

A Plea for Experiment

2 OCT 70

By Dr. ARNOLD A. HUTSCHNECKER

On Dec. 1, 1969, the President handed me his advance copy of the "Commission Statement on Violent Crime" under the chairmanship of Dr. Milton E. Eisenhower and asked me to state my "philosophy" on this problem.

He had come to realize that a mere increase in law-enforcing agencies is not the full answer to the terrifying rise in crime.

Having read the report, I was struck by the thought of preventing crime by attempting to prevent a child with delinquent tendencies from growing into a full-fledged delinquent, provided that such tendencies could be detected early enough and with fair accuracy.

Crime in the United States, according to the Eisenhower report, is being committed by males between the ages of 15 to 24. It further states that "violent crime in the cities stems disproportionately from the ghetto slum, where most Negroes live." My consequent plan was not meant to be a substitute for the Eisenhower committee's recommendations

Among the manifold problems there were these three:

① Can delinquent tendencies in a child be predicted and at what age?

② Can a prediction of delinquent tendencies be made by specific tests and how reliable are these tests?

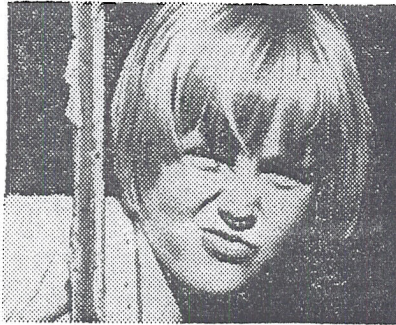
③ If delinquency can be predicted and is considered to be the result of depressing environmental circumstances, to what degree can a child be helped if he is obliged to continue to live under severely deprived and unhealthy conditions?

Professor Sheldon and Dr. Eleanor Glueck of Harvard Law School have developed a test which claims that "nine out of ten (delinquents) could have been correctly identified at the age of six."

On Dec. 9, 1969, I sent a provisional report to the President, suggesting mass testing of all six- to eight-year-old children (and possibly the total child population up to the age of fifteen) as well as "After School Programs" and group therapy for those children who show delinquent tendencies. I stated that more time was needed for further research "in order to determine the most effective and least costly method . . . to detect . . . violent and homicidal tendencies."

I then went to Mexico to meet with Dr. Robert Hartman (Research Professor of Philosophy, National University of Mexico and University of Tennessee) who had developed a method which by measurement testing of values, claims to predict delinquency for intelligent children from the age of ten upward and all children from the age of twelve upward.

Dr. Hartman stated, and I concur, that "no test can predict actual violent behavior, or any kind of actual behavior for that matter. But the test



Jerome Halberstadt

can detect the tendency or proneness to such behavior. It can, moreover, indicate the need for therapy, and the kind of therapy needed."

I reported my further findings to the President, who on March 23, 1970, sent his counselor, Dr. Daniel P. Moynihan, to see me.

April 6, 1970, began with a series of overseas telephone calls from London newspapers and from B.B.C., excited about "your testing of children." The press demanded more details of my plan. "It is a confidential report," I replied evasively.

What followed next was an uproar in the press with bitter attacks, cynicism and ridicule which was puzzling to me, until it became evident, that a distorted version of my original text had been released with allegation of racial undertones and a denunciatory statement of solving crime by the establishment of "detention camps" for six- to eight-year-old children. I have made no such suggestion.

Through Jack Nelson, of The Los Angeles Times and Washington Post, I learned weeks later that the original report had been leaked out together with the following note: "This memo hasn't reached the press as of today—April 3; it smacks of Nazi Germany. We haven't determined if Finch has replied to it yet, but others have copies of this memo in their hands and we expect it to break by the end of this week. Do what you can with it. (*Italics mine.*) An interested black H.E.W. employe."

Evidently it was this memo which had created the rancor in the press.

The controversy about testing continued. Many psychiatrists bluntly rejected the idea of psychological testings. Other doctors supported it.

During my last meeting with Dr. Hartman, May 22, he gave me an eleven-page memorandum prepared for the National Institute of Mental Health plus 66 more pages of bibliography and related data. If correctly answered, Dr. Hartman told me, there is no error in the testing since the test is mathematical and a delinquent sticks out like a sore thumb.

Among those supporting my plan is Dr. Louise Bates Ames, associate director of the Gesell Institute of Child Development in New Haven, Conn.

Studies show that the nonexistence or absence or indifference of a father is a strong contributory factor to delinquent behavior. I suggested that children eight to ten years old (and later up to fifteen) who show delinquent tendencies should have "guidance counselors, possibly graduate students (in order to reduce costs) who are trained and work under the supervision of psychologists or psychiatrists, and who "must have empathy (most important) but also firmness." Boys need firm and kind male figures to identify with in order to grow up as healthy males. The learning of how to channel hostile aggression into creative pursuits is necessary to prevent a child from becoming

At the end of a scientific meeting of the American Society of Psychoanalytic Physicians (of which the author is a Fellow) on May 26, dealing with "Psychodynamics of Violence on the American Scene," the president of the society, Dr. John B. Train, stated:

"I take my hat off to Dr. Hutschnecker, who single-handedly went to Washington, stuck his neck out and got hurt. What have we psychiatrists



Burk Uzzle, Magnum

done to help him? Has anyone of us stood up in support? No, we did nothing. The time has come for us to organize so that our voice can be heard in our urgent need to help the children in trouble and to work for the prevention of crime."

Officially the President has not as yet rejected my plan. I am preparing a project which I hope will be financed by private means or a foundation.

Such a pilot project may convince the Government of the effectiveness of crime prevention and motivate it to adopt this or a similar plan. If we are seriously determined to cure the cancer of crime which costs this nation billions of dollars, to say nothing of lives, and if we are really desirous of helping young human beings to have a chance in life, then the early detection of delinquent tendencies and their cure seem not only the most effective action available to us but an inescapable responsibility of the Government.

Dr. Arnold A. Hutschnecker is author of "The Will to Happiness" and other works in the field of human behavior. He is a friend of President Nixon's.

See 11 Apr, 7 May 70; 1 Feb 73