

Juvenile Delinquency

EXTENSION OF REMARKS OF

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OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Mr. FOGARTY. Mr. Speaker, under leave to extend my remarks I include an address which I delivered at the National Institute on Crime and Delinquency at New Ocean House, Swampscott, Mass., June 1, 1959:

SPEECH OF HON. JOHN E. FOGARTY, MEMBER OF CONGRESS, SECOND DISTRICT, RHODE ISLAND, AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY AT NEW OCEAN HOUSE SWAMPSCOTT, MASS., JUNE 1, 1959

It is a pleasure to be here with you this evening and I welcome the opportunity to share with you my thoughts on the problem of juvenile delinquency.

It is a problem that causes grave concern, not only to you and to me, but to millions of our fellow Americans, and rightly so. The statistics themselves are shocking.

The number of delinquency cases has risen for 9 consecutive years, in fact such cases have doubled in the last decade.

Last year more than one-half million of our children were involved in court actions because of delinquent behavior. An additional million whose cases never reached the court required police attention.

Young people under 18 are committing an increasingly disproportionate number of serious offenses, according to FBI reports.

Yet you know, as I do, that these figures, shocking as they are, do not tell the whole story. They barely hint the magnitude of the problem in the human terms of parental distress, economic burden, and loss of future potentially useful citizens.

All over our broad land, parents, teachers, the courts, civic groups, and other organizations express concern over the problem. And there are many groups attempting to solve it.

Recently I have met several times with professional people who are tackling the juvenile-delinquency problem through what they call saturation programs. This was a new term to me, but the idea it expresses—that of flooding high-delinquency areas with the united services of all the agencies of the community—seems to me to be a genuinely creative technique. What impresses me most about these total community programs is the breadth of concept. Here delinquency is tackled simultaneously with every available resource. Working through existing agencies—community, school, and civic groups; welfare and medical facilities; legal and police channels, youth organizations—these programs attempt to make available to the children of high-delinquency areas every type of help they will need. Through the schools, psychometric testing, remedial reading, and vocational guidance services are given as they are needed. The dentists and physicians of the community are drawn into contact with deprived groups who are ordinarily without such care, and mental health clinics are established to help untangle some of the complex psychological problems of the people of the area. Public and voluntary welfare agencies are utilized in their particular areas of concern. Interagency registries are set up to prevent duplication of effort and assure that each agency which has contact with a family knows which other

agencies have attempted to serve members of the same family. Probation and parole officers reach out to delinquent and potentially delinquent children at a level they can understand, gradually winning the confidence and respect of influential gang leaders.

Let me say a special word about the people who handle the difficult tasks of probation and parole work. These are grueling jobs, taxing every resource of the worker, often placing him in actual physical danger. Yet, in spite of the long hours, the emotional and physical strain, the inadequate pay, we find young men and young women ready and willing to devote themselves to these jobs in the hope of reaching a few of the unreachable children. With these young men and women—many of you here today—lies much of the day-to-day supervision of disturbed and often rebellious children. To me, this type of service calls for a dedication to ideals—of vocation—of equal measure as that demanded of our medical or educational professions.

But the various techniques I have mentioned which bring together all available services are only the surface manifestations of a concept of far greater depth, which was also explained to me—a concept which I believe to be a thoroughly sound one of far-reaching implications. This concept recognizes the supreme importance of family and community, stability in freeing children of the tensions that lead to delinquency. Consequently, programs are focused especially on strengthening the family and community structures.

Special attention is given to the adjustment problems of families who move from familiar surroundings into Federal housing projects, and every effort is made to establish harmonious relationships among the new neighbors who are often of different cultural backgrounds.

Attempts are made to stimulate the more responsive members of the newly established communities to develop growing attitudes of civic responsibility. Special contacts with parents are made at the first sign of troubled behavior in the child, and the parents are educated to the need for positive parental influence and control while the children are still young enough to accept it.

The young people themselves are invited to participate in councils where specific problems can be ventilated and corrective action outlined by those most actively in and affected by them.

I am told that programs utilizing some of these ideas have been developed in several of our major cities: Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and others, and that one of the most comprehensive at present, is mobilization for youth, the all-out total community program in New York's lower East Side. Mr. James McCarthy, executive secretary of this program, has been partly responsible for opening my eyes to the creative possibilities of this new trend toward comprehensive programs of action.

I am not naive enough to assume that this approach to delinquency prevention and control is a panacea. In fact the more I learn about it the more I became aware of certain additional needs in the fight against juvenile delinquency. Two important aspects of the Mobilization of Youth project are simultaneous training of needed personnel and research to determine the effectiveness of techniques used in the effort to reduce deviant behavior. I feel that we need these training and evaluation procedures with each and every program of this type. We must set ourselves a goal of far more research in the field than is presently being done. We need to look into the possible

relationship between juvenile delinquency and mothers who work. We need to determine why delinquency rises in some communities and drops in others. We need to make full use of the tests which have been developed to help us identify delinquency-prone children early, before they actually get into trouble, and devise still more ways to recognize such children. We must evaluate the effectiveness of our prevention and treatment techniques and formulate new ones to fill the gaps we discover.

I have been pleased to note that as you who are active in juvenile delinquency have turned increasingly to the total treatment approach in combating it, you have also turned your attention to a consideration of our present court structures. We cannot doubt the need for strong and effective courts. We know that in the past decade the number of cases coming before the juvenile courts has increased almost five times as rapidly as the child population of juvenile court age. This is an alarming rate of increase, and projected into the future at the same rate would mean that in another 5 or 6 years the courts would be handling a million delinquent children each year.

We have seen it demonstrated again and again that the seeds of delinquency are most apt to lie within the early homelife of the child. In fact I have been told that certain tests have been devised by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck which attempt to predict the probability of future delinquent behavior through an analysis of the family setting. The Gluecks found clues that certain factors within the home relate closely to the presence or absence of delinquent behavior in the children. These factors were supervision by the mother, discipline by the father, affection of the mother and of the father, and cohesiveness of the family group.

Recently I learned that a limited pilot study in Washington, D.C., indicates that of 60 disturbed children studied, over half had shown behavior problems in their preschool years, and an additional third had manifested difficulties by the time they were in kindergarten. Poor family relationships and an unstable home environment were present in a significant number of the class. These facts, and other studied along the same line, indicate a clear need for family guidance facilities available while the children are in their preschool years, as well as during the school years—but they also bring me to the point I wish to make about our present court structures.

At present in most areas juvenile offenses fall under the jurisdiction of one court while cases relating to other family matters are handled by other courts. Many of our juvenile courts are doing an excellent job of supplying the specialized services needed by the disturbed young people who come before them, but I feel it is possible that an even more effective job can be done if the total framework of family problems can be considered by a single agency. This is not a matter simply of adherence to certain constitutional guarantees about the rights of individual children, important as those guarantees are. If, as research seems to show, delinquency is usually an outgrowth of an inadequate home life, it seems logical that delinquency cases might best be handled by a court empowered to deal with all problems relating to family matters. This idea, of course, is not original with me. It is the substance of the Standard Family Court Act which has recently been released after 4 years of study by your organization, in cooperation with the Children's Bureau and the National Council of Juvenile Court Judges.

I think of the family court concept as a form of insurance. To return to the point I mentioned about the seeds of juvenile delinquency being sown most often in an unstable home environment, I think we might consider these questions: If, by the family court

approach we can strengthen and stabilize family relationships, may we not be supplying one more of the building blocks in our defense against juvenile delinquency? May we not help families toward the resolution of some of their problems while their children are small, before they have slipped—or been driven—into delinquent behavior?

The coordination of services to a given family seems to me to be one of the chief possible advantages of this system. You have all encountered cases where the same family may be known to several different courts at the same time. You have seen that this is confusing to the family involved and inefficient from the standpoint of the court because it results in duplication of effort and one-sided knowledge of the family's problems. A family in trouble does not know to which court it should turn with its particular problems of the moment. The courts, in turn, acting independently of each other, with different policies and procedures, may actually be at cross-purposes in relation to the problems of a given family.

Commendable as are these efforts, I have been impressed, as I have discussed the juvenile delinquency problem for the past several years, with the lack of coordinated effort. No one group accepts responsibility for giving leadership in the attempts to prevent or ameliorate the problem. The same situation of necessity exists where there is a lack of unified probation and parole system.

Earlier, I mentioned the need for more research on various aspects of the problem. As you know, I have for many years served as chairman of the committee of the House of Representatives that hears appropriation requests for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. In the course of the years, hearing from leaders in medical and health research, it has become apparent to me and the other members of my committee that many of our scientists are, as they should be, increasingly turning their attention to study of the behavioral sciences. Such studies include inquiry into the psychological, emotional, and environmental factors affecting children and youth. From such studies can come knowledge of influences leading to deviant behavior—knowledge which in turn will, it seems to me, give us our best leads to means for preventing juvenile delinquency.

In the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare are the Children's Bureau and the National Institute of Mental Health, both with interest, experience, and resources in the fields of child behavior, child welfare, and child psychology. My deep personal conviction of the benefits to be gained from research in medical and related health fields has led me to believe that a collaborative effort by these two agencies, one oriented to research in behavioral, psychologic and psychiatric sciences and the other oriented to research in sociological science with emphasis on child welfare, could not help but lead to methods for helping reduce the tragic social burden that juvenile delinquency represents.

The members of my committee are also convinced of the desirability of such collaborative effort by these two agencies. In our report on the appropriations for the Department we, therefore, instructed the Children's Bureau and the National Institute of Mental Health to team up on the problem and let us know what can be accomplished by such collaborative effort. In addition, because we in the Congress have been convinced of the need for some one group to assume primary responsibility for leadership in this field, the National Institute of Mental Health was asked to take such primary leadership.

I hope that as a result, there may be constructive progress, or at least a clear path toward such progress, by the time your group meets next year.

Meanwhile, I hope, and am confident, that you will continue your efforts to meet the problem. You may be equally confident that I, for my part, will continue my efforts in the Congress toward the end we both so greatly desire—an end to juvenile delinquency and a happier, more rewarding future for our Nation's children and young people.