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Delinquency —

A Sociolegal Problem

The nation's greatest social problem in the present era is that of juvenile delinquency. Of equal importance is the legal problem that has resulted from the rebellion of a delinquent segment of American youth against law and order. The editors of *THE CATHOLIC LAWYER* realize the pressing need of suggestions for effective solutions to this sociolegal problem. The experts best qualified to offer such remedial counsel are those who are primarily concerned with the philosophy and administration of youth law. Consequently, this issue of *THE CATHOLIC LAWYER* is devoted in part to a consideration of various aspects of the problem of juvenile delinquency from the point of view of a legislator, a judge, a district attorney, a youth law authority and a priest.

James H. Bobo, General Counsel to the U. S. Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, introduces the topic with a graphic delineation of the problem presented to the nation by delinquent juveniles. His accurate and detailed report of the current activities of the Federal Government in this area, coupled with his analysis of federal remedies which have been suggested, is a fitting preliminary to the recommendations for individual and community remedial action propounded in the accompanying articles.

Proper emphasis on the necessity for an organized community program to combat delinquency is found in the articles written by Judge Cone and District Attorney Frank O'Connor. Both writers stress the importance of the role played by the Church and the parent in the formation of basic standards for child guidance. Of primary interest to the Catholic lawyer are the specific recommendations for lay activity within the parish in respect to the formation of counselling and guidance services for youth groups.* Equally valuable to the lawyer are the suggestions concerning various types of municipal and state legislation which, in the opinion of the writers, will most effectively check the rapid growth of juvenile delinquency.

* An article which provides in detail the organizational data for this proposed activity will be published in a subsequent issue of *THE CATHOLIC LAWYER*.

Frederick Ludwig, former counsel to the New York State Temporary Commission on Youth and Delinquency, and author of *Youth and the Law*, gives adequate consideration in his article to the moral issues involved in the delinquency problem. Mr. Ludwig insists that the American public face up to the conditions that give rise to delinquency, namely, parental irresponsibility and inadequate community training programs.

The scholarly and philosophical treatment by Father William F. Cahill of the particularly vexing question involving parental and societal interests in delinquency offers, to those connected with the administration of youth law, several basic considerations as to the natural rights of parents and the recognition which should be accorded those rights in the interpretation and application of youth law. Lawyers will appreciate the parallel which Father Cahill, a member of the Bar, has drawn between that area of law applicable to child adoption and that applicable to delinquency.

The most significant feature of the five articles on delinquency published in this issue is the fact that all stress the necessity of religious and moral training as the basic solution to the problem. Each child should be taught by his parents to abide by the dictates of conscience and to form his conscience upon the principles of religion. All other cures are completely dependent upon the fulfillment of these two conditions precedent.

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