

1947

## Current Notes

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## CURRENT NOTES

Austin L. Porterfield, *Guest Editor*

**Panels of National Conference Report Recommendations for Action—**Over 800 representatives of various public and private organizations in the United States attended the National Conference on the Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency that met in Washington, D. C., on November 20, 21, and 22, 1946. Fifteen panels reported to this conference findings which met the general approval of its members. These panels made recommendations for action on problems of community coordination, institutional treatment, juvenile court laws and treatment facilities, role of the police in juvenile delinquency, recreation for youth, housing and delinquency, youth participation, citizen participation, mental health and child-guidance clinics, case work and group services, the responsibilities of the church, the school and the teacher, the home, and so on.

The *Panel on Community Coordination* gave seven basic reasons why juvenile delinquency is a problem for the whole community, indicated what the community can do as a whole, suggested some specific trends and types of cooperative activity, recommended the coordinating council movement, and cast the whole program in a large and significant frame of reference involving economic, physical, social, and cultural planning.

*Economic planning* deals "with the development of a sound commercial and industrial structure so that citizens have an opportunity to earn an adequate living." *Physical planning* deals "with the use of land and the development of the community in respect to streets, parks, sewers, public buildings, housing." *Social planning* deals "with the problems of health, welfare, and the constructive use of leisure time, which includes . . . the health and welfare aspects of the programs of the police, schools, medical, dental, and legal professions." *Cultural planning* deals "with the educational, religious, artistic, and general cultural development of the community."

The significance of giving the problem this scope is the realization of the fact that it "cuts across every segment of community life and is therefore the net result of a whole series of circumstances and a climax to the interplay of many forces." Surely this is a good antidote to the easy answers that are being given by many publicity hounds about the problem.

*The Panel on the Institutional Treatment of Delinquent Juveniles* suggested that Congress might consider giving Federal aid to state training schools; that Federal law enforcement officers might see that juveniles violating federal laws are not treated as criminals, that they have decent, clean, nonpunitive detention, and that they be committed only to an institution run on progressive, educational lines; that state legislators provide laws substituting treatment for punishment and adequate, first class personnel, with first class equipment for a well-rounded, constructive program in carrying out this treatment. It recommended that state commissioners of various departments—education, health, mental hygiene, etc., make sure that juvenile institutions come up to standards in all these respects; that law enforcement officers should prevent the detention of children in jail, treating them not as

criminals but as children in need of encouragement and guidance. It sounded a call to members of social agency boards, workers in social agencies, juvenile courts, superintendents of institutions, case workers, chaplains, medical officers, and recreation directors to learn to understand the child and to give him encouragement and guidance.

*The Panel on Juvenile Court Laws, Administration, and Detention Facilities* recommended juvenile court jurisdiction to age 21, non-jail detention, trained juvenile judges, social workers on the court's own staff, equity procedures, social study prior to court hearing, private hearings, case dispositions based on treatment needs, adequate social records, and state-wide juvenile court laws, based on the Standard Juvenile Court Act.

*Other panels* called for interest in juvenile detention work as a profession, police departments adequately staffed with carefully selected well-trained personnel, constructive probation and parole systems, recreation for youth in public and private agencies, schools, libraries, camps, housing developments, homes, industry, churches, and rural communities. They called for the cooperation of private builders, banks, local legislative bodies, planning bodies, housing authorities, state legislatures, the Congress of the United States, and the United States Housing Authority in solving the problem of housing for all. Full support was given to the provisions of the Wagner-Ellender-Taft housing bill.

Still other panels, such as those on *Youth and Citizen Participation, Mental Health and Child Guidance Clinics, Case and Group-Work Services, Church and Home Responsibilities*, recommended that youth should take active part in community planning; that the greatest possible number of citizens should be educated through various agency contacts to participate in a youth and community welfare program; that aid for child-guidance clinics should be given at the Federal, state, and local community levels; that social work should be understood as "action directed toward assuring all persons certain basic human rights," which recognizes "the dignity of man and the right of the individual to act in his behalf"; that social case-work so understood should be utilized in every group contacting the life of the child in trouble; that the church and its ministry should cooperate with all agencies that specialize in children and their families so troubled, and attempt to find "ways and means of enabling their followers to reduce to practice the things they have learned from their teachings in regard to the brotherhood of man in God"; that the school restudy its own part in the program in terms of improving staff, teacher-pupil relations, home contacts, leisure-hour recreational programs, child-accounting records, individualized education, and parental participation; and that there should be classes and other educational activities for parents.

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Illinois Conference on Delinquency Prevention—The *National Conference* reported on above believed it would be advisable for each state and local community to hold a conference on the problem. Illinois, however, has had such an annual conference for the last sixteen years. The *Sixteenth Annual Conference on Delinquency Prevention* met at the Sherman Hotel in Chicago on April 10 and 11, 1947. It was sponsored by the Division for Delinquency Prevention of the Illinois Department of Public Welfare and The Big Brothers and Sisters Association of

Illinois in cooperation with thirty-six other public and private organizations. About 500 delegates were enrolled. General sessions alternated with four sectional meetings on the subject, "The Child—A Family Responsibility."

Speakers and presiding officers for the two days included Francis C. Vonachen, James S. Plant, Edward H. Stullken, Bertrand L. Smith, Mrs. Marjorie Cosgrove, Max A. Weston, Win G. Knoch, Irene Kawin, E. H. Regnier, S. D. Gershovitz, Marian K. Craine, William E. Skadden, Ernest J. Chave, Eric Friedland, Martin L. Reymert, H. J. McKean, Francis P. McNally, Lester A. Kirkendall, Cassius Poust, Harry Allen Overstreet, Paul J. Folino, Harlington Wood, Thomas H. Wright, Joseph B. Lohman, Pearl Barnes, Frank H. Mynard, George Nell, Sally MaAninch, Mrs. T. H. Ludlow, George B. McKibbin, Ralph Blaha, Jessie Binford, Phillip Weightman, Ethel Kawin, Robert J. Havinghurst, Mrs. Sora Barth Loeb, Arthur Hillman, Austin L. Porterfield, Walter M. Berry, Glenn Wolthausen, Bruce Drake, Robert G. Willrett, Jasper Roy, Shirley Nelson, Carol Lipsey, and Alice Loeb.

The Conference studied such subjects as "strengthening the family," "family hazards in the community," "the parent, the child, and the law," "the significance of the family in preventing delinquency," ways in which community service agencies, organized religion, the schools, and legislation can strengthen the family, factors within the family which endanger its stability, "we want good families," and "parents are people, too."

In his keynote address on "The Significance of the Family in Preventing Delinquency," Dr. James S. Plant stressed the importance of the family in determining *what* the child is in his status and *who* he is in his belongingness. He showed that delinquent behavior is symptomatic of a problem rather than being the problem, and that much of the family's difficulty which leads to the genesis of the problem grows out of the web of its interrelationships with the larger society.

One very refreshing aspect of the Conference was an emphasis upon the idea on the part of speakers that "parents are people, too," and as such are in need of sympathy and help rather than general condemnation and punishment.

The seven young people in the panel presided over by Dr. Lester A. Kirkendall, who is President of the Chicago Association for Family Living, got a hearty response from the general session audience as they "teed-off" on the subject, "We Want Good Families." One great emphasis was their belief that youth should be educated for marriage and parenthood, and that this educative process should begin, at the very latest, early in high school. Here again was a demonstration of the practicality of taking young people into counsel with adults on community problems.

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**Conferences in Other States**—Mr. Hayes A. Richardson, Director of Welfare, Kansas City, reports that the Coordinating Youth Council of that city sponsored a conference in March in response to the National Conference at Washington "for the purpose of evaluating the work now being done and future needs and programs for our young people."

Likewise, the Penal Affairs Committee of the Public Charities Association of Pennsylvania and the Council of Social Agencies in Philadel-

phia jointly sponsored a meeting in Philadelphia in January where reports were given on the Attorney General's Conference. Speakers included Leon T. Stern of the Penal Affairs Committee, J. Francis Finnegan of the Crime Prevention Association, Robert C. Taber of the Philadelphia Board of Education, and others.

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Illinois' Division for Delinquency Prevention—In the Illinois Department of Public Welfare, headed by General Cassius Poust, is the Division for Delinquency Prevention of which George W. Withey is the Superintendent. With the assistance of men like Messrs. Scott and Campbell, the Division is carrying on one of the most effective programs of community organization in the United States, with the idea of leaving no part of Illinois untouched. At least, this is the opinion of the writer after observing Withey, Scott, Campbell, and their associates in action on various occasions.

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Fortieth Conference of the National Probation Association—The Fortieth Annual Conference of the National Probation Association met at San Francisco from April 10-12, 1947. Roscoe Pound is the President and Charles L. Chute is the Executive Director. The theme for the Conference was *Probation, Parole, and Crime Control*. Speakers at general sessions included Judge Paul W. Alexander, Toledo, Ohio; Richard A. McGee, Sacramento, California; Judge Donald E. Long, Portland, Oregon; Dr. Harold E. Jones and Dr. Franklin Fearing, University of California; Mrs. Ruth B. Hedges, Los Angeles; and F. Perry Olds, Editor, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

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Judge Paul W. Alexander's "Podful of P's"—In the February issue of *Probation* there is an outstanding article by Judge Paul W. Alexander, Division of Domestic Relations and Juvenile Court, Toledo, Ohio, with the interesting title, "A Podful of P's." These P's are factors in every case which the P.O. (probation officer) has to handle: parents, pedagogues, the police, psychologists and psychiatrists, the press, the public, prosecutors, and, of course, the P.O. himself.

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Helping Parents—The *Newslet*, a newsletter or journal of the National Probation Association's Professional Council included in its February issue an article entitled "Helping Parents," which is important enough to reproduce here in the light of all the whining and quacking that is being done, through all the avenues of communication, about parents. Observe how the writer begins.

"How to impress parents of children brought into the juvenile court with a sense of their responsibility, and more important still, help them to become better parents is not simple. The mother of a fourteen-year-old New York boy who, having possession of a rifle, played the part of a sniper and wounded three citizens, was recently given a jail sentence as a neglectful parent. Without going into particulars of the mother's history, situation and abilities (which as a matter of fact we do not have) we can legitimately raise several questions. When this mother has served her punishment sentence will she be a better mother? Will her son look up to her and have confidence in her? Does the jail offer training in parenthood, and will the parent-child relationship be improved?

There is, of course, the possibility that this child should never return to his home, but that is another question.

"We have in these pages and in other publications referred to schools for parents. The NPA has a report of a study of the widely publicized one in San Francisco, where attendance is compulsory and results are unsatisfactory. This plan has been copied in other communities. The idea of forcible education has a popular appeal.

"In Moline, Illinois, last summer a sounder plan of voluntary parent education was inaugurated under the sponsorship of the Big Brother and Sister Association. Of the twenty-four parents of children known to the juvenile court who were invited to attend the course, eighteen appeared at the first meeting. Judge Junius P. Califf, of the Rock Island County Court, opened the first session with the frank statement that delinquency is the outcome of official, parental and *community* neglect of children.

"In Topeka, Kansas, this problem has been handled in a somewhat different way. Romana Hood, Executive Secretary, Council of Social Agencies, writes us that the juvenile court, cooperating with the Topeka night school, held a series of discussion meetings on family relations in the high school. The course was worked out after a conference of representatives from the court, the public schools and the Council of Social Agencies, in which it was decided that it was not wise to set aside parents of delinquent children and establish a course for them. The court did not, therefore, *order* parents to attend and the course was offered to any interested parents. It was publicized through the newspapers, the radio and by word of mouth through the PTA and the public schools. A mixed group of adults responded including even non-parents. Parents were primarily interested in learning to help their children develop into happy, wholesome and well-adjusted individuals."

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**New Journal to Coordinate Social Sciences Internationally**—A new quarterly journal, *Human Relations*, has been organized to serve as a channel in which work in the various social sciences may converge for comparative study at an international level. It is announced jointly by the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, London, England and the Research Center for Group Dynamics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It will be edited by two committees drawn from the staffs of those organizations, and will have two advisory boards for Great Britain and North America whose members represent many social science disciplines.

*Human Relations* will provide side by side comparison of related work in sociology, psychology, economics, anthropology, psychiatry and other disciplines. It will relate the various disciplines functionally to human affairs, and will publish original reports of laboratory and field research designed to clarify practical problems. These reports will be complemented by theoretical contributions. The Journal is a natural outgrowth of a broad scientific trend.

The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations is a newly organized research and action staff of British psychiatrists and other social scientists. They are engaged in a broad program of projects including group therapy, community organization, industrial relations, mass education and administrative management. The Research Center for Group

Dynamics is designed to train research workers in theoretical and applied fields of group life and to assist in training practitioners. In research, its main task is the development of scientific methods of studying group life and the development of concepts and theories of group dynamics. The Institute and the Center are collaborating to produce a journal which extends their shared point of view. They hope that the reader of *Human Relations* will be helped in discovering useful relations between his own work and work done in other fields, in other countries and at other levels of conceptual and practical achievement.

Correspondence about its policy, contributions and subscriptions should be addressed to *Human Relations*, Research Center for Group Dynamics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge 39, Massachusetts.

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The Work of Melitta Schmideberg, M.D.—Dr. Melitta Schmideberg, who is a psychiatrist associated with the Institute for the Scientific Treatment of Delinquency in London, is at present visiting in the United States. In recent months she has written a number of challenging articles for various American journals. The *American Journal of Psychotherapy* (January, 1947) includes her article on "The Treatment of Psychopaths and Borderline Patients." The December (1946) Issue of *Probation* carried her discussion of "The Psychological Treatment of Adult Criminals," and the *Journal of Social Case Work* (March, 1947) starts the Issue with her paper entitled, "Can Criminals Be Analyzed?" The last number of this *Journal* contained her scholarly article on "Underlying Factors in Criminal Behavior".

Several outstanding characteristics of Dr. Schmideberg are her great patience, her confidence that older criminals can be helped to much better, if not "normal", adjustment, her skillful use of depth psychology, and her emphasis upon the need for studying "the interplay between social and psychological factors on different levels and at different periods of [criminals'] lives."

Dr. Schmideberg's visit to the United States is proving to be no small contribution to our ways of thinking about crime and the criminal.

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Sexual Psychopaths, Psychiatrists, and Courts—Recently a sexual psychopath (so said six out of eight of a panel of psychiatrists examining him after ten months of custodial care in a mental hospital) was released from the hospital with the statement of his examiners that "he has known right from wrong and always has." Whereupon the local district attorney declared, "This ought to be a lesson to juries to send his kind *always* to the penitentiary." One may be inclined to ask, "For how long?" What will the prison sentence do for him? What, as a matter of fact, will mere custodial care in a hospital do for him?

This reminds us that the Prison Association of New York in its 1947 *Recommendations to the Legislature* sees the problem differently from the local district attorney's view. The Association said, "It is recommended that . . . an offender convicted [of certain sex crimes, if he is a sexual psychopath] be committed to the jurisdiction of the State Department of Correction for care and treatment in its appropriate institutions or those of the Department of Mental Hygiene," and that he should

“remain confined until such time as he is no longer a sexual psychopath and no longer a danger to himself and others.” This treatment should precede any sentence on the crime, and disposition should provide for “suspended sentence or probation if the court is of the opinion that the defendant is no longer a sexual psychopath.”

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The Penal Reform League of South Africa—H. P. Junod, organizer of the Penal Reform League of South Africa, reported on March 1, 1947, from Pretoria, S. A. on the objectives of the *League*. He maintains that the vast majority of the 218,281 persons released from prisons and jails in S. A. in 1945 had been imprisoned for minor crimes or for no other reason than that they were unable to pay a fine. He also says that very large numbers of these prisoners are of non-European extraction and friendless. He believes that this large “non-criminal” population should be kept out of jail. The main objectives of the League are, therefore, to keep minor offenders out of prison and to prevent crime.