

1947

## Current Notes

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## CURRENT NOTES

Austin L. Porterfield, Guest Editor

**Guest Editor's Note to Readers**—Everyone who has any news or material that might fit into *Current Notes* is urged to send the same to the address of the *Guest Editor of Current Notes: Austin L. Porterfield, Department of Sociology, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth 9, Texas.*

**Sanford Bates Honored**—Sanford Bates, the American representative to the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission, which met at Berne, Switzerland, on August 25-30, 1946, was honored by being elected as the new president of the organization. His own words, taken from brief remarks he made on acceptance of the office, serve best to describe the meeting. In part he said:

The delegates of the eighteen countries who have assembled here have discharged with fidelity and devotion their own responsibility to their countries as well as to the International Commission which they serve . . . There never was a time . . . when it was more important that men from different regions of the earth . . . should have the opportunity and determination to understand each other better. If everywhere in the world there could prevail the spirit of mutual trust and confidence . . . the willingness to listen to the other's viewpoint that have prevailed here in Berne during the last week, the world would indeed be a more peaceful . . . place in which to live.

**A Better Probation and Parole Law Is Up to the 50th Legislature of Texas**—The Texas Probation Association and the Texas Social Welfare Association have joined hands to get two new bills to the 50th Legislature of Texas which convened in January, 1947. These bills are for the purpose of placing prison personnel on the merit system as a basis for selection, with improved salaries for all workers and for establishing adult probation and parole on a scientific basis in the state. The latter bill proposes the following conditions for adult probation:

1. Courts of record shall have the power to suspend sentences, unless the sentence is for life or death, and to place persons on probation under the supervision of a State Board of Adult Probation to be created by the Act.

2. The terms of probation are to be determined by such courts, but the probationer is to violate no law, avoid injurious habits, stay away from disreputable persons and places, make regular reports to his supervisor, permit visits from that officer, work faithfully, support his dependents, and remain in a designated place.

3. The court should call upon the probation officers available to it to bring in case reports on persons who are being considered for probational treatment.

4. The court, may, at its discretion, require a bond of the prospective probationer.

5. Courts shall determine the period of probation, and may at any time extend or terminate such a period.

6. Probation officers, who will also have charge of parolees, shall keep the State Board informed of any change in residence of either probationers or parolees.

7. Either probationers or parolees may be arrested when they violate the terms of their release and held in a county jail until taken back to court or returned to the prison, if a parolee. In any

event the official ordering or making the arrest must report the attendant conditions to the State Board. No probation time is to be considered as a part of the time which the person is sentenced to serve.

8. The Governor shall appoint an Adult Probation Board of three members who must be qualified by experience to serve. These members will be paid expenses and ten dollars per diem while engaged in the work of the Board.

9. This Board shall select a Director of Adult Probation with the requisite training and experience to do effective work. He shall be the supervisor of all adult probation and parole officers in the various districts and courts of the state. His salary is to be \$6,000 a year.

10. The Board is required to set up a merit system of examinations for the appointment of all probation and parole officers, and the Director is to appoint all such officers from the list of eligibles so determined. These officers are to be paid out of the General Fund of the State of Texas. Their offices shall be in the criminal court suites of the county in which they are serving.

11. The duties of these officers shall be both investigatory for the purpose of obtaining case histories of persons who are prospective probationers and supervisory for those who are on probation or parole.

Two other provisions stipulate that the measure should take effect immediately and that it should be supported by an annual appropriation of \$150,000.

This proposed law is being urged by a large group of influential Texas citizens who call themselves the Texas Adult Probation Committee. Langston G. King, who is Judge of the Criminal District Court in Houston, Texas, is the Chairman of this group. W. E. Robertson, who is Chief Probation Officer in Houston is Secretary. The group has had the advantage of the advice of Frederick Ward, Jr., who is on the consulting staff of the National Probation Association.

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**Hidden Delinquency**—Fred J. Murphy, Mary M. Shirley, and Helen L. Witmer are the authors of an interesting and informative article in the October, 1946, issue of the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* on "The Incidence of Hidden Delinquency." These representatives of the *Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study* in Massachusetts have "maintained an intimate contact with a large group of boys throughout their adolescent years" and thus have been afforded "a unique opportunity to arrive at some measure of the amount of juvenile law-breaking that is hidden from public view." The writers believe that, from their case records, "it is possible to make a minimum estimate of how frequently the group of boys under study committed acts that *could* have brought them into court if someone in the community had wanted to register a complaint."

The author of these notes is greatly interested in the results of the Cambridge-Somerville studies because of their relation to his own which arrive at very similar conclusions.<sup>1</sup> One item which the former studies include and which is not included in my own is the *frequency* with which a given individual commits one or more of fifty acts—my list includes fifty-five—which get boys and girls into

<sup>1</sup> Austin L. Porterfield, *Youth in Trouble: Studies in Delinquency and Despair with Plans for Prevention*: Fort Worth, Leo Potishman Foundation, 1946.

the juvenile court, without getting into the court himself. In the Cambridge-Somerville Study the terms used to designate this frequency were "*rarely, occasionally, and frequently.*" "*Rarely* denoted a frequency span of from one to three offenses per year; *occasionally*, from four to nine, and *frequently*, ten and over."

The writers report that "in the main, the transgressions of the official offenders were more frequent and more serious than those of the unofficial group," after comparing 40 of the former with 61 of the latter. The median number of offenses reported for boys in court was 79; of the non-court cases, 30.

Helen Witmer, in her discussion of the *Study*, draws the following conclusions: (1) court statistics are wholly inadequate as a measure of the amount of youthful illegal behavior in the community. My comparisons of the behavior of college students with the behavior of children who are complained about in court show the same thing; (2) "an adolescent's court record, even if he lives in an 'underprivileged area,' is a very inadequate measure of the amount of his anti-social conduct; and that, moreover, absence of a court appearance is far from an indication that he is free from misconduct." These findings "cast very serious doubt on research workers' practice of using court records as an index of social adjustment." Moreover, "all in all the figures presented suggest that "the term 'delinquency' is of little more value than the term 'insanity' so far as orthopsychiatric research is concerned."

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**Group Activity and Delinquency Treatment**—Harry M. Shulman, The City College of New York, has just completed a report on his studies of an extensive research experiment conducted in several New York City Schools under the auspices of a number of justices of the Children's Court and the New York City Board of Education, dealing with the group treatment of problem children in situations involving their status and role. The criteria for the establishment of his treatment groups were laid down as follows: (1) that they be undifferentiated in apparent structure and program content from any other recreational groups; (2) that they be not stigmatized by designation as treatment programs; (3) that the membership be recruited voluntarily; (4) that they admit a large proportion of severely maladjusted and conduct problem children; (5) that the program content be especially suited to the social immaturities of problem children but be equally appealing to all children; (6) that the group structure provide both for educational and experimental controls without conveying to the membership an awareness of the presence of either.

Professor Shulman, who is Director of the Community Service Division of the Department of Sociology in the *City College*, has conducted a valuable "social experiment," which we may well hope to hear more about.

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**Outcome of Parole and Preparole Prognosis**—Richard S. Sterne's article on the "Outcome of Parole as Related to Preparole Prognosis" was published by the Pennsylvania Committee on Penal Affairs of the Public Charities Association in October, 1946. It contains an "Introduction" written by Leon T. Stern.

In the "Introduction" Stern states that the records of 1,400 men, who had been imprisoned between 1924 and 1933 for committing major crimes against property and later released on parole, formed the basis for the study. Special attention was given to 225 cases

for which psychological and psychiatric services had been available in making the prognosis.

The prognosis consisted of two parts. First, the actual prognosis divided prospects for parole into several categories: (1) probably good if certain conditions are met, (2) probably fair . . . , (3) probably poor, unless certain conditions are met, and (4) very poor, even though certain conditions are met. Second, based on a diagnosis of the causative factors leading to the crime for which the man was incarcerated, was a statement of the actual conditions of parole under which it was expected that parole might or might not be successful.

Five years or more after the date of parole, 87 of the 225 persons had violated their parole. Thirteen out of 47 whose prognosis had been "probably good, if certain conditions are met," were among the violators. In the second category there were 25 violators out of 85; in the third, 31 out of 70; in the fourth, 2 out of 19.

We could wish that the report gave us more information on whether the conditions set forth as favorable to success were fully met or not, and what relation failures to meet such conditions had to degrees of success. We could also wish that the report gave us more information about the criteria for determining what the conditions for probable success were.

The conclusions which the author of the article draws are that the first offender is a safer risk than the recidivist, the men with the poorer prognoses violated parole sooner than the men with the higher prognoses, the most important problems are the need for guidance and aid and the correction of antisocial attitudes, and, finally, that prognosis can be of definite value to paroling authorities and to parole officers in the supervision of parolees.

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**Combining Parole and Probation Service**—States, such as Texas, contemplating the improvement of legislation in the field of crime treatment may do well to turn to a study of Maryland's combined parole-probation service for suggestions in this particular phase of the problem. Writing in *Federal Probation* (July-September, 1946), J. Lewin Burris, who is Senior Parole Officer for Maryland, gives his article on "Combined Parole-Probation Service" the subtitle, "A State Makes It Work."

The wisdom of combining the two sets of services is a subject of considerable discussion in some circles. New York, for example, has no legally authorized or established agency for combining services. Some authorities believe the "two fields are distinct." Burris believes they can best be combined under one administration.

He points out that the services for parolees and probationers are very similar, in spite of the fact that probation is a function of the court and parole is a function of the administrative arm of the state.

Maryland has had probation since 1894 and parole since 1914. The two services have been combined under a single administration since 1939. "The combined service has thus far worked so successfully with the circuit courts that some of the juvenile courts in the state now wish to avail themselves of it."

The writer argues that "probation or parole is just as much the therapy of a single profession as treatment by a physician of a patient before and after hospitalization." He sees the movement as gaining wide acceptance. Those who have been contending for the combination of government bureaus will probably find additional arguments for it.

**Factors Affecting the Amount of Crime in a Community**—Cities which wish to compare the crime rates reported for home communities by *Uniform Crime Reports* with the rates for other cities would do well to consider the factors affecting this comparison as given in Volume XVII (1946), No. 1, p. 12. A statement outlining these factors follows:

Caution should be exercised in comparing crime data for individual cities, because differences in the figures may be due to a variety of factors. The amount of crime committed in a community is not solely chargeable to the police but is rather a charge against the entire community. The following is a list of some of the factors which might affect the amount of crime in a community:

Population of the city and metropolitan area adjacent thereto.

The composition of the population with reference particularly to age, sex, and race.

The economic status and activities of the population.

Climate.

Educational, recreational, and religious facilities.

The number of police employees per unit of population.

The standards governing appointments to the police force.

The policies of the prosecuting officials and the courts.

The attitude of the public toward law-enforcement problems.

The degree of efficiency of the local law-enforcement agency.

It should be remembered that the war brought about marked changes in some of the foregoing factors in many communities.

In comparing crime rates, it is generally more important to determine whether the figures for a given community show increases or decreases in the amount of crime committed than whether the figures are above or below those of some other community.

**V. A. Leonard Will Study Police Systems in Europe**—Professor V. A. Leonard, who is Director of the School of Police Science and Administration in Washington State College, but now on leave of absence as a candidate for the doctorate in Ohio State University, will spend the summer of 1947 touring Europe and studying the police systems both in England and on the Continent. At Ohio State University he is basing his doctoral dissertation on a "Survey and Evaluation of the Police System of Columbus, Ohio."

Professor Leonard is the regular *Editor* of this section of the *Journal*, for whom the present writer is "pinch-hitting" this year.

**Children in Jail**—The movement to get children out of the jails of the nation is growing. During 1946 a great number of clubs and civic organizations in Fort Worth, Texas, have been demanding that the County Commissioners' Court and the City of Fort Worth set up a "detention home" and a "child study center" or a "receiving home" to get this program implemented.

Heretofore, the emphasis has been placed almost solely on children held in the Tarrant County Jail. In the fall of 1946, however, the Sociology Department of Texas Christian University carried out a study of children detained by the police in the Fort Worth City Jail. This study has magnified the realization of the seriousness of the problem. It shows that 1,083 boys and girls of juvenile age—boys below 17 and girls below 18 (only 103 girls)—were detained in jail by the police in 1945 for an average of 14 hours.

It is important for any community to realize that county and city officials can do no better in treating problem children than the facilities afforded them by the citizenship permits them to do. Surely, little is to be gained by the grand old game of blessing out parents and swearing at the police.