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THE YOUTHFUL OFFENDER

FRANK O'CONNOR*

DOES MERCY or mollycoddling characterize the current treatment of the youthful offender? The answer to that proposition, perhaps too simply stated, varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and from judge to judge. Even if the answer to this loaded question were a clear-cut one, however, I would, like the proverbial Irishman, make my small contribution toward answering it by asking another question of the average lawyer whether he practices criminal law or not — What would you do as the judge or even as the district attorney with youngsters between 16 and 19 who have committed criminal violations? Before considering the problem of the youthful offender as it is presented by specific cases, let us try to place the problem in its proper perspective.

When a youngster who has received consideration as a juvenile delinquent, wayward minor or youthful offender becomes involved again with the criminal law, the public often reacts skeptically — as the district attorney does on occasion too — about the efficacy of youthful offender treatment. Being close to the people's pulse and temper, the district attorney is more liable to sympathize with what seems to be the public's natural reaction to newspaper accounts of youngsters with previous records returning again to the courts because of another offense; although this is not always true. But with all due respect to the press, without which freedom might indeed be endangered, it can never be any kind of a definitive medium for the presentation of cases involving criminals, especially youthful ones. And yet in no small measure, the community's attitude toward the criminally involved youth and secondarily toward the judge reflects the emphasis and treatment the newspapers give stories on juvenile delinquency.

What strikes the courts and the district attorneys as curious is the reaction of the public to the problem of juvenile delinquency. Last year, for example, a half billion dollars was spent by the public buying comics and cheap magazines, some of which were if not obscene certainly close to it. The Kefauver Committee, to use the popular name, estimated that fifty million dollars was spent on outright pornography. As a former member of the New York Joint Legislative Committee to Study Publication of Comics, I can attest personally to the fact that there is in the opinion of all the experts a definite connection, although to what exact

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degree is not discernible, between obscene literature and juvenile delinquency.¹

The public's attitude is further illustrated and the problem compounded by the fact that the professional ranks of people involved in the youth care and development fields are woefully understaffed . . . because they are underpaid and lacking in prestige. In the New York City public school system alone there are 300 to 400 pupils serviced



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guidance-wise by one teacher whose major field is in the majority of cases something entirely outside the field of guidance.² One of the potentially fertile subjects of delinquency is the youth who doesn't know where he is going or how he's going to get there. On the other hand, once such a youngster does become a delinquent, the probation staff which handles him on parole or probation is also so understaffed that one probation officer handles 80 to 90 youngsters and adults.³ If probation is to be as truly beneficial as it could be, obviously the case load must be lighter and the financial and social remuneration greater for the officer. Like every other professional group involved in the youth care and development

field, the probation officer must receive more incentive, thus making the job more attractive.

Despite this general public inertia however, the federal government drafted a bill this year with a starting allocation of three million dollars to study the problem of juvenile delinquency. If New York Times reporter Ben Fine's national estimate of one million juvenile delinquents — potential and actual — is accurate, then the federal allocations will give three dollars more per delinquent to study this serious problem.⁴

It is tragic but ironically true, therefore, that a large segment of the public is interested in youngsters only after they become involved with the law and then their interest is largely wasted in fruitless and unavailing grief. However, amidst this public apathy, there are a number of influential people who come in direct contact with delinquent youngsters and who try earnestly to save them from other mistakes if they show any signs of being salvageable. These people are trained, experienced and presumably intelligent professionals. In many cases they are overworked and in almost all cases they are underpaid and unappreciated. Many of them on the strictly sociological side have been described by the unknowing as "eggheads."

To give you some idea of the official duties of these professionals, how they figure in the legal procedures established to handle youths in trouble, and what can and does happen to these youngsters because of their efforts, we shall briefly follow a young man in New York City from the time he commits an anti-social act until his case is closed.

⁴ N.Y. Times, May 6, 1957, p. 1, col. 8; FINE, ONE MILLION DELINQUENTS (1955).

¹ 1955 LEG. DOC. NO. 37, REPORT, N.Y. JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE TO STUDY PUBLICATION OF COMICS 25-33.

² High Points, April 1954, pp. 6, 18, 19.

³ N.Y. Times, April 30, 1957, p. 22, col. 2. These figures are for the 107 parole officers working in New York City. The ideal number of cases for each officer has been set as low as 60.

Besides the victim of the youth's actions, who is generally the complainant and in whose place, by the way, readers of the newspapers generally see themselves, there follows in logical order the police who arrest, fingerprint and book the youthful defendant; the magistrate in Felony Court before whom he appears within 24 hours following the arrest and who sets the bail on him; the assistant district attorney also in the court at this time who recommends the amount of bail on which the defendant should be held. Around the court, too, at this time the defendant's family may meet the bondsman who will probably put up the bail if they have the collateral to guarantee it. If the defendant cannot put up the bail he goes to jail, where he usually comes into contact with the correction officers and the prisoners older and sometimes younger than he.

At first glance this procedure may seem automatic, impersonal and potentially, if not actually, harsh. But in practice it need not be overly harsh. For the bail that is set may be low as well as high, depending on the nature of the offense and the circumstances surrounding it, the judge's personal attitude and the district attorney's policy.⁵ When the youth appears for his hearing in Adolescent Court ten days to two weeks following his arrest, he meets another magistrate and another assistant district attorney, besides, perhaps, a temporarily assigned trial counsel if he has not one already.

⁵ A bill proposed by the District Attorneys' Association of New York State to the Legislature last year and viewed by many quarters as a definite attempt to abolish the present system of bail would make it a crime for a person to jump parole pending the disposition of criminal charges against him. In the words of the bill memorandum: "The proposed legislation would encourage both courts

At this hearing he may be held for grand jury or have the charge against him reduced and sent to Special Sessions, depending on how serious in the magistrate's judgment is the crime of which he is accused. In either case he may still be eligible for youthful offender treatment, or he may be treated as a wayward minor.⁶ In most cases, short of outright dismissal, the youngster is still very much in contact with the criminal law. During all this time his family, which is suffering along with him the embarrassment and the inconvenience which is attendant on every anti-social act, is still another contact besides his friends and neighbors. These are the principal agencies and people who come into contact with the youthful offender, unless of course he is also the focal point of an interesting case; then there will probably be a few more people interested in him like psychiatrists, reporters and inquisitive readers.

Ultimately in most cases, however, his destiny rests with the judge, the probation officer and the district attorney. It is what can easily be called a second trinity of mercy which has been trying for many

and prosecutors to make greater use of parole rather than bail. This would relieve defendants of the economic burden of bail and to some degree the overcrowding of detention facilities used to hold the prisoners awaiting trial." This would also obviate the necessity of putting young offenders in the same prison situation as older and hardened criminals, which is currently a necessary practice in many jurisdictions because of the paucity of facilities. It is a procedure which has justifiably elicited criticism from many quarters, despite precautions taken to separate adult from young offenders. (The bill never got out of committee.)

⁶ LUDWIG, *YOUTH AND THE LAW* 87 (1955). In effect, adjudication as a wayward minor singles out a youthful defendant over 16 and under 21 as being involved in a situation potentially criminal or destructive of health or morals.

years to salvage the lives of people who have been loosely described as juvenile delinquents.⁷ In the public mind at least, the district attorney, as the chief prosecuting officer of the county, is the least likely member of this trinity of mercy. However, the district attorney's presence in the trinity, although somewhat equivocal, is not as anachronistic historically as it might seem at first consideration.⁸ For not only has the legal pendulum swung away considerably from the strict letter justice of fifty years ago, but the informal atmosphere of the average district attorney's office has done much to change the unreal set-up of prosecutor in one corner and the defendant, especially the youthful one, in the other.⁹

This is not to minimize the specific body of distinct and sometimes partially opposed duties which the members of the legal trinity have to perform, but it is to draw attention to and emphasize the humanity, interest and youth-saving pur-

⁷ LUDWIG, *op. cit. supra* note 6, at 87.

⁸ A review of the provisions of the law relating to youthful offenders indicates that while the duty of investigation into eligibility for youthful offender treatment rests upon the court and not upon the district attorney, the district attorney does have a right to recommend whether or not such an investigation should be made, and by traditional usage and legal implication a further right to recommend that the accused be denied the benefits of the youthful offender law and prosecuted for the crime as an adult. N.Y. CODE CRIM. PROC. §913a(1). For background of this legislation, see 1942 N.Y. LEG. DOC. NO. 55, *Young People in the Courts of New York State*.

⁹ In practice, the general policy of plea taking, for example, has not only resulted in an economical saving for the court and law enforcement agencies, but it also has been viewed as resulting in a possible rehabilitative effect on defendants, whose cooperation with the authorities is thus rewarded with a lighter sentence. This applies to youths as well as to adults.

pose that binds the trinity together in an informal union, so complete in some jurisdictions as to admit nothing which will ever seriously threaten the machinery and milieu which history has and will continue to establish and sustain in the interests of unfortunate youth.

Historically of course, of the three, the judge has occupied the center of the stage in the law's effort to handle and, if possible, rehabilitate delinquent youths. He is the target or focal point of the probation department's report, answering the all-important question, how can this troublesome youngster be helped without hurting him too much, if at all?¹⁰ The probation department's duty then is not only to the court but to the youth whom it is investigating. Its report has been established and designed to insure the defendant's legal privilege, if he so desires, to have his whole life evaluated, not just in relation to one or more anti-social acts, but against the whole backdrop of his previous existence. This evaluation will attempt to determine whether there is hope of saving him. The probation officer's inquiry, therefore, sounds out the defendant's background to determine specifically if there is some environmental or personal deficiency present in the defendant's life for which he is not initially or entirely responsible and which has elicited or developed his anti-social tendencies.

That these questions take precedence over the right of the law to strictly punish the youth who is a first offender or a salvageable recidivist is at the very heart of the modern view of handling youthful offenders, despite the fact that it lies within the discretion of the judge to grant youthful offender treatment or not and within the

¹⁰ See 1942 N.Y. LEG. DOC. NO. 55, 90k, at 169.

discretion of the district attorney to recommend or object to its being granted. In practice the judge's discretion is thus substantially qualified by the general acceptance of youthful offender usage as imposing some kind of moral, if not legal, imperative on the court. The philosophy giving rise to this moral imperative is that if there is punishment at all it must fit the criminal, especially the young one, and not the crime. Implied in such thinking is the growing conviction in some quarters that the preventive quality of sanction in the law can no longer be assumed, and its efficacy, especially in relation to youth, is being challenged if not actually devaluated and perhaps even discarded. The school applauding this position asks the question: What figures can be cited to prove that strict punishment of youth, or even of adults for that matter, has prevented this or that crime by this or that many individuals? In answer of course another school completely opposed to this philosophy thinks that getting "tough" just logically discourages crime and says with equal vigor that there are no figures to disprove them either.

This first school says, however, police figures testify, if at all, only to a reduction in certain publicly committed crimes in proportion to the number of foot patrolmen assigned to a given area. It is therefore, to their thinking, not the sanction that a crime carries that is primarily effective as a deterrent, but the sureness of apprehension which leads only ultimately to punishment. Psychologically the certainty of apprehension rather than the severity of punishment probably enters into the motivation of a hardened criminal first, while in the mind of an imaginative and potential first offender these two con-

siderations may be inseparable. The retributive and purely preventive qualities of the law in relation to youth therefore, are, in some quarters being balanced with, if not actually relegated to secondary positions behind, that quality of the law which we might loosely call rehabilitative.¹¹

Indeed the whole question of what jail accomplishes is being answered today, not only for youth but also for adults, by the statement that it only takes criminals out of circulation. And to do this for most youthful offenders, according to one school, is to cost the state and the youth himself more than probation and parole.¹² On the other hand, a second school in the personage of a well-known chaplain at an eastern reformatory (while admitting that his own institution is currently slightly overcrowded) contends that youngsters can and do develop healthy attitudes while in detention: "Those who have run afoul

¹¹ The extent to which certain quarters are trying to expand the rehabilitative quality of the law was illustrated this year with the publishing of a pamphlet called *First Offenders a Second Chance*, written by Brooklyn Assistant District Attorney Aaron Nussbaum. The book has been the motive force behind a bill introduced this year in the State Legislature proposing that a deserving first offender of any age be given an opportunity to erase a conviction for his first crime, depending upon the results of an extended period of probation as well as several allied inquiries into his character, habits and suitability for rehabilitation. (The bill never got out of committee.)

On Mike Wallace's program, *Night Beat*, May 9, 1957, Warden Joseph Ragen of Statesville Prison, Joliet, Illinois, supporting the idea of fitting the punishment to the criminal and not to the crime said that sentences should be as short or as long as would be beneficial to the criminal and to the state. He also came out against capital punishment, saying in effect that it did not serve as a deterrent.

¹² The cost of supervision for an adolescent in an appropriate penal institution is in excess of \$2200 per year, while the cost of probation supervision

of the law for the first time adjust exceptionally well. Most of those who have been arrested several times also adjust."

While these schools of thought are not in complete opposition to each other, their relative positions do illustrate that safe and comfortable black-and-white generalizations are easily thwarted, and the trinity, especially the judge, acts with the growing conviction that a line cannot be easily drawn for most defendants, and that each kind of case, if not actually every case, must be judged by itself.

Undoubtedly, however, there is for most lay people a practical point beyond which the youngster should not be allowed to violate the law without meriting some kind of punishment as a lesson, prescinding almost entirely from the lesson's rehabilitative quality. Most judges and lawyers for all their legal training appreciate, if not subscribe to, this view as readily as the layman. There is another attitude however which can be summed up quite readily in the statements: He deserves everything he gets, or let's make an example of him — an attitude which is probably on the increase for the time being. However, under the law, the legal trinity cannot indulge without grave cause in such an attitude, certainly not in relation to youth anyway.

While admittedly the problem of drawing the line allowed by the law is finally for the judge, the district attorney's right as the people's representative is generally accepted as being twofold: (1) to initiate

is substantially less than half that figure. See COMMITTEE ON PENAL INSTITUTIONS, PROBATION AND PAROLE OF THE CRIMINAL COURTS BAR ASSOCIATION OF QUEENS COUNTY REPORT of November 15, 1956, Recommendation 3. In Recommendation 4, the committee deplored the overcrowding and tendency to increase the optimum capacity of youth detention centers.

recommendation for youthful offender consideration, (2) to oppose or support the granting of it after an investigation by an unofficial arm of the district attorney's office. Since the district attorney should have no access to the report of the investigation conducted by the probation department, upon which the judge probably most frequently bases his own decision, the prosecutor's right would generally be of dubious value were it not for the fact that he has access to the defendant's prior record and age and in certain jurisdictions to a report by a police officer on his staff. This report may duplicate in essence what the probation department does in detail. Consequently, while the district attorney's part is really a secondary one, his recommendation is not *ex nihilo* by any means and is quite liable to be regarded as the most hard-headed by the general public. On the other hand, the force of his recommendation may frequently be more perfunctory than real. As the people's prosecutor, his right to make such a recommendation, however implied or circumscribed, will likely always be kept intact as a matter of public policy. Without it the people's immediate voice, indicative of public policy, would have no opportunity to be heard on this vital problem except at infrequent legislative sessions.

Now the decision of the judge reflecting to a greater or lesser extent the recommendations of the district attorney and the probation department is obviously of prime importance and represents a great problem. When should a youth be punished, if at all, as a youth and as an adult? Recalling of course that a youngster up for youthful offender treatment cannot be accused of a crime for which he could be executed or imprisoned for life, will quan-

tity or quality of crime determine?¹³ The following four cases illustrate the practical problem the trinity usually faces.

What would your decision be regarding a boy 16 years of age who has run away from his home in a distant city and is arrested in New York, dazed and frightened, on the premises of a place he has technically burglarized? The only child of a good family, with no previous record, the boy is revealed to be involved in a family situation featuring an over-indulgent mother and a father who is a strict disciplinarian. Possessed of a superior I.Q., the boy mirrors the strained atmosphere of a morally good but psychologically disturbed home. Indicted for burglary in the third degree, should he be granted youthful offender treatment and, if he is, should he be sent away to a detention home or put on probation? In the actual case the youngster received youthful offender consideration and was put on probation. He returned home to complete his studies with the alerted cooperation of school and community authorities. When last heard from

¹³ As far as the district attorney's office is concerned, we occasionally recommend a boy for youthful offender (y.o.) treatment twice, when his criminal acts may be part of a sequence of crimes within a short time. As for youngsters who have a prior record of adjudication, as juvenile delinquents or wayward minors, we occasionally recommend and judges will grant y.o. treatment not only because a youngster is technically without previous felony convictions despite his record but also because on occasion the record is by no means indicative of a boy's innate ability or character. Some judges will even grant y.o. treatment twice if the first y.o. treatment was for a misdemeanor. There are still others who will deny y.o. treatment almost all of the time to a youngster who has a prior record of adjudication as a juvenile delinquent, wayward minor even in Special Sessions. There are some people who contend that y.o. treatment should be restricted to first offenders in the strict sense of the word.

he was graduating from high school and was giving every indication of taking his place in the community. Obviously this youngster needed the youthful offender treatment he received.

What would you do with a defendant already adjudged a wayward minor twice for auto larcenies who commits a fourth auto larceny while being investigated for possible youthful offender consideration for a third? . . . In this case our report and the probation report showed such a vacuous family situation—the boy was illegitimate and fatherless and his mother was a poorly paid domestic—that both judge and district attorney agreed that this youngster who had shown intelligence and some promise of being saved would be worth institutionalizing for a period of three years as a youthful offender rather than as an adult.

The third case involves a defendant whose previous record contains three adjudications as a juvenile delinquent under 16; and two adjudications as a wayward minor after the age of 16, for one of which he served two and a half years in a federal institution. In the case to which we refer the youngster topped his previous record with the commission of first degree murder. There is a temptation here, armed with the surety of hindsight, to look back and see the threat of murder from the youngster's first brush with the law, and claim they should have stopped him in time. Hindsight here, however, is more deceptively clear than any foresight can be. This kind of case, while illustrating obliquely another quality of the criminal law, also points up a very practical need in the administration of the criminal law. The quality is the recourse that the law affords to all defendants to be certified as

mentally defective or incompetent, regardless of quantity or quality of crime. In this youngster's case, he was referred for psychiatric examination, but only after he had proven himself a menace by committing first degree murder. This situation illustrates a great need for change in our present set-up. Had the defendant received examination earlier in his life this crime might well have not been committed.

What would you do in a fourth case which involves a youngster with no previous record, of a good family background — Catholic college included — who is charged with felonious assault with a bat during a party brawl. The charge reduced to simple assault by the magistrate is sent to Special Sessions where the authorities concerned agreed to investigate the youngster for possible adjudication as a youthful offender. He was granted youthful offender treatment and he was dismissed on his own recognizance.

These are only four cases out of thousands that the courts handled last year and they are four relatively easy ones. By considering them one may get some idea of the problem the judge faces, the problem of where to draw the line up to which a youngster should be treated as a youth and beyond which he must be treated as an adult. Supposing for the sake of discussion that with the exception of the youngster accused of murder each of the other three defendants in the previous cases was to be involved with the criminal law again for substantially the same offense. What would your decision be concerning them? If your answer is the easy but wise one that "it depends," at least in relation to the first two defendants, then in our mind you grasp the problem. If the answer comes quickly, without doubt, on the three cases,

you are probably a better judge and district attorney than most of us, better in the sense that you are surer and perhaps tougher.

A realistic picture of what actually happens in the administration of the youthful offender law, lies in a breakdown of the youthful offender cases in Queens last year. Although there were almost a thousand more adolescents in court for 1956 than in 1955, no increase was reflected in County Court figures for 1956. A substantial majority were dismissed at Adolescent Court while 142 others were given wayward minor treatment and approximately 330 were referred to Special Sessions. Of the people who went to County Court, however, fewer — 118 to be exact — were granted youthful offender consideration in 1956 than in 1955, when 139 received youthful offender treatment. Youthful offender treatment was denied to 33 last year, compared to 16 in 1955. A partial explanation of this development is the fact that 73 per cent of the arrests for unlawful assembly were dismissed throughout the city at the Adolescent Court level. A word here must be said in favor of the exercise by the police of their preventive power to arrest members of gangs before a "rumble" is initiated thus preventing bloodshed and crime.

The total number sentenced as youthful offenders in 1956 in Queens County Court was only 106 — the rest went over as pending to 1957. Of these 42 went to Elmira Reception Center, 2 went to local penitentiaries, 2 to institutions for defective delinquents, 59 were placed on probation and there was 1 suspended sentence. In Special Sessions which handles minor crimes, 224 youngsters were granted youthful offender consideration while 55

were denied it. In proportion these figures correspond closely to the figures for County Court where 118 were granted and 33 were denied. The breakdown of these figures reveals that only 16 youngsters were sent to Elmira Reception Center, while 108 received suspended sentences and 100 were dismissed on their own recognition. There were 6 cases dismissed and 16 which resulted in acquittals. Two youngsters were referred to Children's Court.

Like the administration of all justice, however, the granting or denial of youthful offender consideration cannot be a product that is mass-produced or quickly and painlessly dispensed. The decisions do not come out of a test tube but are made by human beings — albeit professionally educated — and are sometimes fallible and prove occasionally disappointing at a subsequent time. In the place of some gigantic mechanical brain, capable of cataloguing all sorts of youngsters in all sorts of situations and projecting these results into the future, stands this facet of the administration of the criminal law administered by a human agency and participating in the same historical wisdom upon which the whole Anglo-American system of jurisprudence has been traditionally based.

What kind of youngsters do we send away as youthful offenders to a detention center? Among the youngsters who were sent away last year to detention homes there were certainly almost no first offenders. In this connection, the first offenders who can come from any strata of society should not and are not in general dealt with in a harsh way, even as youths before the law, first because probation as we said before is currently viewed as being cheaper for the state and better for the

individual if the family situation is beneficial. As for the recidivists who usually come from a pattern of family disintegration, moral vacuity and economic under-privilege, unless they are hopeless recidivists, they have not been and should not be sent away in large numbers.

As for the vast majority of youthful offenders who are not extreme recidivists the context of probation and parole can and must be improved principally by a revitalization of the attitude of the lay community itself. Thus the changed attitude of the community in this regard will be the hope and harbinger for the salvageable recidivist as well. Intelligent and charitable laymen could easily fill the vacuum created by the lack of sufficient numbers of professional people in youth care and development fields, a lack which has been recently scored by Cardinal Spellman in an appeal to the Catholic population to serve in the Big Brother and Big Sister movements. The Cardinal's request might easily have been an imperative, for in Queens alone last year fifty-four per cent of the people who were sentenced for felonies or serious crimes professed to be Catholics, however nominal they proved to be — lighting candles, but missing Mass; while an informal survey of dismissed youth cases showed that sixty-six per cent of the youngsters involved also professed to be Catholics. Indeed, according to one observer close to the picture in Queens, the latter represented a new and disturbing element, for all the cases — dismissed and otherwise — involved a trickle of Catholic grammar, high school and even college students.

What the "Catholic" percentage of crime and youthful offenders would be if there were no Catholic school system is fortu-

nately problematical. Indeed, the Church's historical insistence on maintaining its own school system may ironically depend upon the above rule-proving exceptions for oblique support, for by and large the overwhelming number of Catholics involved with the law never attended a Catholic school, but as the new development may demonstrate, perhaps even the Church's school system is not enough. Then what can be used to supplement it? Again the community's importance is underlined, especially the lay community of the parish which in many respects is not living up to its vocation in the church militant. From those parishes which may be suffering from "organizationitis" the objection may quickly spring, "What more can the people of the parish do?"

Consider for a moment the resources both material and spiritual that the average parish possesses. Besides good buildings, including gyms and school halls, etc., and religious personnel, there are people within its confines of every walk of life, doctors, lawyers, teachers, businessmen, sociologists, scientists, engineers, psychiatrists, representing professional and business organizations of almost every kind, as well as a growing number of Catholic women who are graduates of college. Here is an inexhaustible source of proven talent from whose ranks the parish can recruit a counselling organization which could help every boy and girl in the parish of grammar, high school and college age to find job help, vocational and professional guidance, besides social and recreational development. The parishes have the embryo of such an organization already, but by and large it has traditionally been left to the diocese to assume and discharge such responsibilities. While the propriety

and need of diocesan direction must be recognized, we do feel that the more local unit could be better organized in detail.

Such an activity could easily be the function of an extremely active Holy Name Society, K. of C., sodality or any combination thereof. It could organize for example a college and career guidance service, a youth vocation service and a youth employment service. The latter has proven very successful in some western states even when run by the youngsters themselves.

This concern to recruit lay aides for school and church is by no means a personal one. There are many people who appreciate its need. For one thing the religious in the parochial school has the care of far too many children to be able to do the detailedly complete job of guiding all of them, especially the minority of recalcitrant youths who may complicate parochial classrooms from time to time. Now the parochial school youth would only form a part of the group that this counselling service would try to help, for the Catholic students who attend public grammar or high school, as we have seen, face an even more haphazard guidance set-up. Until and even after the ranks of guidance personnel are filled with professionally trained people — if they ever are — the parish offers a potentially ideal medium through which all the people in the immediate religious and geographic community can help youngsters with their problem. To be sure this new direction in parish life is a very difficult task in an urban community, but it is obviously imperative. For many of us in our daily duties as Catholic laymen see an overwhelming need for Catholics to awaken to the responsibilities and opportunities that are theirs on the community and on the parish level.