Searchlight On Murder

Home, Child Keys To Preventive Social Therapy

No study of murder is complete without a search for ways to prevent this tragedy — this shameful waste of human life, says Dr. Ralph S. Banay, well-known criminologist. In concluding this series of five articles, he presents his views on how capital crimes can best be prevented.

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By DR. RALPH S. BANAY

A NEWS SPOTLITE SERIES

Taking stock of the state of today's society, what can we do that would reduce the tragedy, waste and shame of the rising tide of impulsive murders?

We can do a great deal.

Like every other social remedy, the effort must begin in, and be focused upon, the home and the child. But important contributions must be expected also from the schools, the churches, civic and social groups and society at large.

Murder and other violent crimes are essentially aggression running wild. Controlled and directed, aggression is a useful vital force — in fact, the source of nearly all achievement. Only in morbid or pathological situations, where it escapes restraint and surges into lawless channels, does it become the destroying agent of vented rage, recrimination and hate.

The problem, therefore, is to foster and promote the constructive uses of aggression so that it will serve the best interests of life: achievement, success and the pursuit of happiness.

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CONTRARY TO OLD assumptions, murderers do not run to type. They vary widely in their physical and psychological profiles. So the study of murder is properly based upon an individual assessment of each person who commits the capital crime.

However, certain parallels and similarities help to throw light on the genesis of crime in general.

In cases of sudden murder, it often appears that the killer has always acted in a normal, rational manner except for those few moments when he carried out his act. Yet further investigation nearly always discloses that the murder was the culmination of certain inner conflicts and frustrations that have caused lifelong tensions.

Also, there is often a history of a succession of episodes indicating that the killer had some physical or emotional impairment.

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If such indicators of instability or malfunction could be found at an early age or before the person gets into serious trouble, he might be helped to remedy his difficulty and the lives of his possible victims might be saved.

One of the most effective long-term precautions would be an alertness on the part of parents, physicians, teachers and school nurses to any evidence in children of marked emotional disturbance or disfunction that could lead to serious complications.

Such symptoms as repeated headaches, dizziness, fainting or wandering attention could be the nucleus of disorders that might cause aberrant behavior later. Even the presence of minor disfigurement, remediable physical defects or subnormal sight or hearing could be the cue for therapy that might save the child from tragedy.

Parents and teachers owe it to themselves and their charges, too, to prevent the spreading of contagions other than physical. There are times when unsavory and unwholesome associations, threatening to lead to waywardness and worse, can be discouraged by no more than a friendly counseling word.

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SIMILARLY, OCCASIONS for sexual license and perversion, an incitement to them, are more or less easily prevented than are their consequences.

In this era of professional personnel direction, welfare benefits, organized reaction and industrial medicine, there must be more facilities in business and industry than ever before to help employes, especially the younger ones, to solve the personal problems that so often lead to crime.

An earnest attempt to counteract the disadvantages of bigness in this day of the organization man might foster a feeling in the rank-and-file individual that he is a valued aide, however humble his job, and not just a cog in a gigantic machine.

In churches, clubs and social service organizations, as well as in ordinary daily contacts, cultivation of an atmosphere of goodwill and concern, with a readiness to listen to the troubles of the unfortunate and offer at least counsel, can give to a man or woman on the brink of desperation the slight lift needed to renew the spirit of fortitude and achievement.

One sometimes hears of a man or woman who attributes a narrow avoidance of a desperate act to a kind word or a friendly gesture from an understanding policeman. The police and other officials are in a strategic position to prevent delinquency and worse by showing forbearance at difficult times and thus wipe out the impression that rigid law enforcement only helps to spread lawlessness.

Under average conditions, a healthy, stable family life is likely to be found in those homes where the father is a respected, authoritative figure, the mother is an affectionate, considerate confidante of her children and an atmosphere of genuine affection between the parents transmits to the young ones a feeling of security in a climate of close-knit congeniality.

On the other hand, tensions between incompatible, bickering parents and distrust or aversion toward them on the part of the children are among the most common causes of emotional disruption and disaster. Even in well-provided, well-kept homes where the children are unhappy, dissatisfied and disturbed, the danger of youthful errancy is as great as in those that crumble for heartless neglect.

We should be able to look to a near future when all the nation's resources dealing with crime and its remedies will be unified and concerted in the progressive study of what causes people to go wrong, and of what can best be done to prevent the wholesale recurrence of serious errancy and to treat those who have erred.

IN SUCH A SYSTEM, we would have clinics in the schools and elsewhere that would give as close attention to emotional ills and obscure cerebro-nervous ailments as we now give to the common diseases. There would be dignified public centers to which both children and adults could go with assurance that they would receive the counsel and therapy needed to restore their health and stability.

Prevention would be the watchword, and remedy, where necessary, would be founded upon the pooled knowledge and experience of all medical and allied resources.

It would be compounding tragedy to surrender to the notion that the problem or murder — and I would include delinquency and other crime as well — is bigger than the capacity of our society to deal effectively with it.

Though it is true that every deterrent so far tried, including capital punishment and long imprisonment, has failed to check the growth of criminal behavior, we should be proud enough to believe that we have the means of remedy if we would only concentrate and implement them.

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School Textbooks Selected Only After Careful Study

By LYNN NISBET
News Raleigh Bureau

RALEIGH — Popular interest in public schools has been accentuated in recent years by decisions of the federal courts, developments in Arkansas, Virginia and elsewhere, as well as by increasing imposition upon the public pocket book.

LYNN NISBET

A pproaching centennial of the Civil War, the upsurge of activity in restoration of historic sites and concern over use of newly discovered nuclear energy have aroused great popular interest in subject matter taught in the schools.

This is especially true with respect to history, mathematics and sociology. To greater degree than ever before the parents of children and the folks who put up money to operate the schools are asking about what is being taught and how the textbooks are selected.

CHOOSE BOOKS

One of the specific duties set out in the Constitution for the State Board of Education is to "provide for the selection and adoption of textbooks to be used in the public schools." While the reading, the "leg work" of responsibility for adoption of textbooks and required supplemental reading, he "leg work" of research and appraisal is delegated to a statutory Textbook Commission of 12 members, jointly appointed by the governor and the superintendent of public instruction.

The statute provides that seven of the members shall be outstanding classroom teachers or principals in elementary grades, five in high school grades, with provision that one member may be a city or county superintendent. The commission selects its chairman, who presently is A. B. Gibson of Laurinburg.

No adoption of textbooks may continue for longer than five years without review, and in most instances new editions or revised texts are substituted on recommendation of the superintendent every year or two.

The process of textbook adoption is controlled largely by statute, supplemented by board regulations, and is essentially as follows.

ADVISES BOARD

The state superintendent will officially advise the Board of Education that the time has arrived for adoption of new texts in this or that subject.

Say, for example, a sixth grade U. S. history. The board instructs the textbook commission to call for submission of texts by authors and publishers. Each member of the commission is required to review and appraise every book submitted and make a written report. These several reviews are then considered by the commission as a whole which makes formal evaluation, in one-two-three orders, to the board.

The board receives and considers this evaluation report in "executive session," meaning that nobody except the sworn members of the commission and the board ever knows which was rated first, second or in sequence.

NARROW EDGE

Sometimes the evaluation so clearly shows excellence of material as to virtually eliminate competition. More often the difference between first and second choices is so narrow that cost or delivery time might make them competitive. In that event sealed bids are called for from publishers. Since the state spends around three million dollars a year for textbooks the price of a book is important, but the price is not considered unless the text is on the approved list.

After evaluation reports have been received from the Textbook Commission, and before formal adoption is made, opportunity is given publishers to present their cases to the Board of Education.

The publishers do not know how they have been rated, and often devote more time to quality of printing and binding and service rendered than to text content. Since the books are rented to pupils the physical durability is an important factor.

Four Bombs Tossed In Steel Strike

ATLANTA (AP) — Four homemade bombs have been thrown against the homes of two supervisors of the Atlantic Steel Co. where a strike has been in progress for three months.

The bombs were made of large electric light bulbs filled with gasoline and aluminum paint. One bomb exploded. The other three misfired, scattering paint over the structures. No injuries were reported.

It was the second major outbreak of violence since the strike began Oct. 31. In November a wine bottle filled with flaming gasoline was tossed into the cab of a truck near the plant. The driver suffered serious burns but recovered.

Police said Thursday night the homemade bombs were tossed against the homes of Forrest L. Cheek and Lem Harris, foremen at the plant. Both men have continued to work at the plant, which has been operating on a limited basis with supervisory personnel.

VICIOUS THING

Howard B. Johnson, president of the steel company, termed the bombings "a vicious thing" and said other foremen have been threatened and had paint thrown on their cars in the past.

Clyde E. Dye, president of Local 2401 of the United Steel Workers Union, said the union does not condone violence and has no idea who was responsible for the bombings.

Both company and union officials reported no immediate prospects of a settlement.

Company spokesmen said 1,400 of the firm's 1,600 employes have been cut out in a dispute over seniority provisions in the contract.

Three of the oldest houses of worship in America are located in Newport, R. I. They are the Quaker Meeting House, built 1699; Seventh Day Baptist Meeting House, 1729, and the Touro Synogogue, 1763.

GIRL ADJUDGED MENTALLY ILL AFTER SLAYING

HOUSTON, Tex. (AP) — Diana Daye Humphries, 16, who killed her brother because nothing exciting happened around their home, was sent to a state hospital at Austin Thursday for an indefinite period.

The commitment order by Travis County Judge Tom Johnson wasn't contested.

Robert D. Humphries Jr., 14, was shot to death Sept. 10.

"I was bored," Diana said in a signed statement to officers. "all we do is eat, sleep and watch TV."

A Harris County court committed the girl to the Austin hospital on a temporary basis.

Two state doctors testified they considered Diana mentally ill and recommended that she remain in the hospital for additional treatment.

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