

Movement to Suppress Sordid Crime News Beneficial to Citizenship

By H. J. LANGOE

"CRIME NEWS is not of social importance. A large amount of space devoted to it is not socially advantageous. Such news makes a depressing newspaper and it gives a distorted view of a rather well advanced civilization. News of crime is monotonous, for the events chronicled have been happening for thousands of years."

If the above quotation is a criterion of what is thought to be in the minds of America's thinking citizens, Eric W. Allen, Dean of the University of Oregon School of Journalism has put it plainly enough to cause every interested citizen in the state of Oregon to give a personal response. The following questionnaire, prepared by George S. Turnbull, professor in journalism at the University, has been submitted to the newspaper reading public in this state for the purpose of obtaining individual opinion on the subject:

Do you believe that the newspapers ought (a) to give considerable prominence to news of crime and punishment with a view to the deterrent effect of publicity, or ought they (b) to give very little prominence to such news on the theory that prominent crime news increases crime?

Whatever your belief on the first question, do you yourself read the crime news with interest? Which do you actually prefer to read, a paper like the Christian Science Monitor, which virtually ignores crime news, or a paper like the Chicago Tribune, which gives crime news emphatic display?

Apart from your own personal preference, what preferences have you actually observed on the part of friends, associates and persons with whom you come in contact. In other words, do you believe your degree of interest in crime news is a

representative one, or do you stand in a minority on the matter? How does the general public feel about crime news?

Do you want reports of crime suppressed in the papers you read?

Do you approve of the way crime news is handled by the papers?

Do you disapprove of the way crime news is handled by the papers?

Do you want reports of any types of crime suppressed? Which ones?

Do you want classes of individuals protected in crime stories? If so, who?

Do you believe the publication of crime news, with proper handling of details and reports of convictions, tends to deter crime, or to raise moral standards? Does it deter prospective criminals?

Do you believe the sensational paper's method of handling crime news tends to encourage or to discourage crime?

Do you believe it possible to report crime news in such a way as not to encourage criminal acts on the part of certain types of readers?

Do you believe that the evil of whatever encouragement there may be to crime in the publication of crime news is counterbalanced by the good to society resulting from a full knowledge of the state of law enforcement as shown by publication of the news of crime?

Do you believe that the bare essentials of crime should be reported in the papers, without special effort to make this news attractive to the readers?

Do you believe that the trouble with crime news in the papers is largely due to improper handling of the details by reporters and editors devoted to sensationalism?

Do you believe that it is possible to reform reporting of crime without suppressing the details altogether?

Where, in your opinion, should the line be drawn between crime news that should be suppressed?

Do you believe that the publication of illustrations (halftones

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