusta F. Bronner, *New Light on Delinquency and Its Treatment*. Yale University Press. New Haven, 1936.

and the teachings of his parents remains, however, and as in Tommy's case, it may show itself in nervous symptoms (nail biting, bed wetting, sleep disturbances, head jerking) or, under certain circumstances (for example, the influence of Jimmy, whom he admired) in misbehavior.

### When Emotional Needs Are Unmet

In general, the delinquent child is the unhappy child—the emotionally maladjusted child. His misconduct is a symptom of some inner or outer disturbance, usually both. To the casual observer his behavior may seem naughty or vicious. To the delinquent himself it has as much meaning as socially approved activity has for the well behaved. His misconduct is his way of reacting to his inner urges and the environmental pressures.

Everyone—the delinquent and the law-abiding—has certain fundamental emotional needs that he seeks to satisfy. Simply expressed, they are the need for love and affection, for security with other human beings; and the need for growth and achievement and for recognition from other human beings.

In order that a child may grow up into a mature, well-adjusted adult, able to participate in our society without too much emotional strain, he must have, particularly in his early childhood, the kind of family that will help him answer those needs. First and above all, he must be secure in his relationship with his parents. He must feel that he is loved, that he "belongs." Such security gives him a sense of worth and of confidence in himself, which help him toward becoming an integrated personality.

As was indicated earlier, studies of delinquents have shown that for many the need for security and love was unmet. They felt rejected by those very persons—their parents—whom they most wanted to be close to. The thwartings of their fundamental needs made them feel angry, insecure, frustrated, inadequate. The disturbed child does not necessarily know that he feels this way. All he knows, if he thinks about it at all, is that he is tense and unhappy, and he fumbles about, seeking in some substitute way to find satisfaction for these needs that we all have. Some children escape from this tension by finding satisfaction in day dreams. Others turn to delinquent behavior through which they may get recognition or imagined revenge or some other substitute gratification.

All three children with whom we have become acquainted lacked this feeling of security with their parents. Jimmy felt that his father did not love him, and though his mother had a warm regard for the boy, she was so harassed by her constant child bearing, the inadequacy of her husband, her chronic concern for "making ends meet," that she had little time or energy to show Jimmy the love he wanted.

We sensed Tommy's feeling of rejection at the birth of Buddy. A child of 2 naturally still wants his mother for himself and resents the presence of another who robs him of her attention. A tactful parent can, of course,

handle such a situation so that it leaves no scar upon the growing personality of the older child. As we know, most children learn to accept their brothers and sisters and share the parents with them. In Tommy's case, his mother showed a serious unawareness or disregard of the child's needs. While his brother was petted and fussed over, Tommy was given scant notice.

Peter was subjected to an abnormally cruel and harsh father on the one hand and on the other was indulged by an overprotective mother. The marked difference in their treatment was bound to leave Peter disturbed and confused in his attitude toward adults and the world in general.

For his healthy development into maturity, a child must have the kind of relationship with his parents that will fulfill his second need—the need for growth, for achievement, for status as an individual apart from his family. As a child develops, his interests gradually broaden and his experiences expand outside the family circle. As he approaches puberty he wants to assert himself, to become independent, and emancipate himself from his family.

The process of achieving these ends is not always a smoothly flowing affair, even in the healthiest of children. There are times when the normal adolescent wants to be a "baby"; at other times he wants to be "his own boss." It is this conflict, among other factors, that makes adolescence a time of stress for all children. The child who is secure in his relationship with his parents, however, is freer to loosen the family ties gradually and to become an emotionally mature adult than is the insecure child. The latter may become anxious about his process of "growing up" and "hang on" to his parents, figuratively. Or a similar child, feeling guilty or ashamed of his desire to be cared for when he should be a "big boy now," may pretend to be tough and independent. Studies of criminals have shown that many of the so-called "tough guys" were emotionally immature and insecure and that their craving to appear aggressive hid from themselves, as well as from others, their intense longing for dependence and for support. Tommy was such a child. He needed to cover up his deep wish to be "babied" by fancying himself an admired masculine hero. In his actual exploits with Jimmy he tried to prove to himself that he was indeed "a tough guy."

All children—and for that matter, all adults—need recognition, approval from others. Failing to find satisfaction for this basic desire in their actual experiences, they get what comfort they can by withdrawing into the realm of fantasy where all their wishes come true. Or unable to gain recognition through socially acceptable behavior, they may turn to delinquency to get the acclaim and admiration they seek from their companions. Tommy and Peter sought refuge from their feelings of inadequacy, arising from lack of recognition, in daydreams at first and later in delinquency.

This does not mean that all children who are rejected, "spoiled," or guilt-ridden, who feel frustrated, inadequate, and revengeful, become delinquent. Some of these children find expression for their conflict in ways

that are not legally forbidden. But the child who is unhappy in his family relationships is likely to seek satisfactions away from home. And if he lives in a community in which antisocial attitudes prevail, in which other boys in the neighborhood seem to be getting a lot of fun out of forbidden activities, in which a pattern of delinquent behavior is traditional, he is more susceptible to the attractions of delinquency than another child under the same community influences who has found more strength and satisfactions in his home.

### THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

While the home is the first and perhaps the most important influence in shaping the child's personality and in "civilizing" him, it is by no means the only one. Other environmental influences also play a significant part in determining the pattern of behavior he will follow. The harm done to a child by an unfortunate home situation may be offset by satisfying relationships and constructive experiences on the outside.

#### **The School a Potent Force**

Because it receives the child at a relatively early age, the school is in a strategic position to influence his development and adjustment for later life. Aside from its formal tasks of passing on to the child the traditions and customs of society and thus perpetuating our cultural pattern; of teaching him to think clearly and independently; of equipping him with skills by which he may later earn a living through useful work—aside from these tasks, the school plays a very significant role in helping the child learn how to get along with other people and to accept the obligations that come with living as part of the group.

These are the school's responsibilities. To fulfill them it must understand the needs of the total child—not only his intellectual needs but his emotional and social needs as well—and adjust its program to meet them. If it succeeds, the school can be a most potent force in helping the child on his way toward becoming a mature, well-adjusted adult able to take his part in a democratic society. If it fails to recognize and meet these needs, particularly for a child who has come to school already thwarted, it may indirectly serve to do him harm.

Behavior problems in school indicate that something is wrong between the child and his environment. It may be that the maladjustment occurred long before the child came to school, so that he is only bringing to school the unhappiness and feeling of being thwarted that he feels at home. But whether he is reacting to an unfortunate home situation or to some frustration he experiences in the school set-up, it is important that the school recog-

nize his behavior as a symptom of conflict, instead of treating it as a nuisance or mere "willful defiance" of the school's regulations.

### Truancy

The most common symptom of maladjustment in school is truancy. Truancy has been called "the kindergarten of crime" because frequently children who later become delinquent start their misbehavior as truants during their early school years. While "bumming around," generally with other truants, they frequently fall under the influence of older boys or girls who initiate them into the techniques of stealing and other delinquent acts.

Children become truants because for one reason or another they are dissatisfied. Dissatisfactions with school may arise from various situations; one may be a curriculum unsuited to the pupil. The bright child may become a truant because he finds the routine school program adjusted to the level of the mediocre, boring; the dull child because the program is too difficult. The subject matter taught may be unrelated to children's everyday experience and they may lose interest in learning something that has no meaning for them.

Studies have shown that a large proportion of delinquents were markedly behind their grades in school. The sense of being a failure and the scorn to which a retarded child is exposed, both by his parents and by other children, may be potent factors underlying a child's truancy.

An uncomfortable relationship with a teacher who has no understanding of his needs may impel a child toward truancy. Rigid discipline, imposed by a teacher who demands obedience through strict, authoritarian methods, can only serve to increase the feeling of rebellion and retaliation against persons in authority that some children, as a result of their home situation, bring to school to begin with. Conversely, weak discipline leading to futile and confused school hours can have the same effect.

The school's contribution to delinquency is not so much one of commission is one of omission. If schools fail to take cognizance of children as total personalities, with feelings and interests and family situations out of which they come and to which they must return, some children—including perhaps many of the more spirited ones—will rebel against them and be labeled "truants."

Jimmy Smith was an example of the school's failure to meet a child's needs—and, even worse, perhaps, of its frequent failure to spot an emotionally disturbed child. His early truancy should have been a warning that he needed help. Instead, his truancy and his annoying behavior in the classroom were regarded at best as a nuisance, to be handled with scoldings and visits to the principal. Later they were regarded as a violation of authority to be referred to the court.

Tom Kelly was considered by his teachers to be a "good boy." He caused no trouble and failed in no grades. Yet we know he was a poorly adjusted child. Teachers are more likely to regard only that child as a "problem" who is noisy and causes a distraction in the classroom, who irritates them by disturbing order; they are less likely to recognize as a problem the meek, overly quiet youngster who may actually be withdrawing from reality into a world of his own, more to his satisfaction than the one in which he finds himself.

Peter was another child whose needs the school had failed to meet adequately. Unable because of his poor intelligence to keep up with the intellectual pace of other children of his age, he was removed from the regular grade and placed in a special class. Now, special classes can be of decided benefit to those children who are unable to progress at the same rate as the average child. The classes are generally small enough to permit the teacher, often specially trained, to give each child the individual attention he must have; the programs of these classes are adjusted to the individual capacities of the children. It is most important, however, that these classes should be so integrated with the regular school program and their function so interpreted to the community that no stigma will be attached to a child who attends a special class. For if a child and his schoolmates regard the special classroom as the "dummy room," the hazards to the child's emotional health in being pointed out as inferior may outweigh the advantages of placement in such a class.

## THE NEIGHBORHOOD

### The Gang

As children grow and their interests broaden, they naturally become curious about the world outside their home. They venture into the neighborhood to make friends with other children and soon they form spontaneous play groups or "gangs." Though we have come to associate the word "gang" with something predatory, the gang in itself is not inherently vicious. It is merely the expression of a growing child's need for companionship and for group activity at a certain time in his life. It becomes dangerous if the street life from which it springs offers opportunities for delinquency and if the leader is a bad influence. To the potentially delinquent child whose family life is disorganized, gang life becomes particularly attractive. There, with children of his own age who are perhaps as neglected as he and from whom he may get recognition and acceptance by taking on the ways of the gang, he finds the satisfactions for which he is searching.

The influence of the gang is particularly effective because it often completely answers the boy's needs. There he finds his desire for companionship and adventure satisfied. He gets a feeling of belonging and of loyalty

to the group. In the delinquent gang the tougher he is the more recognition he gets. He may also find in the gang the discipline he needs. The gang develops its own codes and rules of behavior and demands that its members rigidly abide by them. Thus the gang's control over a boy's conduct becomes stronger than that of his family or of the larger social group. But through the gang's influence he may develop attitudes and behavior patterns that isolate him from conventional society.

Adolescents, whether delinquent or not, are especially sensitive to the attitudes of their own small group and are more responsive to the judgments of their companions than to those of their own family or of the larger society. We are all familiar with the freshman high-school lad who spurns the well-tailored suit his mother bought him for the baggy pants and jacket that must never match and for dirty moccasins just because "the other boys wear them." The delinquent is not essentially different in this respect. He conforms to the codes and standards of behavior of his group. In the "good gang" the lad who makes the winning touchdown is adulated; in the delinquent gang the boy who commits the most daring and flagrant offense or can most cleverly evade the police becomes the hero. The difference lies in their cultural standards and traditions.

### Delinquency Areas

The activities and attitudes of gangs reflect to a large extent the social values and customs of the neighborhoods from which they spring. It is a common observation that "slums breed crime" and that in the deteriorated neighborhoods with the greatest amount of social ills—poverty, disease, neglect, family strife, desertions, mental disorders—juvenile delinquency and crime flourish.

These social swamps, or "delinquency areas," generally adjacent to central business districts or industrial centers, are characterized by physical deterioration, social disorganization, and other unfavorable factors. The buildings are dilapidated, the housing conditions deplorable. As one might expect, these areas are inhabited, for the most part, by families too poor to live elsewhere, many of them dependent on assistance from welfare agencies. These families move into better neighborhoods as soon as they are financially able to do so; hence the population is very mobile. Demoralizing influences of low-grade pool halls and taverns, gambling "joints," burlesque shows, and cheap dance halls abound. Ideas of "easy money" through shady enterprises are in the air.

The economic insecurity of the families, the high rate of movement of the population, the different cultural backgrounds of the groups, and the failure of the families to recognize their common interests hamper the development of community spirit or neighborhood organization to control the children or check lawlessness. Without this control, crime and delinquency gain a foothold as a traditional part of the social life of these areas.

The traditions and patterns of delinquency are handed down from one generation to another through group contacts. Such activities as stealing fruit, lifting brass from empty buildings, "rolling drunks," and "stripping cars" are neighborhood sports that the children in gangs learn early in the course of their everyday experiences. They become educated in crime. They are encouraged in their delinquencies by the "fences" who buy their stolen wares and are spurred into committing more serious offenses in the hope of emulating the older criminals who are around. Their heroes are the underworld "big shots"; their ambition is to advance from petty thieving to daylight robbery. They know about the inside workings of the organized and powerful criminal gangs and their "rackets"; they become wise in the ways of political corruption and smirk at the alliance between politics and crime.

These areas have a low resistance to crime and to the other pernicious influences that pervade them. If a notorious tavern keeper should try to set up business in an organized neighborhood, citizen groups, neighborhood clubs, parent-teacher associations, church clubs, and other such organizations would rise in protest, and, if they were powerful and vociferous enough, Mr. Tavernkeeper would have to move elsewhere. But in the disintegrated neighborhoods there is no organized sentiment to combat demoralizing conditions—only an attitude of indifference or helplessness—and the tradition of delinquency perpetuates itself.

And there are few constructive influences to offset this tradition. Those organizations fostering leisure-time activities that do exist are for the most part supported and run by persons living in more privileged communities. Their programs are imposed from without as "good for" the participants and often fail to meet the needs of the neighborhood group.

These areas offer their children no consistent set of cultural standards to follow and little wholesome social life by which they can form socially acceptable patterns of behavior. The wonder is not that children brought up under the constant influences of such surroundings become delinquent, but that so many escape delinquency.

### DELINQUENCY IN RURAL DISTRICTS

We generally think of juvenile delinquents as unkempt city children teeming out of overcrowded tenements into noisy, bustling streets, there to do mischief and sometimes harm. But delinquency is not confined to city streets. It seeps to the surface in towns and villages, in "resort spots" and crossroads trading centers, in backwoods and countryside.

Its form may be different in the country. The country boy has less opportunity than the city child to steal hub caps, or plumbing fixtures from vacant buildings. But his need for activity is as great, and if he is given

no wholesome outlet for his energies, he, too, may find release in undesirable ways. With another child or two he may experiment in sex play; he may pilfer a neighbor's barn or hurl rocks at a greenhouse.

We hear less about delinquency in rural communities than in cities because in the country it is less likely to be labeled as such and put into a statistical table. An act considered punishable in the city may be disregarded in the country. Standards of law enforcement may be lax in some rural districts. Then, too, people in small communities are often loath to lodge a formal complaint against a neighbor's child. If he is fortunate, time and later constructive influences temper his behavior. If not, it grows worse until it becomes too flagrant to be disregarded and action is finally taken—usually too little and too late.

In thinking of rural life, we are likely to conjure up—particularly if we happen to live in the city—a picture of rolling meadows and placid cows, of neat frame houses, church spires, and shady streets. And so it often is. But another view reveals a different sight—unpainted shacks on the edge of town, squalid shanties on river banks, near railroad tracks; undernourished children too poorly dressed to attend school; a cluster of beer “joints” and pool halls, and young loafers hanging around whistling at the passing girls; and over all, the squalid atmosphere of poverty and deprivation. These are slum conditions as truly as any found in the largest cities.

Unwholesome community influences and lack of constructive recreational facilities are no less potent destructive forces in rural communities than in cities. The bleak homes of the tenant farmer and the mill hand, the monotony of life in some small towns with nothing to do for the young folks in their spare time but “just set”—such situations are seedbeds for undesirable behavior.

“Nothing to do!” And so often, as one rural delinquent girl put it, “What there is to do ain't decent.” So the boys hang around the village tavern telling dirty stories and drinking beer. And the girls, seeking some excitement and relief from the dullness of their lives, walk down the road in the evening, accepting auto rides from strangers who stop their cars or they sneak off to the dance in the next county to meet those wild Baker boys their parents warned them against. Maybe the Baker boys are a bit rough—but they're gay and exciting—and a girl wants to be “a good sport.”

Fresh air and meadows are not enough. The unmet needs of country children—the frustrations and unhappiness at home, the neglect, the poverty, the lack of opportunity—these take their toll in maladjusted personalities and juvenile delinquency no less than among city children.

### JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN POSTWAR YEARS

During World War II, as in the depression of the 1930's, people's everyday ordinary way of life was disrupted. Standards of behavior were confused

and social controls weakened. Attitudes of hate and destructiveness—ordinarily forbidden or repressed—were permitted expression.

In the war years, many teen-age young people of today were children whose fathers were in camps, overseas, or away from home in war industries for months or years. Many were in families torn from the communities where they had deep roots and were never fully integrated in the new localities. These children lacked a sense of security not only because of their disrupted home life, but because excitement, uncertainty, and general insecurity were in the air.

Later, as war industries closed down or reconverted, periods of unemployment followed for some of the fathers. Many fathers returning from military service found it hard and slow to adjust to conditions at home. Many mothers continued to work. Overcrowding or the temporary nature of homes added still more elements that lead to instability of home and community life.

The effect of the war years and postwar dislocations on these children will be felt for a long time. Many are still affected by these influences and much needs to be done to counteract them. State and community planning on a long-time basis is needed to consider the measures necessary to provide the basic services that will prevent and control juvenile delinquency that grew out of the war years. It is becoming increasingly recognized that safeguards for the well-being of all children will be the best means of cutting down this problem. Consequently greater emphasis is being placed on programs of parent education, family and youth counseling, wholesome leisure-time activities for people of all ages, educational facilities adapted to the needs and interests of the children to be served, child-guidance clinics, and on social-welfare agencies with child-welfare workers skilled in case-work and group-work techniques, closely available where children live. This is being done in order to deal with behavior problems early, before they become serious enough to be classed as delinquency.

A number of States have organized their efforts to prevent delinquency under State-wide planning commissions or committees and have related them to the total planning for the need of all children. These commissions are stimulating communities to study themselves and deal with local conditions that are creating juvenile problems.

## Prevention and Treatment of Delinquency

### Every Child Everyone's Concern

Healthy, happy, secure children—children who feel comfortable with themselves, their playmates, their parents and other adults—do not, as a rule, become delinquent. The most fundamental way to prevent delinquency is to help children to be healthy, happy, and secure.

The problem of preventing delinquency must be seen broadly, in terms of developing well-adjusted children. It involves more than the improvement of juvenile courts or the building of better training schools. It involves more than the isolated efforts of leisure-time and character-building agencies.

Prevention of delinquency involves community concern for the needs of all children—the child across the tracks and in the city slums, the child in the depressed rural regions, the shopkeeper's child and the child of the factory worker, the crippled child and the dull child, the child in a foster home and the child in an institution, the child receiving Aid to Dependent Children, the child who needs aid and is not getting it, and even the child from an economically secure family.

And it involves more than concern. It involves taking action to meet their needs. This is no small task. It means providing basic community services to 49 million children, services that contribute to their healthful physical, social, and emotional growth. These would include social services that build up and strengthen the economic and social security of the family; adequate health services and medical care for all children; opportunities for education and for wholesome recreation and companionship; protection against harmful community influences and against the exploitation of young people for commercial gain.

The job takes money. But unless we are willing to pay the price for necessary services *now*, we shall have to pay later in the immeasurable cost

of maladjusted personalities, and in the material expense of training schools, prisons, and mental institutions for the care of those we have neglected.

### PRESERVATION OF FAMILY LIFE

As is indicated in the first section, *What Causes Delinquency?* a child's family, particularly during his first few years, is the most important influence in his life. It is in the home that his personality is shaped, his attitudes toward other people and toward authority are formed, and his ethical values and standards of conduct are molded. Any solution to the problem of delinquency must concern itself, first of all, with the family out of which the child comes.

The best schools, churches, clinics, playgrounds, and parks are of minor worth unless the child has first and foremost a stable and secure family life in which his fundamental physical, social, and emotional needs can be met. The primary essential of a comprehensive program aimed at the development of wholesome personalities and the prevention of delinquency must be the preservation of family life.

When it is absolutely necessary that mothers work, the community must provide adequate care for their children. This should include not only day-care centers for the preschool children but supervised activities before and after school for the older ones. And if mothers of children under 2 years must work, provision should be made for the day care of their babies in foster homes where they can receive individual attention. We must also see that social services are available to help working mothers iron out family problems and to ease their burden of responsibility when it is too heavy for them to carry.

### Parent Education

Children always should find in their families love, security, and guidance. To meet these needs, parents themselves must be mature and show understanding of their children.

The art of parenthood is no simple one. As life in our rapidly changing society grows more complicated, parents often need and want help in rearing their children. They should have an opportunity to express their fears and to get skilled counsel in answering the many questions and solving the many problems that arise in bringing up children.

Such counsel implies more than specific instructions for habit training and child care. Parents must be helped to understand their children's emotional needs and how they may meet them. They must gain insight into the fact that their own personalities directly affect the child's and that his behavior may reflect their own attitudes toward him. They must be helped to recognize certain undesirable conduct in the child as a symptom of

disturbance rather than as "naughtiness." They must see the necessity of treating behavior problems early and of seeking professional help when the problem seems beyond their skill.

There are many organizations, both public and private, on national, State, and local levels, that promote parent education. A few States have initiated parent-education programs throughout the State through their departments of education, which furnish material and counsel to local groups; some State universities offer comparable programs. The Federal Government, largely through the Children's Bureau, the Extension Service of the Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Education, has been a potent force in spreading information on child care and guidance to large numbers of parents. These agencies supply supplementary material and counseling service to State offices and local workers, arrange radio talks, and distribute free publications on child care to parents for the asking.

Many communities are making provision for parent education by sponsoring group discussions or counseling interviews through the churches, libraries, schools, child-guidance clinics, community centers, family-welfare agencies, women's clubs, and study groups. It does not much matter which agency sponsors the parent-education program so long as it reaches all parents, answers the needs of the group participating in it, has good leadership, and is one facet of a coordinated community program aimed at the development of wholesome family and community life and, indirectly, at the prevention of delinquency.

### Family Income

Even though parents understand their children and are capable of bringing them up wisely, if they are constantly struggling without success to make ends meet or are out of work and worried about how they can pay next month's rent, it is extremely difficult for them to give their children a feeling of security that they themselves lack. No family can be secure unless it has sufficient income to provide its children with at least the necessities of life.

How many American families can give their children the security that comes from growing up in a home with an adequate standard of living and a stable income? In 1945 the average (median) income of families having four or more children under 18 years of age was about \$2,100 as compared with \$2,800 for those with one or two children. The average annual income of white families was about twice that of nonwhite families.<sup>2</sup>

Certain groups of children are exposed to greater economic hardships than children in the general population. Rural children, for example, on the whole fare worse economically than city children. Negro and other

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Census: Family and Individual Money Income in the United States, 1945, No. 2, p. 60.

children of minority groups in both city and country suffer greater economic deprivations than their white neighbors.

What kind of security can these low-income families give their children? What kind of home life? Family discord is more likely to arise when parents are harassed by anxieties over making a living. In discouragement or despair, fathers may desert their families or begin to drink; mothers may give up the struggle to keep an orderly home. Many situations that are labeled "delinquency" are basically family problems that have found expression in the behavior of the child.

As long ago as 1919 Julia C. Lathrop, first Chief of the Children's Bureau, said:

Children are not safe and happy if their parents are miserable, and parents must be miserable if they cannot protect a home against poverty.

Let us not deceive ourselves. The power to maintain a decent family living standard is the primary essential of child welfare. This means a living wage and wholesome working life for the man, a good and skillful mother at home to keep the house and comfort all within it. Society can afford no less and can afford no exceptions.

It was true then, it is equally true now.

### Families in Need of Assistance

Because of unemployment, illness, low wages, and other factors beyond their control, there will always be families that at one time or another will be unable to provide for their children. We have held to the principle in this country that these families should be given help. In 1940 between 5 and 6 million children were in families dependent upon some form of economic aid for food and shelter.<sup>3</sup> Aside from humanitarian aspects, the number was so great that the kind of assistance given and its administration concerned all of us. It is important that the amount of assistance should provide some measure of security and that it should be given as a right—not as a favor.

In 1930 it became evident that private social agencies and local governments could not begin to cope with the problem of meeting the needs of the growing thousands of unemployed, and that increased public funds were of urgent importance. State governments began to take responsibility for helping local units. By 1933 the Federal Government assumed responsibility for a Nation-wide system of public assistance. Later it set up a Federal works program intended to provide for needy employable persons; it provided special help for farmers; and, as probably the greatest stride in social welfare of the last decade, it set up, through the Social Security Act, Nation-wide programs based on the principle that it is society's obligation to assure its citizens at least a minimum of security when circumstances are such that they cannot provide it by their own initiative alone.

<sup>3</sup> White House Conference on Children in a Democracy: Final Report, Ch. 7, Economic Assistance. Children's Bureau Pub. 272. Washington, 1942.

Of special interest to those concerned with child welfare and the prevention of juvenile delinquency is the provision in the Social Security Act known as "aid to dependent children." Hundreds of thousands of children in the United States are deprived of support or care by the death, absence, or incapacity of one or both parents. In 1909 the White House Conference declared that no child should be deprived of his home because of poverty. In 1911 a State "mothers' pension" law was passed in Illinois and between 1911 and 1935 mothers' aid laws were adopted by all but three States. The assistance thus given not only kept children in their homes instead of sending them to institutions but it also saved them from the destitution or neglect they might have suffered because of the loss of the breadwinner. By 1935 some 286,000 children were being helped under such legislation.

With the passage of the Social Security Act, Federal funds became available to assist States in providing aid to these children, and the program included not only children living with their mothers but also children living with other specified relatives. The act recognized as a cause of dependency not only the death of the father but also the death of the mother and the physical or mental incapacity or absence from the home of either or both parents.

About a million children are now receiving aid to dependent children. Although the assistance has been invaluable to many children, in many States the grants are not large enough to meet the cost of care, and many children who are eligible for aid are still not receiving any.

There are many families and individuals in need who do not qualify for aid under the provisions of the Social Security Act. They must depend upon measures for general assistance in their State or local community. The standards for assistance in many localities are very low, and in some areas many needy families are neglected entirely.

### **Toward Economic Security**

As citizens actively concerned with the welfare of our children, we must do everything possible to insure the economic security essential for the preservation of family life. This means we must see that minimum-wage legislation is maintained and extended; that the right of collective bargaining is safeguarded; that public works programs, adjusted to the fluctuations of private employment, are part of our national policy; that the provisions of the Social Security Act are expanded to cover more people and provide adequate benefits; that aid to dependent children is further developed to enable each eligible family to provide adequate care for its children and that Federal assistance to States is adjusted according to the economic capacities and needs of the States; that the Federal Government provide aid to the States for general assistance covering all persons in need who are not in the

present categories that fall under the Social Security Act; and that States provide substantial aid to local units for public assistance.

### Housing

For normal, healthful family living, people need decent homes. Yet millions of children are living in overcrowded, insanitary houses unfit for human habitation. Studies have shown that families with the greatest number of children occupy the most dilapidated houses, have the fewest conveniences, and endure the greatest amount of overcrowding.

In many cities a large proportion of the worst housing is located in districts where thousands of children are crowded into dark, poorly ventilated, broken-down buildings, many of them firetraps. There is little play space except in traffic-laden streets and alleys strewn with trash.

In 1947, 2,800,000 families were living doubled up with other families. An additional 500,000 families are living in temporary housing, trailers, rooming houses, and other makeshift accommodations.<sup>4</sup>

Some of the Nation's worst housing is to be found in rural areas. Proportionately twice as much of the farm housing is in need of major repairs as is that of nonfarm housing. Overcrowding is twice as frequent in farm homes as in nonfarm dwellings.<sup>4</sup>

Improper housing in itself does not cause delinquency. But the lack of privacy, the friction and irritations caused by overcrowding may well create tensions in the child that find expression in delinquency. Then, too, children living under these conditions are often eager to get out of the house and into the streets, away from the supervision of their families and, especially in overcrowded city areas, are apt to be exposed to influences that may do them harm.

It became evident years ago that private enterprise alone was not meeting the housing needs of this country, particularly the needs of families with low incomes. Since 1937 the Federal Government, through various agencies, has assisted local communities with financing and building homes for low-income families. It has cleared some slum areas and erected admirable housing projects, most of them providing, among other essentials, recreation facilities for children.

A well-planned housing program may mean a new way of life for thousands of children. Citizens interested in child welfare must be concerned about public-housing programs, including slum clearance, new housing for low-income groups, rural housing—half of America's children live in the country. Local committees to promote public interest in housing can accomplish much.

<sup>4</sup> Housing Study and Investigation, "Final Report of the Joint Committee on Housing," submitted by Congressman Gamble, March 15, 1948.

## THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN PREVENTION

A child's religion starts with his parents. His basic outlook on life, his sense of values, his moral and ethical standards he absorbs from the example of living set by his parents. The church can reinforce the family's role in helping a child achieve personal and social integrity. It can guide youth in arriving at a scale of values in keeping with democratic living—values that emphasize the dignity and worth of the individual and the equality and brotherhood of all people. It can transmit to youth the enduring ideals of civilization.

Adolescence is a time when children begin to tussle with problems about themselves and their place in the universe. The church can give them spiritual faith and confidence in a rational order and an appreciation of the ultimate truths that transcend the immediate confusion. It can help youth understand the issues now at stake and can imbue them with a sense of responsibility as citizens of the world.

To give spiritual guidance—this is the primary role of the church. As one of the community forces influencing children, the church can also contribute concretely to the prevention of delinquency. To do so its leaders must take an active interest in community life. They must be aware of conditions in their neighborhood that make for delinquency and take steps to eliminate them. They can arouse public concern for community problems and spur church members into doing something about them. They can cooperate with other agencies and neighborhood groups to make the community a better place to live in.

Church buildings can serve as community centers with recreational programs so varied and attractive that children will be eager to come. These programs might include discussion groups in which older boys and girls could thrash out their ideas, doubts, and beliefs. Ideals are molded by the personalities we admire. Group leaders in church activities, therefore, should be the kind of men and women who understand young people and arouse their respect and admiration.

## THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN PREVENTION

Perhaps the pivotal agency in a unified community child-welfare program is the school. It reaches practically all children at a relatively early period of their growth. If it succeeds in helping them to develop integrated personalities, healthful habits, attitudes, and interests, and a sense of civic responsibility, it has won a major battle in the prevention of delinquency.

To win this battle the school program must be pointed toward teaching *children* rather than *subjects*. It must aim to give all children a sense of accomplishment and to make the school experience a happy and successful one.

### Program

Children differ in their native endowments, growth patterns, and abilities. A program centered upon meeting the needs of all children would have to be flexible enough to take account of individual differences. A good illustration of this is the school that gives the exceptionally bright child an enriched program; the dull child a simpler one; the child with a reading disability, let us say, remedial help.

To engage the interest of children the curriculum should be related to their everyday experiences. They need to feel that what they are studying has a current meaning. Geography takes on new significance when children in school have had letters from school children in other countries and have written to them.

Young people in high school want to learn practical skills that prepare for industrial jobs. They should be given such training. They must also be given an appreciation of the fact that a broad education will help them understand the nature of man and his world and make them better able to meet present-day problems.

The school program must be so devised that children will master that most essential element for personal and social adjustment and for democratic living—namely, the art of cooperating with others and assuming the responsibilities that come with being a member of the group. A common device is to have children plan and work together on a project, preferably one related to the community.

### Teachers

A well-planned, flexible program is necessary. But even more important are the teachers with whom the children come in daily, intimate contact. For it is primarily through the emotional relationship between one human being and another that growth and change occur. The teacher one recalls from his own childhood as having had the best influence on him is not necessarily the one who knew the most history or mathematics, but is the one who was most responsive to the children and stimulated them most to widen their horizons. Some teachers, like some parents who are not emotionally grown up, tend to impose hardships on those under their control if they themselves have to undergo difficulties. We must make sure that the teachers to whom we entrust our children are understanding and stable and not likely to "take out" on the youngsters their own frustrations.

### Spotting Problems Early

No matter how good the teacher and the school program, there will always be children who, perhaps because of some underlying personality disorder, or because of an unfortunate home situation, will show symptoms of maladjustment. They may avoid companionship with other children or may be

unduly timid, restless, or lazy. They may express their maladjustment in undesirable habits such as nail biting, thumb sucking, peculiar mannerisms; or in such forms of behavior as stealing, fighting, playing truant, bullying other children, being disobedient, or causing a disturbance in class. The school can play an important role in the community campaign against delinquency by recognizing these habits and actions as symptoms of some disturbance that forewarns of more serious trouble later, and by treating the difficulties early.

Frequently the understanding teacher can herself do much to help the disturbed child through her personal interest in him. This presupposes, of course, enough teachers in the school to permit small classes in which each child can get individual attention and guidance. In some communities the contrary situation exists. With many teachers leaving the schools to take better-paying jobs, the remaining teachers are overburdened with large classes and heavy schedules and have little time or energy left to consider the needs of individual pupils. Communities must pay teachers high enough salaries to keep them in the schools. Funds to maintain adequate and qualified staffs are a real preventive of delinquency.

Often, however, the child's difficulties lie outside the teacher's ability to handle and require the skills and services of other professional people. For example, a child may be undernourished or suffering from a physical ailment that prevents him from doing good school work, or his home situation may be a damaging one. Either the school must provide special facilities or it must enlist the cooperation of other agencies to help these children. Some communities have cut down on special services. Such "economy" is expensive in the long run as it may later add the greater cost of delinquency to the community budget.

### Community Participation

Most schools have gone far from their days of isolation from the rest of the community when they were just an institution to which children were consigned from 9 to 3:30 o'clock. Educators have come to realize that a child's education starts long before he enters the school gates and that it does not stop when he leaves them. They recognize the necessity for concerning themselves with the total life of the child—with his home, his neighborhood, his companions, his play, and all the other influences besides the school that are educating him.

Some schools are extending their educational services by providing nursery schools and kindergartens for the very young, and classes in the evening for grown-ups. They are reaching into homes, not only through the child but through parent-education classes, mothers' clubs, and parent-teacher activities.

Recognizing children's need to play and the important influences upon their lives of the manner in which they use their leisure time, some schools

keep their playgrounds and gymnasiums open after school and on holidays, and sponsor after-school clubs of various sorts. Some schools serve as community centers for the whole neighborhood and offer a wide program of recreational activities to adults as well as to children.

Programs of vocational guidance can work to keep in school students who ought to stay, can steer young people into jobs for which they are suited, and help them to appreciate the value of choosing work that offers training and a chance for promotion.

### PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL COMMUNITY INFLUENCES

What a boy or girl does in his time away from home and school depends to a large extent upon what the community has to offer. As we have seen earlier, the communities that offer children the least opportunity for wholesome recreation are generally the places in which organized community sentiment is weakest and in which demoralizing influences are most prevalent.

Inadequate housing, lack of constructive recreational facilities, coupled with youth's natural desire for fun and excitement, have tended to thrust young people who have no other outlets into low-grade commercial amusement spots that wait like beetle traps to attract them.

Since the purpose of such enterprises is profit for the owners, many, particularly in neighborhoods where competition is keen, employ questionable and sometimes illegal methods to lure the trade.

These places themselves do not "cause" crime. A young person who is emotionally stable and finds satisfaction for his needs in socially approved ways, who has opportunities for fun through wholesome outlets, who has absorbed from his family and other influences in his life decent standards of behavior, will have little desire for such entertainment, and even if exposed on occasion will suffer little harm.

But the boy or girl who is deprived of emotional or social satisfactions to begin with and whose judgment and sense of values are immature will be especially susceptible to the demoralizing attitudes inherent in such places, to the artificial stimulation, and to the dubious acquaintances he or she may scrape up there either as customer or as entertainer.

These boys and girls—and unfortunately there are many of them—need protection from harmful community influences. A community seriously concerned about the welfare of its children must maintain an honest and forthright program of inspection and regulation of commercial amusements, backed by carefully drawn laws and ordinances, to protect its youth and prevent their exploitation for commercial gain. It must eradicate the festering spots that breed delinquency by a vigorous policy of law enforcement on the part of its public officials.

Citizen groups and private organizations can do much in a community campaign to protect children. They can study their local conditions and call sore spots to the attention of the authorities. Through their most powerful democratic weapon—the ballot—citizens can wield a telling influence by voting for individuals they hope will be conscientious and competent public servants, by supporting them when they carry out their responsibilities, and by voting against them when they do not.

Regulation and suppression, however, are at best only a negative approach to the problem of protecting children from harmful community influences. The community must give its young people ample opportunities for constructive activities and recreation to fill their leisure time.

### RECREATION AND LEISURE-TIME AGENCIES

Much has been said about the value of recreation for improving physical health, building character, or preventing delinquency. Such emphasis overlooks its essential value in answering everyone's need for fun, for relaxation and release, and for self expression.

To the small child play is the most important activity. Those who have tried calling a child in for dinner know that even eating may seem like an adult-imposed nuisance to him if he is in the midst of a game with other children. Through play the young child can give vent to his feelings.

In the period when he is growing up and trying to establish himself as an individual apart from his family, the youngster finds in his activities with the group not only an outlet for his energies but satisfaction for many needs—his need for adventure, for companionship, and for group approval. The adolescent often gets from his relations with his "gang" a sense of emotional security that he may fail to find in his home or in school. Thus clubs or group affiliations of whatever kind answer a real need for growing boys and girls.

If the community makes no provision for meeting these needs, children themselves may take the initiative. The so-called social and athletic clubs that dot neighborhoods barren of recreational facilities, the "cellar clubs" that sprouted up during the depression, where young folks with little money could get together for talk and fun, give evidence of young people's ability to "find a way"—even though a questionable one in some instances—to meet their desire for social experience.

Immediately after the outbreak of World War II England closed its youth clubs and commandeered them for military purposes. It bore the consequences of this ill-advised move in a marked increase in juvenile delinquency. Children who had been getting real satisfaction out of their club activities were suddenly left without this anchor and some foundered. And some

formerly delinquent children who were finding wholesome ways of expression in their group work were thrown back to their antisocial habits. England soon remedied the situation by reopening the clubs and expanding them.

A community that has the welfare of its boys and girls at heart will provide plenty of play space—public parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, swimming pools, and camping spots. It will have easily accessible clubs and settlements and social centers. It will provide competent and trained leaders to help youngsters develop skills and creative talents in which they may find pleasure immediately and in later years.

### Recreation as Prevention

One often hears the claim that wholesome recreation will prevent delinquency. The skeptic, on the other hand, will point to statistics showing high delinquency rates in neighborhoods having boys' and girls' clubs, character-building agencies, settlement houses, and social centers. No one program by itself can combat delinquency. A child potentially or actually delinquent may find enough gratification in his activities at a club and in his human relationships there to be diverted from antisocial ways. Another child, however, may be so constantly exposed to harmful influences in his home and community that, despite the real pleasure he may get out of playing on a team or creating something with his hands, he keeps on being delinquent.

It is unfair to expect recreational agencies alone to be a "cure-all" for delinquency or to prevent its occurrence, when, as we have seen earlier, the causes are numerous and complex. By meeting children's needs through constructive recreational activities, leisure-time agencies can, and do, play an important part, *together with the home, the church, the school, welfare agencies and other social resources*, in a total program whose purpose is the wholesome development of the community's children.

### Recreation as Treatment

In general, the programs of leisure-time agencies are set up to meet the needs of average, well-adjusted children who are able to abide by the rules of the group and feel secure enough to participate in competitive and highly organized activities. Many delinquents, as we have seen, are socially immature children who have difficulty in getting along with others. The characteristics that keep a "difficult" child from getting along at home, at school, and in other places also prevent him from fitting into the regular program of, say, a boys' or girls' club, a YMCA or YWCA, or social center, where many of the activities involve ability to cooperate with others. This is one reason why many of such children shy away from these places or drop out after a short time. To urge them to participate in organized group activities

may be dangerous, because it may only increase their sense of inadequacy and difference.

It is not suggested that leisure-time agencies change the emphasis of their programs to help delinquents primarily. This would obviously be unfair to the great majority of the children, who are not delinquent and to whom the regular programs offer many satisfactions.

Without slighting the majority of their members, however, leisure-time agencies can be of help to children already delinquent or in danger of becoming so. As in the case of the schools, this would mean a flexible program with a wide range of activities in which children of varying degrees of social adaptability might find satisfying experiences. Many agencies have recognized the desirability of such a plan and are gradually providing facilities for special groups under expert guidance.

### Group Leaders

More important than any other aspects of its program, as of any agency dealing with human beings, are its workers. Leisure-time agencies must have the kind of leaders who are not merely experts in physical culture, or dramatics, or arts and crafts. They must be sensitive to the needs of children and able to meet them. They must understand the implications of human behavior and be sufficiently trained to spot the child whose actions indicate some maladjustment as, for example, the child who always wants to be the "boss"; the child who pursues his interests always alone; the child who flits from one activity to another without completing any; the child who wanders around by himself and just "watches." Through personal interest and attention a skilled leader can help to meet the needs of a maladjusted child. By manipulating the agency's program he can gradually help one child to develop the ability to get along with others; another to get group recognition through his achievement; a third to develop initiative or a capacity for leadership; and a fourth to learn to focus his energies.

For many maladjusted boys and girls the leader's greatest value lies in giving them a happy relationship with an adult, which they may have lacked. As is indicated in the first section, *What Causes Delinquency?*, children take on the ways and attitudes of those they admire. A good relationship with a group leader whom a delinquent child admires may have a great deal of influence in changing his conduct.

## CHILD-GUIDANCE CLINICS

Behavior problems in childhood, if left untreated, may herald later delinquency. A community concerned with the prevention of delinquency must have facilities for the study and treatment of children showing behavior

or personality disorders. Child-guidance clinics are set up primarily for that purpose. While many of the larger cities have such services, the majority of children in the United States have no access to them.

Clinics vary somewhat in their functions, the sources from which they receive cases, and the auspices under which they operate. A clinic may be attached to a school, a hospital, a court, or a social agency; it may be part of the State or local public welfare or public-health service. Some clinics are supported by private funds, others by public funds. The particular affiliations of a child-guidance clinic are unimportant. What is essential is that it make itself part of a coordinated community program.

In general, child-guidance clinics are staffed with psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. They are specially trained to understand the physical, psychological, and social forces that prompt the behavior of children, and to help them in their difficulties.

Each child is carefully studied in the light of his own situation and treated according to his individual needs. One child whose problems are an expression of some deep emotional conflict may require intensive treatment by the psychiatrist. Another child, whose misbehavior is largely a byproduct of the cultural environment in which he lives, may profit by an entirely different type of approach. In most instances, the total situation to which the child reacts must be treated rather than the child himself. Perhaps the attitudes of the parents toward the child need to be modified, or their anxieties, reflected in the child's behavior, relieved. Perhaps the child's school program should be changed, or his physical condition remedied. Perhaps enrollment in a club is called for, a club in which the child can find expression for his creative abilities under the guidance of a leader who understands "problem" children; perhaps the child's environment is so detrimental that it is best to remove him from it. Perhaps the child needs a variety of services plus a friendly relationship with a worker that will give him a satisfying experience with an adult.

These are but a few random types of situations that clinical study of children often reveals. The staffs of clinics are usually small. While many children can be examined, only a limited number can be accepted for treatment. The clinic must turn to other community agencies for assistance in carrying out its plans for treatment. The effectiveness of the clinic, therefore, depends upon the existence of community resources and the cooperation of other agencies. If, for example, after its study of a child, the clinic finds that he needs foster-home care but there is no agency in the community that can arrange for his placement, or finds that he needs vocational instruction but the school has no facilities for such service, the clinic is hampered in helping that particular child.

The child-guidance clinic can be a most important educative influence in the community. By interpreting the needs of the individual child to parents, teachers, nurses, social workers, probation officers, recreation leaders, and

others dealing with children, it can spread knowledge and understanding of the principles of mental health that make for a better understanding of human behavior. It can reach an even wider audience through lectures, seminars, and radio talks. A few States provide the service of traveling child-guidance clinics to rural communities.

In a time of crisis there is a tendency to cut down on funds for intangible services, such as a child-guidance clinic provides. Yet it is in such critical times that problems are aggravated and break-downs more likely to occur—times when child-guidance services should be expanded.

## SOCIAL SERVICES

### What Might Have Been Done

There are many children whose individual disabilities or home conditions seriously jeopardize their progress toward maturity. These children need special consideration by the community. Social services, furnished by public or private agencies, are one way by which society can safeguard their welfare. These services help to give the children not only material aid, when this is necessary, and the kind of environmental protection needed to promote their wholesome growth, but also, through the personal interest and guidance of the social worker, emotional satisfactions to make up to them for the lack in their lives that might otherwise lead to delinquency.

Jimmy Smith, Tom Kelly, and Peter Taglione might be considered as such children. Let us see how a community child-welfare program with adequate social services might have functioned in their situations, and might have forestalled their delinquent behavior.

*For Jimmy.*—In Jimmy's case, community concern for the Smith family would have started away back when his order brother, Jack, was "making trouble" for the teachers. Instead of scolding, demoting, or expelling Jack, the school would have utilized the services of its *school social worker* or *visiting teacher*, a social case worker trained in mental hygiene, to study his situation and give the school authorities some understanding of why he was misbehaving and what it could do to help him change his ways. Among other things this worker would have gone to see Jack's parents. Perhaps she would have found that the family was behind in the rent and lacked sufficient food because Mr. Smith was out of work and that Mrs. Smith was ill and could not look after the children, who were "running wild" on the streets. Perhaps the mother would have complained that Mr. Smith was always quarrelsome and that when he drank he was abusive to her and the children; that she was also worried about Jimmy, then only 5, who had temper tantrums when crossed and was always hitting his baby brother. And Lola, just 7, "played naughty" with the neighbor boys.

The school social worker, however, might have referred Mr. Smith to the local public-welfare agency which had a broad program of services including funds for financial assistance to families and trained child-welfare workers to give specialized case-work services to children. The two workers from the school and the agency would have cooperated to provide all the help needed by Jimmy and his family but without duplication of their contacts with the Smiths.

Case work has been described as the art of helping people to help themselves. In this situation the child-welfare worker, on the basis of her specialized knowledge and skill, would have tried among other things to help Mr. and Mrs. Smith to get along together and to cope with their children's problems.

More likely, however, the visiting teacher would have decided that Jack's problem was basically a family problem and she would have referred the Smiths to an *agency*, whose purpose is to help maintain normal family life. This agency would then have referred Mr. Smith to a public employment agency and would have furnished temporary financial assistance until he could support his family. The agency would have referred Mrs. Smith to a *clinic* for medical care and, if necessary would have supplied a *supervised homemaker* to look after the children and do the housework during the mother's illness. Gradually, through her case-work skill, the social worker of the family-welfare agency would have established a personal relationship with Mr. and Mrs. Smith in which they could "talk out" with her their differences. Perhaps through gaining some insight into the roots of their domestic discord they would be able to make a better marital adjustment. She would also have helped them gain a better understanding of their children's needs. Once the parents' attitudes changed as a result of their increased insight, the children's behavior would probably have improved. If Lola's and Jimmy's problems had seemed serious enough to warrant the attention of a psychiatrist, the case worker would have arranged for them to be studied at a *child-guidance clinic*.

In the meantime the visiting teacher would have been giving her attention to Jack and his problems. In addition to helping his teacher understand Jack better and working out with her the best way to meet his needs, she would have made friends with Jack. Through his relationship with an adult who could accept him even though he was "bad," he might have gained a feeling of security and worth. Or she might have referred him to a *neighborhood boys' club* and explained his difficulties to the group leader, who would take a special interest in the boy.

All the agencies concerned with the Smith family would have cooperated on a joint plan to the common end of conserving and strengthening its home life.

*For Tom.*—The second boy, Tom, needed help long before he started school. If Mrs. Kelly had attended a *parent-education class* she might have

learned that Tom's bed wetting, far from being only an annoying habit, may have been a symptom of some emotional disturbance. She would have taken him to the community child-guidance clinic and there obtained professional help. Or, had she been unaware of the clinic's services, the doctor to whom she eventually brought Tom for examination would perhaps have referred her there after he found no physical basis for the habit. Thus the community could have helped meet Tom's problems when he was still quite small.

*For Peter.*—Peter needed the services of many cooperating social agencies. A family-welfare agency would have arranged for his mother to stay at home with the children, which she had always wanted to do, instead of going to work and leaving her three small children without adequate supervision, and would have directed her to apply at the *local public-welfare department for aid to dependent children.*

The child-welfare worker would also have referred Peter to the *State crippled children's agency* for medical care. This agency would have arranged for Peter to be examined at a *diagnostic clinic* by a child specialist and an orthopedic surgeon in order to determine what treatment services were necessary for his crippled leg. It then would have arranged for complete medical care.

The *medical social worker* of the State crippled children's agency would have taken an active interest in Peter from the time he first came to the clinic. With the cooperation of the family case worker she would have obtained a history of Peter's case, including something about his living conditions, the attitude of his mother toward his physical handicap and toward the proposed treatment, and the family's financial resources. In this way the surgeon could plan treatment especially suited to Peter's needs.

If Peter needed hospital care, the State crippled children's agency would have arranged for his admission to an approved hospital and treatment by a competent surgeon. It would also have arranged for his after-care and for any necessary appliances such as braces or special shoes.

Upon his release from the hospital a *local public-health nurse* would have provided follow-up nursing service in Peter's home. Besides noting Peter's progress she would have given Mrs. Taglione instructions for the boy's care and for his return to the crippled children's clinic at periodic intervals so that he would get the maximum benefit from the surgery.

Eventually the social worker would have enlisted the interest and cooperation of a group leader at the neighborhood *settlement house* to help Peter find satisfaction in recreational activities in which his crippled condition would be no handicap.

In order to obtain a picture of his intelligence, his special abilities and disabilities, the school would have arranged for Peter to be studied either by its own *psychological services* or by a child-guidance clinic. On the basis of the findings the school would have been in a better position to know

how much he could accomplish and how best to arrange the school program to meet his needs.<sup>5</sup>

Peter's education and vocational training would have been planned in the light of his future employability. The services of the *State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation* could have been utilized for vocational guidance and training.

The foregoing discussion of possible services for Jimmy, Tom, and Peter illustrates a few types of social services that may be provided by the community: Visiting teachers, family counseling, homemaker service, medical care and health service, child guidance, public assistance to families and children, services for crippled children, and vocational rehabilitation. Many other services, including foster care in family homes or institutions for those who must be removed from their own homes, are necessary to give children who are under special disadvantages the care and protection they need.

There is no fixed pattern by which social services are rendered. They may be furnished through a variety of channels, such as schools, hospitals, or social agencies. They may be supported by private or public funds.

### Expansion of Child-Welfare Services

There has been a growing conviction that the provision of social services to children and their families should be basically a public responsibility. Some public provision for the care and protection of children has been made to some extent for many years. But after the passage of the Social Security Act in 1935, local public-welfare agencies, with responsibility for services to children, began to expand on a broad scale throughout the country. At the present time every State welfare department makes some provision for the development of local child-welfare service. Impetus for the expansion of this program came from the Federal Government when it provided funds through the Social Security Act "for the purpose of enabling the United States, through the Children's Bureau, to cooperate with State public-welfare agencies in establishing, extending, and strengthening, especially in predominantly rural areas, public-welfare services for the protection and care of homeless, dependent, and neglected children, and children in danger of becoming delinquent."

On June 30, 1946, State and local public-welfare agencies employed approximately 2,900 persons who devoted full time to child-welfare programs. Of this number, about 2,200 were child-welfare case workers. Yet child-welfare

<sup>5</sup> Since Peter was in an "opportunity room" when we met him, it is most likely that he had had the benefit of psychological service, as schools seldom place a child in a special room without previous psychological study. His delinquency, despite the school's interest, points to the necessity, stressed in previous sections, for the cooperation of all the community agencies giving basic services to children. No matter how excellent its efforts might be in improving a child's school adjustment, the school alone can be of little avail in remedying all his difficulties when they are, as in Peter's case, so far-reaching and involve so many other parts of his life.

services are not available to great portions of our child population, especially children in rural areas. Even in the large cities, the child-welfare program frequently lacks many sorely needed services.

In general, the objective of child-welfare service is the preservation of home life and the prevention of child dependency, neglect, and delinquency. To carry out this aim, child-welfare workers perform a variety of services. They include case-work service to children in their own homes who are dependent, neglected, mistreated, or in danger of becoming delinquent; to children in need of foster care; to children who are unusually troublesome at home, at school, or in the community; and to children in need of treatment or special services because of physical or mental handicaps. In some rural areas all children coming to the attention of the court are referred to the child-welfare worker for social service. Jimmy, Tom, and Peter, for example, had they lived in a rural area where child-welfare services were available, would have been children with whom the child-welfare worker would be concerned.

### Unevenness of Service

Thousands of children in need of care and protection have been helped as a result of child-welfare services in their locality. Unfortunately there are still many communities in which children are being deprived of an opportunity for normal development because needed services are lacking. Though this is primarily true of rural areas, it is also true of many cities. Some cities may have a number of social agencies, but their work may overlap or there may be gaps in the services offered by the agencies as a whole. For example, there may be an oversupply of institutions for dependent and neglected children but little or no provision for foster-home care or for service to children in their own homes.

Often, too, communities make provision for dealing with children like Jimmy, Tom, and Peter only *after* they have become a menace to the community, and do little or nothing to help them *before* their difficulties grow serious. One hope of preventing delinquency and maladjustment lies in providing resources for discovery and treatment of children headed for trouble when their problems first show themselves.

### Early Diagnosis and Treatment

The experiences of the Children's Bureau in the operation of a project in an area in St. Paul, Minn., indicate the value of such a plan.<sup>6</sup> The St. Paul project was started in 1937 for the "purpose of study, research, and demonstration of the methods and techniques that can be used effectively

<sup>6</sup> Helping Children in Trouble. Children's Bureau Pub. 320. Washington, 1947. 17 pp. Children in the Community. Children's Bureau Pub. 317. Washington, 1946. 182 pp.

in prevention and treatment of delinquency." Its staff consisted of a psychiatrist, psychologist, case workers, and group workers.

Starting with the premise that the success of preventive measures depends upon the early recognition of children showing personality or behavior disorders, the staff attempted to locate these children by turning to organizations that see the child in his daily routine. Foremost among these was the school. The schools in the area were asked to let the staff know of children whose behavior caused the teachers or principals concern. The staff also worked closely with the police. They were encouraged to refer for study and treatment as many children and young people who came to their attention as possible.

As might be expected, at first mostly older children, especially those showing aggressive behavior that disturbed school routine, were referred. Gradually younger children, whose difficulties were less serious, were referred for treatment. In fact, during the later years many of the children referred were in the primary grades and even in kindergarten. A study showed that during the first year the median age of referral was 13; that is, half the children referred were over 13 years of age, half under. In June 1942 the median age of referral was 10, a drop of 3 years. These figures indicate that if resources are available and close working relationships are established with the institutions and agencies that have close contact with the child, children can be treated early and this early treatment measurably increases the chances of correcting existing problems and of preventing more serious difficulties later.

More planning and experimentation need to be done in working out methods for the identification and treatment of children when symptoms of maladjustment first appear.

### **Toward an Adequate Program**

Social services to children whose home conditions or individual difficulties require special attention should be provided in every county or other appropriate area. The local public welfare department should be able to provide these services either directly or through the resources of other agencies. Public and private child-welfare agencies should cooperate in a program that will assure that every child in need will get proper help, regardless of legal residence, economic status, or race.

The development of good child-welfare services and the coordination of the activities of public and private agencies depend upon the support of informed citizens. Advisory committees, civic organizations, and clubs can stimulate public interest in the need for an adequate child-welfare program and can help their public-welfare departments maintain high standards of service and personnel.

## THE POLICE

Jimmy, Tom, and Peter did not have the benefit of adequate community services when they began being troublesome. Their behavior difficulties gradually increased. Eventually they fell into the hands of the police.

The traditional concept of the duties of the police is largely one of maintaining order and suppressing crime, of catching lawbreakers and bringing them to justice. Actually the police can make a very real contribution to a community program for the prevention of delinquency.

Because the police are generally the first official persons to have contact with a child after he has gotten into trouble, their handling of the situation at the time may have a marked effect upon the child's attitude toward the law. If they treat him with some understanding, they may help to dispel the notion many children have that police are hostile, punishing persons, to be avoided or outsmarted.

On the other hand, if they deal with a child as though he were a criminal, perhaps handcuffing and jailing him, they may serve to confirm not only his antagonistic ideas about the police but also his romantic notion of himself as a heroic "lone wolf" pitted against society. They may make him feel that he is already a criminal. He may glorify the event later, dramatizing himself as a "tough guy" before his companions for their admiration.

As part of their training, all police officers should be given some knowledge of the problems of children and of how to cope with them. Since they dispose of thousands of cases of juveniles without bringing them into court, they should also be acquainted with all the community resources to which they might refer children.

The police are probably more familiar than any other organized group with community conditions that might endanger the safety of young people. Through regular patrol and supervision of potentially harmful spots, such as streets, parks, bus stations, dance halls, skating rinks, motion-picture houses, hotels, night clubs, restaurants, and taverns, the police can help to check promiscuous activities and to protect young people from demoralizing influences. In the course of their inspection, the police may find youngsters working in undesirable places at too early an age, too late at night, and for too long hours. By reporting violations of child-labor and liquor-control laws to State officials and cooperating with them in the enforcement of these laws, the police can also help to protect young persons from being exploited for commercial gain.

Police departments in urban centers should have a special unit devoted to protective and preventive work. The policemen and policewomen assigned to this unit should be trained and experienced in social work as they will come across many young people who need special attention. It is not the task of the police to treat these youngsters, but they should

be able to recognize the nature of their problems and know where to send them for help.

## THE JUVENILE COURT

Many people are inclined to think of the juvenile court in terms of criminal procedure—as a tribunal where young offenders are tried and punished according to the seriousness of the offense. Although it is a court in which legal issues are decided and judicial action is taken, the juvenile court is founded on the principle that all children brought before it are wards of the State, to be helped and protected rather than punished. It is concerned not so much with the specific offense for which a child is brought to court as with the child himself. Why is this particular child delinquent? What needs to be done to remedy the conditions that gave rise to his behavior? These are some of the questions the juvenile court seeks to answer.

### Juvenile Court in Practice

Every State has laws that provide either for a juvenile court or for specialized procedure in children's cases. But the courts vary markedly in their administration and in their effectiveness as a community resource. In some areas the juvenile court is a well-organized social agency. In other areas children's cases are heard as cases in a police court are heard.

Let us follow Jimmy Smith through the juvenile court, where he and his companions were taken by the police after they were caught.

### Jurisdiction

Because he was only 15 Jimmy came under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. The age limit for juvenile-court jurisdiction in the majority of States is 18 years, though in some States the age limit is only 16 years. In three States the juvenile court has jurisdiction until the age of 21. A few States have a higher age limit for girls than for boys.

Stealing tires is a serious offense. Some States require that even though the boy or girl is a minor, if he commits a serious offense the juvenile court must turn him over to another court. In other States the juvenile court may use its own discretion in deciding whether or not it will give up its jurisdiction. In most States, however, the juvenile court has jurisdiction over all delinquent children regardless of the nature of the offense.

### Detention

After a boy or girl is brought to the juvenile court by the police, he is usually allowed to return home until the hearing. Sometimes, however, it may be necessary to keep a child in detention until then because the child's home is seriously harmful to him or because the youngster, as in the case of

Jimmy, is beyond the control of his parents and might run away if not held. If children must be held, the detention should be as brief as possible. This requires a staff large enough to handle cases without delay, that is, to make prompt investigations, and to hold frequent hearings.

While Jimmy was in the detention home, he was kept busy with specialized school work and recreational activities. In some places, however, few facilities are provided to keep the children occupied. They merely "wait" until their cases are called. In their restlessness and boredom over having nothing to do they sometimes get into more trouble.

In some localities children are detained in private boarding homes. This has many advantages over public detention homes. Wherever a group of children are housed together, they naturally exchange experiences. In a public detention home, where groups of children are thrown into intimate contact, ideas that lead to delinquency may be spread from one child to another. Placement in a private home avoids this danger. It also affords the child individual attention in a "homey" atmosphere.

Unfortunately there are still some localities in which children are held in jails or police stations. Many jails are in shockingly insanitary condition—often lacking adequate bathing or toilet facilities. Far more serious is the harm to a child of keeping him in jail, sometimes in the same cell with hardened adult offenders.

Detention in jail should never be permitted for children under 16. If older ones are detained in jail upon order of a juvenile-court judge because their habits or conduct might be a menace to other children, they should be kept in quarters apart from adults. Adequate provision for the detention of children, preferably in private boarding homes, should be made in every community.

### **Social and Psychiatric Investigation**

While Jimmy was in the detention home the probation officer, who is a social worker on the staff of the court, made a careful study of the boy's situation. This included a study of his home and community conditions surrounding it, the nature of his family relationships, his school experience, his companions, his interests and activities, and his previous difficulties.

Because he had been "in trouble" many times, Jimmy was referred to the court child-guidance clinic for psychological and psychiatric study in order that the judge might have a deeper understanding of his problem.

### **Hearing**

Jimmy's hearing was simple and informal. Only those directly concerned with the case were present. The judge talked in a direct, friendly manner with Jimmy and his parents, each of whom had a chance to speak for himself. The judge had the findings and recommendations of the probation

officer and the clinic. But the final decision for a plan of treatment rested with him. On the basis of all the facts he decided that Jimmy could profit best by institutional placement. So Jimmy Smith was committed to the State training school for boys.

### Personnel

The judge and his staff are the most important factors in the juvenile court. The court's effectiveness depends largely upon their competence and point of view.

*The judge.*—The judge of the juvenile court is responsible for deciding upon the legal aspects of the case. He should, therefore, be well trained in the law. But he must also have an appreciation of the social and psychological aspects of the case. No one—not even a judge—can himself encompass the training and knowledge necessary to understand thoroughly all the facets of a child's problems. A judge must, therefore, have respect for other disciplines—medicine, social work, psychology, psychiatry—and be willing to call upon experts in those fields for their contributions in order to broaden his own understanding of the case before him. Above all, a judge of the juvenile court must like children and know how to deal with them.

*The probation officer.*—A probation officer should be a qualified social worker, selected on merit. He, too, must understand children and be endowed with the kind of personality that fits him for his important task. He should not be so overloaded with work that he is unable to give each child adequate attention. Some juvenile courts have well-qualified probation staffs. Others have officers who are political appointees without training or aptitude for their work.

### Treatment

Though Jimmy was sent to a training school, the majority of children passing through the juvenile courts are "dismissed" after an adjustment of the case has been made, or returned to their own homes under the supervision of the probation officer. That is what happened to Tom and Peter—they were placed "on probation." The probation officer's job is far more than "checking up" to see that the delinquent child is behaving. It is a job requiring case work. It means giving the child under supervision the understanding, guidance, and help he needs to get along in his home and community. It requires training, experience, and natural ability.

The juvenile court, in general, has been under some handicap in successfully carrying out this aspect of its work. Although a well-functioning court is, in a sense, a social agency, it is primarily a legal agency. The child does not come to it voluntarily; nearly always he is brought against

his will. He is likely to be suspicious and resentful and to resist treatment. No matter how sympathetic and understanding the judge and probation officer may be, to the delinquent boy or girl they represent figures of authority with the power of the law behind them.

The attitude of the community, too, hampers the court. Associating the court with the idea of punishment, the community is likely to exert pressure on it to "do something quickly" to change the delinquent child. Under such pressure the temptation is great to use the power of authority to make a child, particularly a "willful" or rebellious one, behave. Although such a method may work with some children in curbing further misconduct, most delinquents need a different kind of approach if they are to modify their ways.

There has been a trend in recent years toward defining more clearly the place and function of the juvenile court in the community, and toward relieving it of the responsibility for treatment, especially of those children who need case-work service rather than judicial action. In the early days of the juvenile court other community resources for treating children's problems were few, and the court, in keeping with its socialized approach, assumed the responsibility for treatment along with its legal functions. It fell to the probation officer to do the necessary reconstructive work with the delinquent child and his family.

New treatment services, both public and private, designed to meet the needs of the individual child, have been gradually developed in the community. These services can now be used by the court in a cooperative arrangement. For example, the court, upon investigation of a child's situation, might decide that it would be to his best interests to be placed in a foster home. It would then enlist the cooperation of a child-placing agency to find a suitable home and give the child the necessary supervision and case-work service.

Many children who presented behavior problems but who had not violated the law used to be brought to the juvenile court because there were no other agencies in the community to deal with them. Since the expansion of treatment services in the school, the health center, the recreation agency, and the family-welfare agency, and particularly since the development of public child-welfare services for children who are dependent, neglected, or in danger of becoming delinquent, these children can now in many communities, be given attention at an early stage without the necessity of a court experience. Some courts are referring cases directly to social agencies for treatment at the time complaints are made, if no judicial decision seems warranted. Such an arrangement, however, can be effective only if the community provides adequate social resources to meet the needs of all children requiring special care.

## FOSTER-HOME CARE

In general, the best place for a child is with his own family. The majority of parents, even under the most trying conditions, are able to look after their children and give them the security and protection they need for their wholesome development. But some parents, either because of their own physical, mental, or emotional incapacities, or because of circumstances beyond their control, fail in this important task. As we have seen earlier, most delinquents come from such situations.

The community should provide social resources to help parents maintain a normal family life for themselves and their children whenever possible. Sometimes, however, it is to the child's best interests to remove him from his home and to place him elsewhere. This may be in an institution or in a family home where the foster parents can give him the care and affection, the discipline and training he failed to get from his own family. To decide to remove a child from his home is a momentous step. Of almost equal responsibility is the question of where, then, to place him. These decisions should be made only after intensive study of the child and of everything that concerns him.

Before placing a child in a foster home, the strength of his family ties must be carefully evaluated. What appears to be a "terrible" home to the casual observer may actually have deep values for the child. It may seem advisable, for example, to remove Johnny Jones, delinquent, from the dirty two-room hovel where he is living with his five sisters and brothers and his disreputable mother, and place him in the clean cottage of good kindly citizens such as the Browns, where he will have a room of his own and careful supervision. But if his ties to his family are strong, Johnny might be very unhappy at the Browns, despite their well-meant efforts, and before too long we might find the boy running back to his mother, crowded hovel or no. In this case it might be quite the wiser course to help Johnny's mother make a better home for the children.

On the other hand, the warmth and understanding that another boy, Richard Black, might get from foster parents who accept him without reservations may be just the answer for this boy, also delinquent, whose mother never really wanted him and whose wealthy, divorced father has shown no interest in the boy.

It is no simple matter to select a foster home that will benefit a particular delinquent child. It takes an understanding of children, training, and skill. It should be done only by well-qualified social workers.

Selecting a suitable home is merely the beginning of the difficult task of the social worker who does child placing. She must prepare a child, who quite naturally may be fearful of the proposed change, so that he will accept

the placement willingly. Otherwise, he might be unhappy or run away. After he is in the foster home, she must continue her relationship with him, particularly in the trying early days, to ease his adjustment to his new situation. Through her sustained interest she can give the child a sense of security and the comforting feeling that he has in her a trusted friend.

She must help his own parents to accept the placement. They may feel guilty or ashamed over what appears to be their failure to bring up their own child. Unless she gives them some reassurance and helps them understand the need for placement, they may, perhaps unconsciously, interfere with or defeat the treatment plan. While the child is in the foster home, the same social worker, or one from a family-welfare agency working cooperatively with her, must try to rehabilitate the child's own home, if possible, so that he may return to it after benefiting from the foster-home treatment.

The social worker must also help the foster parents to accept the child into their affections and to deal wisely with him however he behaves. She must continue her contacts throughout his stay in order to guide the foster parents in helping the child to overcome his difficulties and to encourage them in their efforts, particularly when his behavior is exasperating.

One cannot stress too often the fact that the essence of successful treatment of a delinquent lies in the building up of a satisfying personal relationship with an adult whom he loves and who loves him. It does not much matter if the wallpaper in the foster home is faded and the furniture shabby. What matters is that the foster parents are understanding people and truly fond of the child, even when they must use firmness to discipline him. They must be able to tolerate his bad behavior without feeling that he is "ungrateful." This is a great deal to ask of foster parents, since delinquent children are often overactive, destructive, and lacking in regard for the rights of others. But it is better not to place a child at all than to put him in a home with foster parents who will want him with them only as long as he is "good" and refuse to keep him when he is "bad." As we have seen, delinquents are often children who felt unwanted to begin with. Added rejection by the foster parents would only intensify their sense of failure and "unwantedness" and perhaps drive them to further delinquencies.

As part of a coordinated child-welfare program every community should have a social agency, either public or private, whose function in whole or in part is foster care of children. Most cities have such services. Until quite recently many a delinquent child in a rural district whose home was unsafe for him had to be committed to an institution because the community had no facilities for foster-home care. Since the expansion of public child-welfare services in rural areas, many State and local departments of public welfare are making provisions for such care.

## INSTITUTIONAL CARE

"It looks like the 'reform school' for Jimmy. It's his fourth time in juvenile court."

A delinquent child is apt to be sent to a training school as a last resort after other methods have failed to improve his behavior, or, in some cases, because no other treatment resources are available in the community. We commit delinquent boys and girls, we say, in the hope that the institution will accomplish what we have been unable to do on the outside. Unconsciously, perhaps, we may be punishing them because they did not respond to our efforts to help them.

The opportunities that an institution affords for group life in a controlled environment may be precisely what a certain delinquent child needs at one stage in his development to help him learn new ways of living. But such a placement should be made only after the child is carefully studied, and after it is determined that the type of treatment offered by the institution can answer his needs at that particular time better than any other type.

It will be remembered that delinquent children are those who have not learned to abide by society's rules. The causes behind their inability or refusal to conform are many and complex. In general, delinquents are the children who have been deprived of what they need—emotionally, socially, and sometimes physically deprived. Their delinquencies arise from the failure of their homes and communities to meet their fundamental needs.

If the training school is to help these children learn to adjust their personal desires to the demands of the group, so that they may eventually take their place as socially useful members of the community, it must try to make up to them for the deprivations they have endured. Obviously, further disregard of their individual needs by mass regimentation, rigid discipline, and blanket rules of punishment will not accomplish this end.

Instead of being primarily a place of confinement for juveniles, a training school for delinquent children must be what its name implies—an educational institution in the broadest sense. It must prepare boys and girls for successful living in their homes and their communities. A training school must help them realize those potentialities for growth and achievement that their unfortunate previous experiences had stunted and perverted. To achieve this purpose the emphasis of the training school must be focused, not upon keeping order or upon the cost of maintenance, but upon meeting the needs of every child it receives.

A good training school would give opportunities for a well-rounded home and community life. For example, it would arrange for the children to live in cottages with a house mother, house father, and small groups of children similar in age and interests. Cottage life can never be a satisfactory substitute for family life. But it can give these children some of the values

of home life, which many of them have never known. It can teach them orderly habits of social living and the give-and-take of group life. It can give them contact with understanding adults who accept them and whom they can accept. For some delinquents the greatest benefit of cottage life lies in the security and recognition they may find in their relationship with the cottage parents.

Neat grounds, attractive curtains at the cottage windows, and well-planned meals, though they are important, do not make a good institution. Nor do up-to-date buildings, a broad curriculum, and well-equipped shops to train young people for trades, necessary though these are. Despite the most modern architecture and the best equipment, if those in charge of the children regard them as "bad" boys and girls who must be "reformed" and taught obedience through fear of punishment, or merely as charges to be supplied with shelter, regular meals, and clean linen, the children will profit little from their institutional experience. No aspect of the institutional program is so important as the quality of its personnel.

Only as an institution's cottage parents, teachers, and administrators are themselves mature and able to control the natural desire to dominate their charges by virtue of their authoritative position—only as they are sensitive to the needs of boys and girls and can respect their personalities—can an institution hope to bestow any lasting benefits upon the children.

It is thus of the utmost importance that training schools be staffed with men and women of well-integrated personalities who have a genuine fondness for children. A child can accept discipline and can profit from it if he knows that the person administering it is fair and has an abiding regard for him.

Many children who are delinquent have such severe emotional, mental, and physical handicaps that they should never be sent to training schools. Not only are such children unable to profit by the training school experience, but they often disrupt the program for the other children. Yet many severely handicapped children are committed to training schools because the community has no other means of caring for them. Special institutions or treatment facilities especially adapted to meet the needs of these children should be established for them.

But many training schools are failing with some of the children they should be expected to serve. Many "graduates" continue their delinquent behavior. Of the several factors that account for this, perhaps the most important is the failure of many training schools to live up to what should be their first objective—the reeducation of children whose energies have been misdirected. Some schools still cling to confinement and punishment as methods of treatment. In others, despite the outward manifestations of modern procedure, lingering attitudes of "reform" prevail. Children exposed to such treatment often take little with them upon their release but a deepened resentment against authority.

Retraining children whose behavior is serious enough to warrant their removal from the community is a difficult task. It is also an expensive one, if lasting results are to be obtained. Many training schools are handicapped in doing a good job because they do not have enough funds to employ and keep qualified personnel or to provide adequate equipment. Citizens interested in child welfare should see that their legislators appropriate sufficient funds for training schools to permit them to obtain these two essentials to constructive reeducation of the boys and girls in their care.

One of the drawbacks of many institutions has been their isolation from the communities from which the delinquent children came and to which they must return. All too often children are released from the training school only to return to the very conditions that gave rise to their difficulties. Before long they again fall prey to the destructive forces that provoked their previous delinquency. If its program is to be really effective, the training school must be a part of an integrated child-welfare program to remedy the situation to which the child will return. It must work closely with other community agencies to prepare the child's family and community to receive him.

After returning home, the child will need encouragement and guidance in making the necessary adjustments. Unfortunately considerable stigma is still attached to a training-school experience. The child must be helped to face the prejudice and suspicion of the community—and sometimes even of his family—because he has been in a “reform school.” The person in charge of the delinquent's aftercare, whether he is attached to the training school, the State department of public welfare, or a local agency, should be a well-qualified social worker with the ability and time to give those under his supervision the attention and care they require.

The community itself must be educated to receive with good grace boys or girls who have been in a training school. It must recognize its responsibility not only toward helping these youngsters to reestablish themselves as useful members of society, but even more important, toward preventing those conditions that give rise to their delinquency in the first place.

### COORDINATED COMMUNITY FORCES

Just as there is no one cause for delinquency, so there is no one method of prevention. The causative factors, as we have seen, are multiple and complex and our attack must likewise be many-sided.

No one program or any one agency can be of much avail. All community services that are concerned with the welfare of children—churches, schools, recreational centers, health services, child-guidance clinics, and the various public and private social services—must be utilized. But they must do more than perform their specific function. They must plan and work

together in a coordinated program based upon the 24-hour needs of all the community's children. Such a program would aim to fill gaps in essential services, to eliminate duplication of effort, and to make the best possible use of community resources.

There must be some form of community organization through which this coordination can be accomplished. "Community organization" is the means by which representatives from community agencies and institutions, both public and private, and from citizen groups can jointly study the needs of the community and make plans to meet them. Councils of social agencies, and community chests are examples of the group effort known as community organization.

The task of preventing delinquency cannot be delegated solely to experts. It takes the united effort of everyone in the community. As citizens we must take vigilant interest in the community life that affects our children. We can join with other citizens in community groups, whether they be parent-teacher associations, church groups, service clubs, women's clubs, or labor unions, to study local conditions, plan for their improvement, and translate plans into action. We can volunteer our services in recreation centers, nurseries, clinics, and many other child-caring agencies left short-handed by the war. We can serve on the boards of social agencies and help to interpret their work to the community and the community's needs to them. We can give financial support to agencies doing a good job.

These are a few of the many contributions citizens can make to a community program for the prevention of delinquency. Only as all citizens develop a sense of civic responsibility and participate with others for the common good can we hope to achieve the kind of community life in which delinquency will have small chance to flourish.

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