

Summer 1951

Current Notes

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Recommended Citation

Current Notes, 42 J. Crim. L. Criminology & Police Sci. 83 (1951-1952)

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CURRENT NOTES

V. A. Leonard, Editor

Capital Punishment Restored—After nine years without a death penalty for murder, New Zealand will restore capital punishment under a bill passed by the House of Representatives. It was virtually certain to be passed by the Upper House also. Capital punishment was abolished in 1941 as a policy measure. Actually no persons convicted of murder had been hanged for the six previous years, as the Labor Government had commuted all death sentences to life imprisonment from the time it took office. The results have been a source of controversy ever since. Figures have been produced to show that there has been a big increase in killings since the death penalty was abolished, whereas opponents of capital punishment have taken other figures over different periods to show that the proportions of murders per head of population has decreased.

B. L. Dallard, former under-secretary of justice, claims the best comparison can be made by taking the 16 years before 1935, when the annual average of murders was 10.5, and the eight years after 1941, when the annual average was 12.75. The bill for restoration of the death penalty was brought forward by the National Party Government in line with its election policy. When evidence on the bill was heard by a select committee of both Houses, many witnesses appeared on both sides. Restoration of capital punishment was recommended by the under-secretary of justice, the commissioner of police, the director-general of mental hospitals, and other persons closely associated with criminal administration. They maintained the death penalty definitely acted as a deterrent. Restoration was opposed chiefly by church organizations and the Howard League for Penal Reform. They maintained there was no proof murders had increased and to reintroduce the death penalty would be a retrograde step. The select committee reported in favor of the bill and the House of Representatives passed it, 38 to 31. The government allowed a free vote on the issue, but only one government member voted with the Labor Party against it.—THE CANADIAN POLICE BULLETIN, March 1951.

Activities of the New York Legal Aid Society—The 75th Annual Report of the Legal Aid Society for the year 1950 reveals a constantly increasing use of voluntary legal talent in behalf of criminal offenders who are unable to employ attorneys to represent them. Under the very competent guidance of Miss Kelley, the attorney in charge of criminal courts branches, the tremendously increased case load in 1950 was handled, and handled well, despite a minimum increase in regular staff. In 1949 the case load was 9657; in 1950 it grew to 12,569. In General Sessions the representatives of the Society handled 66.7 percent of the total cases disposed of in that court, 46.4 percent of the cases disposed of in the Court of Special Sessions, exclusive of those involving charges of gambling, 39.3 percent of all cases in the Felony Part of Magistrates Court, 79.5 percent of all cases in the Youth Term Part of the Magistrates Court, 23.3 percent of all the cases in Women's Court, 21.7 percent of all the cases in the Brooklyn Felony Court and 98.9 percent of all assignments in the Federal Court for the Southern District of New York. Such a volume of work would have been impossible of accomplishment had it not been that the Criminal Courts Committee, under the indefatigable urge of the Chairman, Mr. Peter H. Kaminer, produced volunteers in numbers and in competence to supplement

the regular staff. These volunteers did yeoman service in the trial courts and beyond—more appeals were taken in 1950 in criminal cases than ever before, and were successful in all of them. As representation of defendants in Special Sessions in Brooklyn comes into full swing, case load will certainly rise and additions to the regular staff will become imperative.—THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY, 11 Park Place, New York.

New Association Formed—The recently organized Association For Psychiatric Treatment of Offenders is dedicated to the scientific treatment of criminals. Dr. Melitta Schmeideberg, Chairman, is a foremost authority on the treatment of psychopaths and criminals; Dr. Benjamin Karpman, National Consultant, famous for books on the criminal; Dr. Wladimir Eliasberg, President, is known to all readers of scientific journals in matters pertaining to crime and criminals. The Association was organized in the Spring of 1950, and has a clinical service functioning which already has attracted a great deal of attention. Every participating doctor is an established psychiatrist who is offering his services free. The criminal patient is treated in the private offices of the doctor without discrimination from his regular practice. Over twenty offender patients have already been accepted for treatment. Among this group are men who have committed such crimes as, rape, armed robbery, assault with intent to kill, forgery, pandering, dope-peddling and others. These patients were sent by such official agencies as the Probation Dept., of the Court of General Sessions in New York City, New York State Training School for Boys, New York State Training School for Girls, Legal Aid Society, The Osborne Association, the Jewish Board of Guardians, and others. In addition to the clinical service, monthly forum meetings are held which are free to the public; also clincial discussion meetings for therapists and casework discussion meetings for social workers (to develop a more intimate cooperation between psychiatrists and social workers). This Fall it is planned to begin a program of public lectures for schools and other organizations on means of preventing and treating delinquency. The Association is a non-profit and non-sectarian organization. Membership is \$5 a year and is open to all professional people. The aims of the Association are:

Therapy

1. To establish a clinic for the treatment of offenders at a free or low-cost basis.
2. To assemble a panel of specially-trained therapists who will diagnose and treat offenders.
3. To develop psychiatric services in cooperation with existing correctional agencies which will (a) treat cases not amenable to their own methods; (b) provide early treatment for first offenders so as to cut short budding crime careers; (c) provide treatment for offenders recently released from prison as an integral cog in the community program for the prevention of recidivism.
4. To provide training facilities in the clinic for therapists wishing to specialize in the field.
5. To develop a psychiatric consultation service as a professional aid for probation and parole personnel in the handling of their charges.
6. To assist in the establishment of similar clinics elsewhere.

Research

7. To stimulate scientific research along three lines:
 - (a) Into the psychological causes underlying criminal behavior
 - (b) Into the most effective clinical techniques for treating offenders
 - (c) Into the types of offenders that can profit from psychotherapy.

Forum

8. To hold monthly scientific meetings:
 - (a) To serve as a clearing house for information
 - (b) To stimulate the interest of professional people in this field
 - (c) To present original papers on all levels.
9. To educate public opinion and dispel the notion that psychiatric treatment is more expensive than any other method of crime prevention.
10. To cooperate and exchange information with similar groups both nationally and internationally.—News release from Association For Psychiatric Treatment of Offenders, 20 East 84th Street, New York City 28.

Correctional Tours—Under the supervision of Dr. Negley K. Teeters, a select group of students and observers will leave Miami on August 4 for a tour of correctional institutions in Latin American countries. Latin American methods of dealing with correctional problems will be the central theme of this 14,000 mile journey around the continent to the south. The opportunity will be afforded to visit many important social institutions in six countries and see how probation, penology, prison labor and diagnostic clinics operate. Members of the party will meet the leading penologists of South America and discuss with them the main phases of Latin American penology including prevalent theories on the cause of crime, penal codes, criminal codes, prison administration, children's institutions and social work. The tour will end on September 3 and is being arranged by Study Abroad, Inc., 250 West 57th Street, New York 19, N. Y.

Criminology In Norway—The following communication from Thomas D. Eliot, N. R. C. Fellow on leave from Northwestern University, will prove of interest to readers of the JOURNAL. "A visitor in Scandinavia gets the impression that criminologists here are more interested in the offender captured, convicted, punished, than in the offender in habitat or in becoming. However, there is considerable publication from an organization called *Norsk Vernelag* (Protective League), headed by Ivan Rummelof, which shows a modern interest in the social, economic, ecological and psychiatric causation and prevention of crime, and which does what we would call "case work" in the investigation of some offender-situations for the *Vergerad*—which is the nearest equivalent of our juvenile courts and other courts.

"I have spent several mornings at the headquarters of *Vergerad* and am very favorably impressed. The "judge" (*Formann*) is a man of fine sensitivity and devotion to his work. The relatively good social and economic conditions of the working class in a welfare state seem to have held the precipitation of delinquency to an intake level which permits Herr Kare Gilhus to be (as Judge Lindsay once was) in many cases his own probation officer. He heads a council (*Rad*) of six, and chairs district councils of smaller size which also, however, meet at the central headquarters. The

members are nominated in part by political parties but seem chosen for competence. Ministers and doctors must be represented, teachers often. (Communists insist on a place in the well-to-do district council to see to it that wealthy families are not given privileged treatment!) The cases are investigated by two paid and experienced but untrained visitors, and occasionally by council members. The records are not formalized by a face-sheet nor characterized by the jargon of social work, but show fairly thorough work on the level of common sense, insight, resourcefulness and judgment, with a minimum of red tape. Cases come in through the police, through schools, through neighbors.

“The judge has authority on his own immediate judgment to order their custody if need be. The child is never called before the council, and the parents are brought in only in serious or contested cases. Once in custody, the court has a variety of work-schools, school-homes, child-homes, working-girls’ pensions, etc., to utilize, as well as occasional foster-care arranged through *Forsorgsvesen*, or Relief Bureau, in the same building. Proceedings of the court are around the end of a long table, with chairs set for the parents at one side, facing the judge. Evidence is read, or the visitors speak, only if the judge’s statement of the situation is disputed by a parent. The parents are courteously treated. Many cases are dealt with without calling in the parents. A clerk records the action taken. Judge Gilhus considers that alcoholism and feeble-mindedness are leading familial factors in child neglect. Neglect and delinquency are not distinguished nor labeled.”—*From a letter to the editor.*

New York Group on Criminology—The New York Regional Group on Criminology met April 3rd and heard Judge Morris Ploscowe discuss the Kefauver Committee investigations—Paul Tappan, Gregory Zilboorg, Sanford Bates, Arch Saylor, et al. participated. Paul Tappan, Prof. of Sociology in New York Univ., was elected President of the group for 1951.—*From Donal E. J. MacNamara, N. Y. Institute of Criminology, Inc.*