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Report to Staff and Trustees of the Vera Institute of Justice

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I. BAIL REFORM

Reform Urged in Alabama

Huntsville, Alabama. A recent article in the Huntsville Times surveys the state of bail reform in Alabama. The Times reports that local attorneys are urging that the state "get busy and reform a bail system that often keeps a man in jail or sets him free solely on the basis of his pocketbook." Of particular concern is the "parasitic role of the professional bondsman." Citing the Manhattan Bail Project and the Atlanta pretrial release program, the Times advocates that a legislative committee be appointed to study the bail system and come up with recommendation for reform.

California Study Proposed

Sacramento, California. A resolution for a legislative interim study of California's system of bail procedures was introduced into the state Assembly by Assemblyman John Vasconcellos of Santa Clara County. Noting that "the only legitimate purpose of bail is to guarantee the appearance of an accused person at his trial," Assemblyman Vasconcellos went on to say that too often defendants are detained because of insufficient funds to raise bail even when there is no danger of that person's fleeing the court's jurisdiction. It is expected a report will be ready for the legislature by next January.

Bail Review Held for Prisoners

Hartford, Connecticut. Beginning in Hartford State Jail where a recent strike by prisoners called attention to overcrowded conditions, a team of interviewers headed by Patrick Ward, Chief Family Relations Officer for the State of Connecticut, has been interviewing prisoners who are being held in jails throughout the state on bonds of \$500 or less. 18 of the 50 men interviewed on the first day were released by a Circuit Court Judge. The team of interviewers recommended to Circuit Court and Police officials that a Circuit Court rule disqualifying anyone convicted of a misdemeanor within the previous six months be changed to allow two misdemeanor convictions in the previous six months or three in the previous year.

Bail Reform Spreads Throughout State

Maryland. Two counties in Maryland have begun to reform the bail bond system in accordance with recommendations made by the Maryland Bar Association. (See Vol. 2 No 12) In Carroll County police will continue to set bail until the county is able to set up new procedures. Magistrates in Anne Arundel County will be receiving instructions including objective standards to follow in implementing the new procedures.

A recent editorial in the Sun in discussing the new bail reform measures in Maryland states that "there should be no turning back.." The article goes on to say that in Baltimore in the state court there have been but a few cases in which ROR'd persons failed to appear as ordered, but on the other hand, Criminal Court records show that the percentage of bail jumpers is higher than the percentage of those not appearing for trial after ROR.

Detroit Bail Administration Criticized

Detroit, Michigan. The Detroit Free Press has criticized bail policy in the city during the riot. Two Detroit policemen charged with 1st degree murder of two Negro youths during the riots had bonds set at \$5,000. Each posted bail and were released. A third man, charged with rioting and inciting to riot, had bail set at \$150,000 and was remanded to jail. The police officers were charged with crimes which, if convicted, could send them to prison for life terms. The third man faced a maximum sentence of five years. All three men were regularly employed. The bail amounts reflected neither the severity of the charges nor the likelihood of flight.

Probationer Not Entitled to Bail

Jefferson City, Missouri. In an attempt to clarify the 1965 state legislation on bail in regard to probationers, state Attorney General Norman H. Anderson held that probationers arrested for violating the conditions of their probation are not entitled to bail. According to Anderson, the Constitutional guarantee providing for bail in non-capital cases is applicable only before trial and conviction; there is no constitutional right in Missouri to be admitted to bail after conviction. Any such right would have to be created by statute.

IV. FAMILY COURT

Alternative to Detention

New York, New York. Twelve boys being held at Youth House on charges of juvenile delinquency - glue-sniffing, purse snatching and the like - escaped from the facility Aug. 30, 1967. Seven of the twelve boys were found by an anti-poverty worker and eventually returned to the authorities. Various organizations including Vera were contacted by the Mayor's Office to help find alternatives to continued Youth House detention. Through the efforts of Mobilization for Youth, Vera was able to place 2 of the boys in foster families pending disposition of their cases. One of the boys is still with the assigned family and a permanent placement is being considered. The Division of Home Finding of the Bureau of Child Welfare is investigating the home to determine whether the parents can be authorized to receive compensation for his care as official foster parents. If this is arranged the placement will be the first of the type contemplated as an alternative to detention by the Mayor's Task Force on Youth House.

V. PROSTITUTION

"Social Approach" toward Prostitutes Advocated

New York, New York. In a recent series the New York Times advocates a social approach to treatment of prostitutes. The article cites the Vera Institute as an organization which advocates "halfway houses" in which prostitutes would be offered a full battery of services from psychiatrists & social workers to vocational guidance experts in an effort to change the present revolving door systems of courts and jails.

VI. POLICE USE OF FIREARMS

New York, New York. Referring to the new regulations for police use of firearms recently prepared by Vera and F.A.O. Schwartz, Jr., the New York Daily News called them "A Guide for the Harried Man." In two highly satirical articles depicting New York policemen as harried, abused, and confused, the News sharply objects to the new regulations and warns of decreasing efficiency of the Police Department.

A hearing on the newly effective state statute restricting the use of guns by police was held in New York City on September 21st. The hearing was initiated by State Senator Edward J. Speno, (R.) of Nassau County because of what he termed the "overwhelming reaction this section of the new Penal Law."

VII. SUMMONS

Ohio Watching New York Summons Program

Mansfield, Ohio. The News-Journal has commented editorially that the New York experimental summons program is "worth watching". Commending the theory upon which the program is based, the News Journal cautions that the criteria for summons eligibility must be clearly defined. Further it questions whether the New York courts will in fact be able to enforce warrants "by relentless pursuit and punishment".

New York Summons Program Seems a Success

New York, New York. A recent article in the New York Times reported on the success of the summons program. Of the 1,100 persons released since the program went into effect July 1st of this year, 95% of the defendants have appeared in court on schedule. These figures represent the first survey of data but it is expected that when the final analysis is made of the last two months the rate of return should rise to about 97%. Approximately one out of every eight arrests for minor offenses have been given summonses.

VIII. VERA NEWS

Interrogation Project

October 23rd will mark the end of the six month experiment tape recording police interrogations at Manhattan's 20th Precinct. (See Vol. 2 No. 6) On that date the tape recorders will be turned off and project members will begin to evaluate the program. In connection with the program at the 20th Precinct a survey of interrogations at the remaining Manhattan precincts (See Vol. 2 No. 13) has been completed. Data has been collected on 1600 cases interrogated and an analysis of this information will begin shortly.

Manhattan Bowery Project

The alcoholic treatment clinic of the Manhattan Bowery Project located at the Men's Shelter, 8 East 3rd Street, New York, N.Y. is scheduled to begin operation on October 30, 1967. At present the Shelter is undergoing renovations on the fourth floor to make the area more suitable for use as a clinic. The clinic has been licensed by the State Department of Social Service and a corporation -- The Manhattan Bowery Corporation -- has been set up to direct its operations. The new corporation has a board of directors made up of members of the legal and medical professions and the business world.

Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

The new Council is now in the process of formalizing plans to use police precincts as local information centers in ghetto neighborhoods. Mr. Klapper attended a conference in Harlem sponsored by HARYOU Act on the responsibility of Harlem residents for crime problems in the area.

Court Expansion

September 18, 1967 marked the opening of Brooklyn night court. (See Vol. 2 No. 13)

The Vera Telephone Experiment

Vera issued a preliminary report on its telephone experiment, which shows that a telephone call can make the difference between getting released on bail or remaining in detainment. (See Vol. 2 No. 13)

The experiment was carried out in the Men's House of Detention in Manhattan during July and August 1967. Defendants who requested the use of the Vera phone were randomly assigned into either an experimental or control group. The experimental group was permitted to use the phone within 24 hours after request; the control group was denied the use of the phone until 7 days later. After 7 days, 27.5% in the experimental group were released on bail, but only 12.5% in the control group -- a difference of 15%. This difference is statistically significant and the probability that it could occur by chance is 3 out of 100.

A final report on the experiment will be issued during the coming month.

New Staff Members

Since September 1, 1967 the Vera Institute has had several new additions to professional staff.

Sgt. Gilmore of the New York City Police Department has been assigned to work with Vera on the Summons Project.

Nancy Dubler will be assistant project director of the Manhattan Bowery Project.

Mary Nichols is a job developer on the Manpower Project.

Miriam Kahn is a research assistant on the Police-Community Relations Study.