

COMBAT CRIME MOVES

THE ABSENCE of closed detention centres for juvenile offenders between 12 and 16 years of age is largely responsible for the present high rate of vandalism, according to Mr. Gordon Holmes, State Solicitor.

He said in Limerick that the criminally inclined were committing crimes unpunished and, being on the loose, were leading other juveniles astray.

Mr. Holmes was speaking to a meeting, attended by various representative bodies, which discussed malicious damage in Limerick city.

The various bodies, which included residents' associations, commercial and social interests, were welcomed by the Mayor, Cllr. Thady Coughlan, and Mr. R. Woulfa, City Law Agent.

The purpose of the meeting was to prepare an action plan to deal with the problem of vandalism.

Mr. Vincent Feeney, on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, called for more Gardai, pointing out that the man on the beat patrolling the streets was a deterrent.

He called also for a State-controlled closed detention centre for the Mid-West Region.

Mr. P. O'Carroll, on behalf of Lynwood Park Residents Association, stressed the need for closed detention centres and referred to the case of his own dwelling-house skillfully broken into by two girls aged ten to twelve years. He urged that the law should provide for payment by parents for the damage done by their children and that the children themselves be required to work to repay the damage.

Mrs. K. MacGabhann of Women's Federation pointed out that children from violent homes became vandals and the task was to get at the parents. The problem allied to battered wives and battered children and the burden imposed by the husband/father who is an alcoholic. Children growing up in such a home would do the same in later life. Help should be granted to wives and children in these circumstances.

Mr. J. Brazil, Mayorstone/Cooleraine Residents Association, enquired as to the facilities available in Limerick and how they had failed.

The Law Agent stated that there were a number of youth clubs and organisations and it is suggested that these are not sufficient in number or spread, and in any case the children who tend to attend these clubs are not the children who need attention.

The Mayor gave an instance of a boy released from the Whit weekend from an institution who, during his leave, was charged by the gardai with malicious damage to a value of £3,000, and asked how this sort of problem is met.

Mr. Gordon Holmes, State Solicitor, made the following points:-

● Neglect in the home is behind nearly every juvenile delinquent.

● Government neglect over a period of years; nothing done to implement the Interim Report of the Task Force on Child Care Services since it was issued last year.

● The number of Probation Officers totally inadequate for current needs.

● There are now no closed detention centres for juveniles between 12 and 16 years of age.

UNPUNISHED

The criminally inclined juveniles are committing crimes unabated and unpunished and they are leading other juveniles astray, so the absence of a closed detention centre or centres is largely responsible for the present situation.

● Sentences imposed by the courts on hardened criminals are grossly inadequate. There ought to be community services where children would find fulfilment.

Mr. John Murphy, Welfare Officer, pointed out that crime frequently arose early in the life of a boy or girl where parental control was lost at an early age; this was followed by ditching from school and the juvenile would be goaded, cajoled and intimidated into crime by older juvenile delinquents so that in some cases a boy or girl of ten would have become an adept criminal. Following warnings by the Gardai and the Court, the child is finally convicted of an offence by the Court for which he is sent to an open institution from which he runs away leaving the Gardai and the Courts powerless to control him.

In addition to calling for a closed detention centre, Mr. Murphy urged for the setting up in Limerick of a proper school attendance service which would hopefully work as well as the school attendance service in Dublin. He accepted that 2 probation officers for Limerick City, Limerick Rural Court area, Nenagh and Clare were not sufficient.

Mr. Patrick Hayes, for the Ballykeeffe Residents' Association and Limerick Civic Spirit Organisation urged the tackling of the problem in the home.

VIGILANCE
L. Mr. Michael J. Hennessy, Woodview Community Development Association, stated that more Gardai, especially on the beat, would help. He was not

happy about closed detention centres but believed that they were necessary for those who were leading other children astray. He urged assistance for sporting organisations, asking if any delinquent had been involved in sport before turning delinquent. He urged also greater vigilance by parents who should know where their children were at all times, and he also urged greater vigilance by residents and residents' associations.

Inspector M. Creton of the Garda Síochána stated that most vandals came from broken homes. He urged that citizens would report to the Gardai any suspicious incidents or cases of vandalism which came to their notice. He thought that members of the public, both adults and children, should show more concern and display greater involvement and engage in more self help.

POOLS

Mr. Kevin O'Dwyer, Limerick District Management Committee (soccer), stated that in his opinion a closed detention centre was essential to deal with the problem of juvenile crime and malicious damage caused by juveniles. He thought a number of new swimming pools was a worthwhile idea which would help in giving an outlet for youthful energies, but he would also like to see more football pitches. He thought juvenile delinquents ought to work to repay the community by, for example, picking up papers and waste in playgrounds and repairing property damaged by them.

Cllr. Bourke expressed the opinion that many parents were too interested in their social activities to look after their children; that school attendance surveillance was not good enough, that it was essential to have a closed detention centre where juvenile delinquents could be rehabilitated through education and training. The removal from the delinquent gang of a ring leader or hero, he thought, would break up the gang. He was not impressed by Garda foot patrols, which could be as easily avoided by the delinquents as motor patrols. He urged community halls providing activities interesting to young people, who ought to be consulted on the range of activities offered. He expressed the opinion that too large housing estates were a mistake, creating gangs of teenagers who had nothing to do.

Mr. James Wallace, Teachers' Union of Ireland, stressed that the problem of juvenile crime was both legal and sociological, three areas being involved—the home, the school and after school. He could not see any direct action for home conditions except to recognise the fact that delinquent youths seemed to come to a large extent from new housing estates where people had been uprooted and found themselves in what was to them a foreign country, with people whom they did not know. This creates a feeling of inadequacy, is easily transmitted to children. He asked if the local authority should not seek professional advice on this disturbance of existing social patterns. Civic teachers do not inculcate values because little civics was taught. Civics classes quickly turning into religious ones. School classes tend to be over crowded and inadequacies in the home are repeated in the school.

CLUBS

He suggested that a committee or sub-committee should draw up a list of the sporting and youth clubs in the city, summarising the activities of those clubs and quoting the name and address of an official in each with whom contact could be made by juveniles wishing to join social clubs. A drive should be made to recruit these clubs juveniles in risk and the committee should contact the teachers who would know what children need to be helped.

He referred to litter in Irish cities and towns and thought there was a failure to prosecute litter bugs; fines on the spot (fines by Traffic Wardens) was the best answer and would help to establish civic-mindedness. He thought there was a serious lack of intellectual entertainment in the city and that the library facilities were not good enough for a city of its size.

"What about a chess club?" he asked.

CIVICS

The Mayor made the point that from the meeting with civic teachers held on the 3rd June, there was no curriculum for teaching of civics, no examinations and no proper training for civic teachers, who tended to run out of civic material by the beginning of the second term in the school year.

Mr. T. Allen, P.R.O., Southill bringing back of Gardai on the Community Council, urged the beat as a deterrent, but felt that the Gardai should be in the area—known and trusted by local people. Regarding young people committing crime, he felt it was tragic that they should do so and tragic that they should get away with it (as they were doing under the present system) and tragic that they should influence others into crime. Some parents did not care what their children did and he urged that the law should make parents totally responsible for their children's criminal and malicious acts. In Southill, he said, there were plenty of facilities but lack of support from statutory bodies which could give support in the form of finance which would inter alia, enable trained youth leaders to be engaged. Money saved on malicious damage could be utilised in this way. He urged the development of community spirit which could influence both parents and children.

Mr. John Murley, A.S.T.I. urged child guidance as well as civics, closer co-operation between parents and teachers, and particular attention to the problem of school attendances.

Cllr. M. Crowe referred to a 5% rate of juvenile delinquency and associated this with lack of facilities. In San Jose, California, civic leaders got together with police and bought 9 acres on which police set up a youth protection unit resulting in a reduction of 44% in delinquency. In Limerick there were not enough open spaces and playing areas.

He was not happy about detention centres.

Mr. John Hannafin, Chairman, Southill Community Council felt there were facilities but what was lacking was professionalism and expertise to bring delinquent children to youth clubs and community based organisations and he urged support from the statutory bodies for these clubs and organisations.

Cllr. P. Kiely urged getting at the hard core among the 5% of delinquents and the appointment of a School Attendance Officer.

Mr. T. Joyce, President, Limerick Council of Trade Unions stated that he would report the evening's proceedings to his unions. He thought sports clubs do help but the city needed more concerned youth leaders who would get hold of the young people early. He thought voluntary effort could produce results, e.g. in the provision of playing fields.

He expressed the Union's concern that young persons of 15/16 years coming into industry had an anti-social attitude resulting in pilfering, damage to machinery and other property.

Mr. Denis Ryan of C.R.A., Limerick, advocated a drastic reduction in the size of school classes. He urged the appointment of a community development Officer who would be a qualified Sociologist, and would be appointed by the Corporation and County Council. He thought the time had come for a restructuring of local government with more community councils having statutory recognition. He was of the opinion that the city remedial teachers, and he pleaded for the acquisition of Mungret College for the use of the youth of the area.

He suggested the making of studies similar to Fr. Ryan's study of Ballinacurra Weston area some years ago.

Mr. Liam McCaffrey, Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland, commented on the lack of support for youth organisations, not just from statutory bodies. Adults

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Board restated

An application by Inspector William Sloyan to estreat recognisances in the sum of £100 was agreed to by Justice M. de Bures at the District Court when Matthew Fogarty, 19 Lilac Court, failed to appear before the court.

DEATHS

COSTELLOE—June 27, 1976, at St. John's Hospital, Lawrence, 3 Crescent Villas, O'Connell Ave., late of Clover Meats, Limerick, and Ogonelloe Post Office, Co. Clare. Deeply regretted by his loving wife, Kitty; brothers, nephews, nieces and relatives. R.I.P. Removal to St. Joseph's Church this (Monday) evening at 6.30 o'clock. Requiem Mass to-morrow (Tuesday) at 10.30 o'clock. Funeral immediately afterwards to New Cemetery, Killaloe. (m28c)

KENNY—June 28, 1976, at St. Camillus' Hospital, Peter, 17 Colmellick Street, St. Mary's Park, Limerick. Deeply regretted by his nephews, nieces, relatives and friends. R.I.P. Remains will be removed to St. Mary's Church this (Monday) evening at 6.30 o'clock. Requiem Mass to-morrow (Tuesday) at 3 o'clock. Funeral immediately afterwards to Mount St. Laurence Cemetery. (m28c)