

F. Multiple Factors

"Social life is inextricably bound to biologic life, each influencing and setting the stage for the other."⁹³

137. In spite of all the work done so far, no one has yet determined a positive definition of mental health or a successful life. It is easier to see the negative side than to see the positive side of a person's attitudes, behaviour and lifestyle. Therefore, it is easier for the research establishment to document and validate the many indices of failure including unemployment, school dropouts, psychiatric hospitalization and re-arrest. Each of these represents easily obtainable data concerning the course of the individual's life. It is easier to recognize factors involved in the development of delinquency than the factors involved in the personality structure that develops the normal social behaviour. The great majority of children from broken homes are not delinquents nor are children who fail in school.⁹⁴ Granted, each of these factors may make it more difficult for the child to develop in a positive way.

138. Why do many children of poor genetic background, brought up in the harshest environment, by alcoholic parents never become delinquents? What are the positive factors which enable young offenders who come before the juvenile courts for deviant behaviour, to extricate themselves from the juvenile court system with little or no help from social workers? Why does a child of 6 with a psychological trauma become a criminal by 26? If we investigate its prenatal and post-natal life and its experiences to the age of adolescence we can get most of the answers. But, if we ask the question why did the child of 6, who gave every indication that it would become a criminal, acquire by 26 a lifestyle without a taint of criminality, the answer is harder to find.

139. There are many possible circumstances in the early years of a child's life which may be causes of criminal behaviour. We have already considered some serious problems affecting the psychological and emotional development of a child in early life. We must in addition recognize the great importance of environmental conditions on the child. The connection between poverty and criminality has been recognized. Today we know that poverty alone does not necessarily cause criminal behaviour, nor does being brought up in an alcoholic or criminal family, but that these factors will place the child at considerable risk of adopting a criminal lifestyle. For this reason, your Committee explored the connection between poverty and criminality, and between alcoholism and criminality.

Poverty

140. In 1979 there were more than one and a half million children in Canada under the age of 18 who were living in poverty. There are several facets of life associated with poverty. Poor children are more