

JUVENILE COURT WORK IN REGINA

Juvenile delinquency is declining instead of increasing as far as the city of Regina is concerned, according to the third annual report of Judge Ethel MacLachlan of the Juvenile Court. During the year 1920 there were brought before her in the Juvenile Court 314 children, including a few who appeared more than once in court, and while this is the largest number appearing before the Juvenile Court in any one year, this is on account of Judge MacLachlan having held more provincial cases than formerly. Out of the 314 cases, 101 were from the city of Regina, a slight decrease from last year, and 213 from provincial points.

Judge MacLachlan estimated that there are in Regina about nine thousand boys and girls between the ages of five and sixteen years, whose age would bring them under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court, and as only 64 of the 101 cases coming before her from Regina were found guilty of an offence, 27 being neglected children who came to court through no fault of their own, she states that "every citizen of Regina should feel proud of its boys and girls." She takes strong exception to a recent article, apparently sent out from Ottawa, stating that "boy criminals" in Canada increased during the last twenty years by 300 per cent. "I also take exception to calling boys criminals," the report says, "as the Juvenile Delinquents Act was put in force expressly for the purpose that juveniles should not be called criminals but delinquents, and that they should be treated not as criminals but as misdirected and misguided children, in need of aid, encouragement and assistance."

Few Repeaters.

To show that the boys who have come into the Juvenile Court since its establishment in the province three years ago are not criminals, she tells that only 23 came into court who had been there before during the three years, out of a total of 265. "I would hate to think of the 242 that appeared once as 'criminals' the report states, 'nor would I like to think of the 23 who appeared more than once as such.'" Out of these 23 repeaters there were nine who were sent to the Industrial School, two were made to saw wood to earn a ten dollar fine each for stealing coal, and the other dozen were continued on probation with small fines, restitution, etc.

Through the co-operation of the city authorities with the Juvenile Court and others interested in boy welfare, the by-law prohibiting boys from frequenting pool rooms was amended so as to raise the age limit from 14 to 17 years. The co-operation of the men engaged in the pool room business, with a heavy fine inflicted on one pool room keeper in 1919, has had a splendid effect, and during the year 1920 the probation officer made three hundred and four visits to the various pool rooms of this city and on each and every occasion reported "pool rooms all clear of boys."

Several newsboys got into trouble last year, partly the fault of the parents, who in some cases took every cent earned by the boys, and as a result of this trouble and owing to the fact that any boy, no matter of what tender age, could sell papers at any hour on the streets of Regina, a request was made to the City Council to pass a by-law to regulate and control the sale of newspapers by boys and to have them all licensed, and this was done.

Thefts Most Common Offence.

Out of the 265 charged with some kind of delinquency, there were one hundred and ninety-six charged with theft of various kinds, including the most serious offences of shop-breaking and theft and house-breaking and theft. Lack of home training, love of money, and the extravagant age in

which we live, may be some of the causes leading up to this amount of theft. While statistics show that theft of automobiles in different cities all over Canada is very much on the increase, the records of the Juvenile Court for the year 1920, in the city of Regina, show that not one boy was accused of this delinquency, which is a remarkable record.

Comparatively few children, says the report, come into court through their own fault. An examination of the table giving the causes for neglect and for delinquency, shows that at the most only 103 children, out of the 314 cases, came into court when the blame might be attached to themselves, while from this number possibly 37 more might be deducted, leaving only 66. "From this analysis," says Judge MacLachlan, "we would infer that for the most part the home, and the home training, is what is absolutely and emphatically at fault."

There would appear to be no necessity for a detention home where children might be kept while awaiting trial. Ninety-nine per cent. are allowed to remain in their homes until the trial date is set, and in the three years not one child has run away while awaiting trial.

Twenty-five Adults Punished.

In all, twenty-five adults were punished for contributing to delinquency or neglect, and there would have been more only that it is not an easy matter to secure evidence in many cases.

The probation system has been a great success. Of the 265 alleged delinquents 242 took advantage of the chance given them under the probation system and never came before the court again, but with the help of the voluntary probation officer appointed for the purpose have succeeded in retrieving their characters. Judge MacLachlan makes a plea for the appointment of women probation officers, stating that the delinquent and incorrigible girl is a much harder problem than the delinquent boy.

"It is possible," says the report, "that a number of children coming into the court are mentally deficient. Out of the 314 last year, nine were evidently of this description. Without a specially trained psychiatrist it is impossible for the ordinary person to detect the high grade, and therefore the most dangerous, feeble minded person. Dr. Clarke, who made a mental survey of the province, in speaking of the Juvenile Court in Regina, advocates the necessity of a mental specialist."

From a number of tables and statistics with which the report is concluded, a number of interesting facts may be gathered. For instance, it is shown that in the 314 cases there were no less than 26 nationalities represented, and while 234 were born in Canada only eighty-four were of Canadian nationality. This shows what an important part, either for good or bad, the New Canadian will play in future generations.

Large Amount for Restitution.

Another table shows the punishment handed out to adults for contributing to delinquency and neglect. Fines to the amount of \$705 were inflicted, costs amounted to \$95.15 and restitution was made to the value of \$639.50. Children themselves paid fines amounting to \$441.30, the costs came to \$795.10, and restitution was made from child or parent of \$2,575.70, while in addition to restitution in money, many articles were restored.

It is also stated that of all the cases brought before the Juvenile Court during the year only one was appealed, and in that case conviction was upheld.