

# SOCIAL PRACTICE

## New York Studies Causes of Crime

By NELS ANDERSON

**D**URING the winter I interviewed the governor of one of the smaller eastern states on the crime situation. He had gone to the papers with a story of his intention to clean up the state. He was going to go to the roots. It sounded good. I found him very optimistic about the prospects—his state was going to be put on the map. He explained in boyish glee, "You see I've been going to the bottom. I been reading Lombroso and all them fellows and now the whole matter is beginning to clear up."

I tried to look learned. "You are going to make some study of the causes of crime?" I asked.

He turned on me with a look of pity. "Causes? We know all about the causes. We knew that before we started. We need law! Law with teeth in it! And that's what we are going to get; law with teeth in it!"

He did appoint his commission. It consisted of the mayors of five cities of the state. The commission reported and the law was passed. It is a vest-pocket replica of the Baumes Laws of New York. Everybody who had anything to do with the passing of the law has returned home with a virtuous feeling, and the police and judges are left to do their duty.

That is one way of facing the crime problem; and that is one kind of commission. It is the tried and true method of the ages. It inevitably ends in passing laws and more laws; in going after the culprit with tooth and tongs. Once they did it to save his soul but later they did it as an example to others. In those days mothers took their knitting and watched the witches burn and the children went in groups to see them hang the beggars. We have entered a new era of feeling but still the vindictivist is with us.

It is refreshing to turn from this point of view and approach to the New York Crime Commission now in the midst of its work. It consists of two members from the Senate, two from the Assembly and five members appointed by the governor. Governor Smith did not pick the mayors of five cities. He selected a lawyer, a doctor who had been connected with the police, a newspaper man, a leader in boys' work and a social worker. Caleb H. Baumes, father of the law that bears his name, is chairman of the commission. The commission has been at work some six months. The advance reports on causes of crime have just been given out for newspaper consumption by the Sub-committee on Causes, which includes William Lewis Butcher, chairman; Jane M. Hoey, and Joseph A. McGinnies. Five other sub-commissions that have not yet reported are studying

statistics, police, penal institutions, the adjustment of sentences, and courts.

Having in mind the vindictive spirit of the Baumes Laws in New York, we outsiders had no reason to expect much delving into the matter of causes. However, the report on causes is an agreeable surprise. It includes studies of two urban areas, of two rural areas, of 145 individual offenders, of 201 truants in the New York schools, of the relation of the daily press to crime and of "art" magazines to crime, and of a questionnaire on causes of crime submitted to 3,000 prominent citizens in New York State.

The merit of this or that individual study may be a matter of dispute but the merit of the nine studies in toto is not to be questioned. The study of one of the urban areas, the East Side, is not complete but the study of Red Hook, an isolated section in Brooklyn, is illuminating, especially with reference to juvenile delinquency. We are reminded again that crime is not a problem apart but is matted into a hundred other forms of social abnormality. In each of the several reports it is brought to our attention that there is no one cause of crime. With special reference to the individual studies of 145 offenders we read:

In every case studied there are many causative factors—bad or broken homes, poor neighborhoods, difficulties in schools, drunkenness, feeble-mindedness, poverty, mental abnormalities, low moral standards and other factors that might result in anti-social conduct.

A companion conclusion, which ought to be common knowledge—but which the vindictivists never concede—is that treatment must be individual. The governor of the small eastern state admitted to me that treatment must relate to individuals and not masses, yet he was for passing a law that automatically sends an offender to prison for life on the fourth offense, taking no account of the whys and wherefores or the complexities involved. That is the easiest way out. To raise questions and delve into causes takes time and gums up the machinery. The vindictivist has no patience with such delays. He calls it sentimentality. His weakness lies in not being able to distinguish between maudlin sentiment and critical investigation.

The report of the Sub-committee on the Causes of Crime is neither sentimental nor vindictive. Nor does it claim to be a final answer. It is trying to raise some of the fundamental issues in the administration of justice. It insists that passing law is alone no cure for crime because crime involves a total situation only part of which is recog-



Courtesy of the Boys' Club of Worcester, Mass.

nized by the law. We need to understand this total situation before we can formulate a constructive program of treatment. Significantly the report points out:

The time has come for clear thinking regarding the aims of our corrective system. If the only aim of society is to inflict vengeance upon law-breakers, then the more mandatory laws that can be enacted the better it will be. If vengeance is the sole aim, then probation, the indeterminate sentence and parole should be abolished, and the state should begin to build more prisons. But, if the aim is the protection of society and the reformation of the offender, mass treatment of offenders should be done away with and individual treatment substituted. Mandatory laws which fix penalties for specific offenses or limit the power of the judges should be enacted only as emergency measures.

The Sub-commission took up in one study the relation of the daily press and crime. The conclusion is a condemnation of tabloid journalism not only for giving false notions about "crime waves" but for overstimulating people by parading the details of certain colorful cases. The conclusion goes on in a guarded way to say that if there is no other means of avoiding the unwholesome psychological effects of the "new yellow journalism" we might have to resort to censorship. I would like to see this study of newspapers carried on, because the censorship proposal might eventually grieve us. On the other hand, if we refrain from censorship, how are we going to get on with the malicious methods of the tabloids? Then there are the off-color "art" magazines, snappy story magazines and hot-stuff publications. Certainly all of this stuff is linked up with the crime problem.

I HAVE heard criticism of the study of the 3,000 questionnaires on the causes of crime sent to representative groups of clergymen, judges, lawyers, business men, teachers, and others in the state of New York. Twenty-six of the popularly conceived causes of crime were named and the object was to get these men to number the causes in the order of their importance. The most popular cause named was "bad companionship," the second was "declining respect for authority," and the twenty-sixth was "capital punishment and severe prison sentences." Except for satisfying the proponents of the questionnaire method, the money spent on this study was wasted, as the Sub-commission admits. It adds, however, "As a means of illustrating the rather wide disparity of opinion among intelligent people and of showing the guesses that are made, as well as the prejudices that exist, this questionnaire serves a very admirable purpose." The object of the Sub-commission was to take stock of the snap-judgments that get quoted in the papers and help form public opinion on the matter of crime. These same opinions that the average man holds constitute the background of much of our law-making. The argument of the Sub-commission is that law should grow out of careful fact-finding and not out of points of view of individuals who may have no other information than their convictions—as for example, the laws against teaching evolution.

The study of the causes of crime will go on another year, which is as it should be. Six months digging into the problem has only stripped the surface. The real ore is under the grass roots and another twelve months ought to bring no little of it to the top. The relation of crime to the various commercialized amusements in the great city needs to be studied. How about the movie and the vodie, and what about the amusement parks and the chop suey joints? Broadway itself would be a real study in causes.



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*You Can Count On Him*

What does Broadway mean to the country in general and New York in particular? And what is Broadway doing to the bright-light hounds that hover about it, and where do we get in the study of crime without taking the white-light hounds of Broadway into consideration?

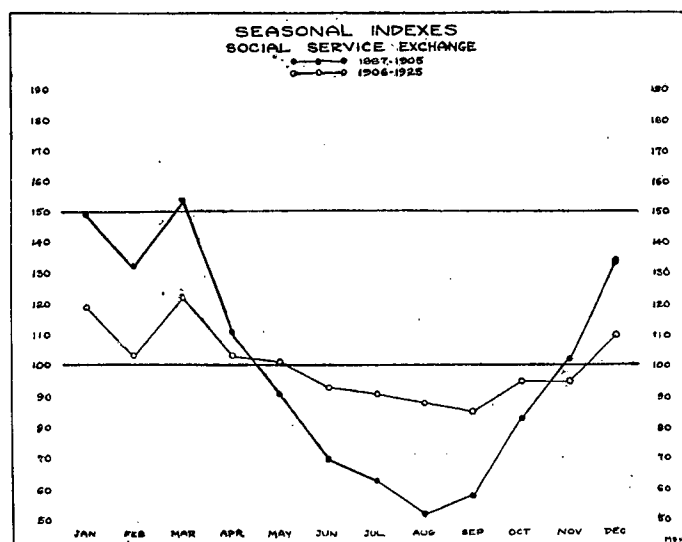
The press got all het up over the gang situation in Red Hook as reported by the Sub-commission on Causes. More than seventy juvenile gangs were located. The leaders of Red Hook didn't like it. Some of them said that Governor Al Smith's Crime Commission was anti-Catholic. That, of course, is a droll conclusion but it shows how touchy a subject the gang problem is. These juvenile gangs are called schools of crime from which the real criminal gangsters graduate. That raises a lot of questions about the adult gangs, the kind of gangs that are putting Chicago on the map. This is a field the Sub-commission on Causes could explore with profit. What is the relation between the entrenched gang and democracy in the city? The gang in its essence is a denial of democracy and yet it seems that the gang is here to stay. By studying the gang could we find some elements in its make-up that might be utilized in its control?

Then there is this matter of the movement of criminals from area to area in the city as they are identified with this or another form of crime. Just as the hobo on coming to New York finds his way to the Bowery or as the rising artist finds Greenwich Village, so the criminal finds his area. Why not study these areas, and while we are about it why not study the movements of offenders as they hop from city to city? This is a subject on which certain branches of the police departments are posted, but the study needs more delving and wider knowledge.

The real value of the initial report of the Sub-commission on Causes is that it is a gesture in the right direction. Its procedure is scientifically sound. It didn't start out knowing what the causes were. It started with only an open mind, recognizing that crime is but a single manifestation of a larger problem. Its task is to define the connection between crime and these many other social maladjustments.

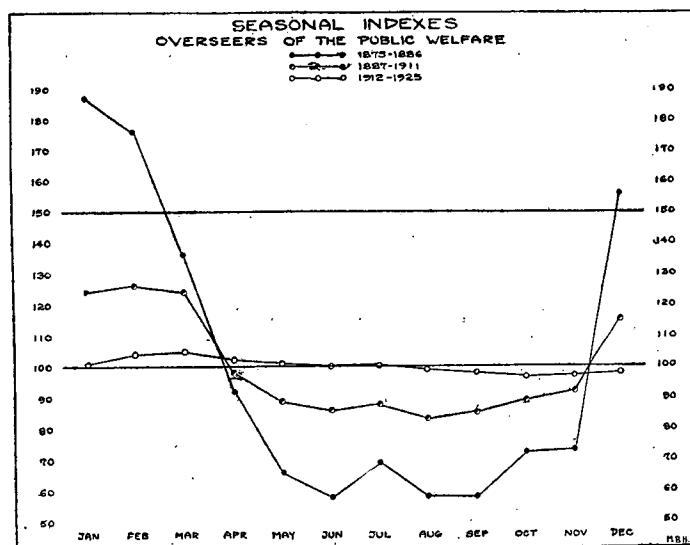
# Stabilizing Dependency?

By Maurice B. Hexter



THE writer has recently been concerned with an attempt to establish for the city of Boston a dependency index running back, month by month, to 1875. In the construction of that index, it became important to eliminate the seasonal variation in the monthly data. The two accompanying charts show the distinct changes in seasonal variations which took place during the past half century.

The first chart concerns the Social Service Exchange. It will be readily noted that in the epoch 1887-1905 the range over which the seasonal index varies is vastly larger than the range of the seasonal index for the epoch 1906-1925. This change is noticeable to an even larger degree in the second chart, concerning the Overseers of Public Welfare, which gives three epochs covering the period 1875-1925—



1875-1886; 1887-1911; 1912-1925. Notice on this chart that the seasonal index for the first epoch ranges from a maximum of 190 through a minimum of 58; the second epoch, from a maximum of 126 through a minimum of 82; while it is extremely interesting to see the very modest variation of the seasonal index of the latest epoch, in which the maximum is 105 and the minimum 98.

It is plain from these two charts that the seasonal feature

in social case-work has been progressively less prominent. Among the reasons for this fundamental change unquestionably must be placed the changing feature of seasonal unemployment. Unemployment itself does not play so prominent a part in the total case-load as formerly; and, seasonal unemployment has been greatly brought under control despite the large part which it still plays. Another important reason for this decline in variation due to the round of seasons, is unquestionably the change in our concept of case-treatment. In earlier years a case would be discharged after emergency relief of any sort had been provided. That method no longer prevails. Even though a case comes because of emergency, it is carried by the case-working agency until all of the family necessities which modern case-treatment discloses have been remedied. These charts depict graphically this change in the philosophy of case-working agencies.

## What Social Workers Do

TO find out not what social workers might do, or ought to do, but exactly what they are doing in some of the more usual types of positions is the object of the job analysis which Louise Odencrantz has been conducting during the past year for the American Association of Social Workers. Such job analyses have been used increasingly in industry and commerce, and occasionally in some of the professional fields. They have been found to serve as a basis for determining the necessary qualifications for a position, ensuring better selection, fewer misfits, less turnover; as a basis for working out training methods, increasing stability, general efficiency, earning power and the happiness and adjustment of the worker; and as a basis for salary grading and organized methods of promotion, eliminating the many injustices and misunderstandings which arise when these policies are left to chance and the whims of a supervisor. Would they not be enlightening also in the nascent profession of social work?

Although she confronted a certain amount of frank scepticism as to whether or not such a device could be used at all in a field which deals with intangible human relations and has evolved comparatively few standards and criteria for evaluating its results, Miss Odencrantz has worked out job analyses for the visitor, district supervisor, case supervisor, and general secretary in the field of family social work; for the medical social worker, chief and staff, in the social service department of a clinic or hospital; and for the psychiatric social worker. The series will make a fat pamphlet to be published by the Association early in the summer.

The analysis of the district secretary, for example, giving a composite picture of the work of such an individual in some sixteen family agencies, covers ten pages in single-spaced typewriting, defining the objectives of the office, its duties and responsibilities, the requirements and qualities of the worker essential for an efficient performance, and the working conditions which generally obtain. The significant part of a study such as this is its analysis of the actual processes of the job—in this case of the responsibilities of the district supervisor in supervising the case-load of the office, possibly carrying some cases herself; in raising funds, directing and training workers, supervising volunteers and clerical personnel, maintaining relations with the central office of the agency and with the community itself. Time



studies carried through a month in four organizations showed that about 24 per cent of the supervisor's time was taken by consultations with staff, students, volunteers and committee members; 14 per cent by telephone calls with clients or re clients; 5 per cent with dictation re cases; 15 per cent by record-keeping; 20 per cent by clerical work—"mail, reports, appeals, statistics, accounts, planning day-book entries, and miscellaneous;" 11 per cent by conferences and committees outside the office and attendance at classes and lectures; and 11 per cent by case-work in the field.

It will be of interest both to organizations and social workers to find that the minimum age for district supervisors was found to be 24 years; that salaries ranged from a minimum of \$125-\$175 a month to a maximum of \$150-\$275, while \$150-\$175 was the usual amount; that there was usually a vacation of four weeks or a month, with various additional allowances for sick leave; and that, though the official working-day was seven hours in all cases, the time studies in four agencies showed an average of from 7 hours 28 minutes in one, to 9 hours 4 minutes in another; that annual turn-over in district-secretary positions was estimated at not more than 25 per cent.

Commenting on the whole study at the May meeting of the Association, Miss Odencrantz declared:

As happens in the development of any new movement, interest has been centered primarily upon the formulation of the ideals and objectives of social work, the development of effective methods of technique, of a necessary body of knowledge, and of standards of preparation and training.

How about the worker back of the job? Those who have been active in efforts to advance the understanding and acceptance of social work objectives and methods and to develop technique out of vague conditions, have been enjoying the compensations that come to the pioneer who pushes into unknown territory and breaks soil. But we are beginning to pass out of this pioneering stage, and the profession calls for an increasing proportion of workers whose essential task is the intelligent, conscientious and enthusiastic application of those methods. There will always be a bit of the pioneer's compensation left, but now large numbers are entering the field for the carrying on of everyday work—new workers who may choose this particular profession from among other professions offering equal opportunity for rendering services to society. In return for thoughtful, interested and faithful service, they may well ask for the compensations which they might expect in other professions, an opportunity for lives of their own, with recreation, leisure, self-development, and the material compensations considered as the essential minimum for a professional worker.

This is especially important in a field such as social work, where a primary factor for effective results is the contribution of the worker from his own vision, philosophy, and outlook, all colored by his own background and experience and his present adjustment and well-being.

## Pennsylvania's Prisons

"INDESCRIBABLE" is the epithet used by Ellen C. Potter, the retiring secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare, to characterize the conditions which obtained at the Eastern State Penitentiary in the early months of 1923. "With hootch freely for sale, even manufactured within the institution; with dope easily available; with the women's section of the prison a brothel, with the building itself infested with filth and vermin, there were no lower depths to which it could sink," Dr. Potter told the Pennsylvania and All-Philadelphia Conferences of Social Work.

The control of the institution itself was actually in the hands of the "Four Horsemen," four convicts running the institution

in their own interest and that of some of the prison officers. While license and gross depravity were rampant at the eastern end of the state, at the central and western penitentiaries there was the hard-boiled type of utter restraint, with shackles, dungeons, "solitary," and mental torture, resulting in equally marked depravity and deterioration of the prisoners. No industrial, recreational, educational, or spiritual program was under way in these institutions.

In the past four years the remarkable renaissance which characterized all the state institutions and social programs of Pennsylvania during the administration of Governor Pinchot has no more striking results to report than those of the prisons. Now the buildings are clean, though still antiquated and overcrowded. Thanks to the help of outside experts and the energy and courage of members of the staff, notably Colonel John C. Groome and Warden Stanley P. Ashe, Pennsylvania has today a group of prisons and reformatories whose administration is second to none in the United States. More than 92 per cent of the inmates are employed either in welfare industries, handicrafts or in the domestic work of the institution, with compensation. The Department committed itself at the outset to the policy of conducting prison industries on a self-supporting basis, for training in the trades, and in such a manner as to minimize competition with the free manufacturer and organized labor. The operation of the industries has not cost the taxpayers a penny; during the past four years, on the contrary, approximately \$200,000 of net earnings went back into them for capital outlay.

The credo of the Department which put through this far-seeing reorganization, and similar pieces of work for the other state institutions—hospitals, almshouses, children's homes—and for state policies in the various social fields, was summarized by Dr. Potter: to develop and strengthen local responsibility for local social welfare; to improve standards by an educational process, not by police methods of compulsion; to keep the Department of Welfare out of politics and put state charities on a sound social basis; to give a business-like administration of the Department; to take official action only on the basis of assembled facts and to add, insofar as was possible, to the sum of these facts by social research; to ascertain existing legal powers, administer with discretion, and ascertain the points at which the laws relating to social welfare needed strengthening.

"Perhaps the biggest hit we made with the public," Dr. Potter commented, "was our habit of sending a reply to letters of inquiry within twenty-four hours."



NO SECTION of the reports of the Subcommittee on Causes of the New York Crime Commission (reviewed in the preceding pages) aroused more interest and controversy than that dealing with a Brooklyn area where chances for legitimate fun were few and youthful delinquencies were many. The picture illustrating that article is taken from a report of the Boys' Club in Worcester, Mass., organized to meet just such needs as those which have been largely overlooked in Red Hook. The Worcester Club has 5,000 members, not hand-picked but the run of the city, forming a considerable proportion of all boys in Worcester likely to get into trouble. Yet while the names of more than 900 boys appeared on the police blotters for the year ending June 1, 1926, only 34 Boys' Club members were among them. Swimming, wrestling, basketball, all preceded by careful physical examination to find and correct physical defects, give healthful outlet for the boyish energies.

# INDUSTRY

## The Workers Recapture Their Tools

By ROBERT W. BRUÈRE

THEY called it a Conference on the Elimination of Waste in Industry, these workers of the Central Labor Union and the Labor College of Philadelphia, who on April 9 and 10, reversing the traditional procedure, played hosts to a group of distinguished economists and management engineers. They had taken their cue, as The Survey has already reported (January 15, page 524), from the resolution of the Atlantic City convention of the American Federation of Labor opposing all wage reduction, but supplementing this stock declaration by urging upon management the elimination of waste in production in order that prices might be lowered while wages were increased and proffering labor's cooperation.

So stated, the program, in spite of President Green's ringing characterization of it as the "enunciation of a new era," seemed a simple and rather naïve extension of the stereotyped idea underlying ordinary collective bargaining over wages. Labor was promising to be good, to cut out ca'canny and waste, to increase the profits of the employer and share economies with the consumer, always however, with a main eye to increasing labor's share in the industrial income. Even so, this shifting of emphasis from the method of warfare to the method of "constructive" cooperation was a notable psychological achievement. But as developed by the spokesmen of the organized workers at Philadelphia, the program carried deeper and far subtler implications. What the workers are driving at, what they must drive at if they are to maintain their due functional status in industry, is not only an increased industrial income, but also the coordinate control with management of the new tools of large-scale machine production.

Critics of labor, and of organized labor particularly, never tire of berating the unions' restrictions upon output and their resistance to the introduction of new machinery and improved methods of production. They forget that the time was when employers defended brutally long hours and starvation wages on the ground that these were the conditions of holy living, since long hours left little time for mischief and low wages kept indulgence in worldly pleasures beyond the workers' purse. What was there for the workers to do but to fight for the right to live decently? And they forget that workers, being human, want something more than food and sleep out of life. They want the joy of conscious creation.

Every craft union was primarily organized to conserve the skill of its craft, through which in the days of the guilds the master workmen, from cobblers like Hans Sachs to the silversmiths who had their shrines in cathedrals, held honor in their communities. Machinery as first introduced smashed the great guilds and made naught of craft pride. What mysteries of his trade the individual skilled workman

snatched out of the wreckage, the first scientific managers took from him by job analyses and time studies, vainly trying to console him with bonuses and other purely financial incentives. He was denied a voice in management, and so denied direct access to the characteristic tools of modern production—planning, routing, cost accounting, the techniques by which the infinitesimally divided operations of a mass production factory are integrated into a single inclusive operation.

That is the fundamental cause of labor unrest. Union-management cooperation centers upon techniques, improved methods—tactfully called the elimination of waste. Enlightened managers are seeing that sharing in the creative processes of industry is indispensable not only to maximum production but also to the self-respect and intellectual vitality of labor. The best papers presented at the Philadelphia conference were read by local labor leaders who were masters of the new techniques and were eagerly putting their technical skill at the service of industries in the perfection of which they took pride.

THE opening address by Gustave Geiges, president of Local No. 706 of the Full Fashioned Hosiery Workers, was a revelation of the quality of the new leadership. The speaker had gone to work as a knitter when he was not quite fourteen and for nineteen years had worked at his trade. For ten years he had served as business representative of the Knitters' Union. During these years he had been "constantly engaged in the study of the technical problems of our industry." Why did he consider the elimination of waste the most important problem facing the industry and why did it so deeply concern the organized workers?

The full fashioned hosiery workers are paid on a piece price basis. What they are able to earn depends upon the quality of the raw material, the condition of their machines, the efficiency of management, their own alertness and skill. If the raw material is poor, threads will break, production will be delayed, sales will be curtailed, "because the successful merchandising of silk stockings depends upon the reputation for quality which the manufacturer or merchant is able to establish." The full fashioned machine is highly complicated and unless its fifty thousand parts are in perfect order both production and quality will suffer. The adjustment of all these parts is so delicate that a sudden change in temperature may cause the machine to produce poor work. Inefficient management entails losses to the workers which they cannot afford. Simple carelessness or inattention or lack of training on the part of the workers are the "third most common cause of bad work." The union protects its members against unequal treatment but "it does not oppress the employers by trying to protect the individual against the consequences of his own inability or improper