

Attorney General Discusses Family Non-Support Problem

(Editor's note: The problem of the absconding father who fails or refuses to support his wife and children is becoming acute in Oregon. In two articles, Oregon's attorney general discusses the problem. The first article appears below.)

By ROBERT Y. THORNTON

One of the most serious and dangerous disturbances in our present day social structure is the increasing number of family breakups due to desertion and abandonment by the husband and father of the family. Across the nation, between July 1, 1948, and June 30, 1949, over 1,000,000 wives and children were abandoned by their breadwinners.

In Oregon 6,600 children were deserted between July 1952 and December 1953. In 18 per cent of the reported cases the deserting parent or parents continued to live in the same county; 14 per cent, in another Oregon county; and in 27 per cent, outside the state. But in over 40 per cent of the reported cases the whereabouts of the parents of these deserted or abandoned children was unknown.

Gives Hypothetical Case

What can a mother do when she has been deserted and abandoned by her husband? To answer this question let's take the hypothetical case of Mrs. John Q. Smith. Suppose that Mrs. Smith, a mother of three children, has been severely mistreated and finally deserted by her husband. There are two ways for Mrs. Smith to approach her support problem.

First, she can treat it as a crime, which of course it is, go to the district attorney and ask to have her husband arrested for nonsupport. Second, she may treat it as a civil matter and either (a) bring suit for divorce and support money or (b) simply sue for support money without divorcing her husband.

Interstate Problems

What happens when Mr. Smith has fled to Miami, Florida? Before the new "Runaway Father Law" was passed, which I will explain in a moment, Mrs. Smith would have been obliged to hire a lawyer in Florida—if she could afford a lawyer—to try to collect support money for herself and the children. This made the civil remedy virtually ineffective.

Under the new law she can file her suit here in Oregon and have papers forwarded to wherever Mr. Smith is living. In all probability she will be able to have the money collected for her by the courts of Florida.

In 1951 Oregon's legislature

passed the new law—the Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act—popularly referred to as the "Runaway Father Law." This law, which was amended in 1953, had for its purpose making all runaway parents support their children instead of forcing the state to do the job.

Provides Machinery

Briefly, it provides machinery whereby a mother living in Oregon can compel her spouse, who has run away to Florida, to support her and their three children here in Oregon by merely filing a legal proceeding in her home state and obtaining the aid of the Oregon and Florida courts to enforce the family obligation in Florida. The reverse of this is also true. Thus, if a Florida wife and her children are abandoned by the father who comes to Oregon, she can file a proceeding in Florida and reach him here in Oregon. This model law has now been passed in substantially the same form in all states of the Union except Nevada.

How has the law worked out in practice? Remarkably well, on the whole. There have been a few dodgers who hop around from state to state so fast that they cannot be compelled to support their dependents.

Some Bottlenecks

Some of the bottlenecks that have developed result from the fact that district attorneys and welfare agencies without adequate staffs have been too swamped with other duties to give these cases the time and effort required to keep after these absconding fathers. Efficient collection of support money is a time-consuming job. It cannot be accomplished without tireless and dogged efforts to stay on the backs of these child deserters.

The costs of aid to abandoned children and wives have proved to be a heavy burden on the public pocketbook, nation, state and local. At the outset of this article, I stated that over one million wives and children in the United States are abandoned by their husbands and fathers every year. These dependents received a total of \$561,111,000 in federal and state assistance in 1954. The Federal Security Agency estimates that this will increase at the rate of 20 per cent per year. At the present time the Federal Government contributes about 48 per cent of the costs of the program in Oregon. The balance is borne 36 per cent by the state and 15 per cent by the counties.

In June 1954, 18 out of every 1,000 Oregon children 18 years of age and under were receiving Aid to Dependent Children. Total payments for the fiscal year 1954 amounted to \$4,652,625.03, or more than 16 per cent of expenditures for all types of public assistance.

While Aid to Dependent Children, as I have just indicated, covers more than just desertion cases, the latter do constitute nearly one-half of this substantial figure.

From my studies of the problem I am convinced that a substantial number of runaway fathers are still escaping their responsibilities of support and that the taxpayer is as usual footing the bill. The absconders are remarrying, settling down and starting to raise new families, all because there is no over-all planned, continuing collection effort being made.

Who is to blame for this situation? (The second article will appear in The Mail Tribune tomorrow.)

Grange

Phoenix Grange

About 80 members and guests attended the covered dish dinner in observance of the 24th anniversary of Phoenix Grange when they met February 22. Charter members presented by Master Melvin Lottie were Myrtle Ferns, Bert Stancliffe and Mr. and Mrs. Cal Lusk. A birthday cake in keeping with the occasion was made by Florence Hartley and Mabel Quackenbush. Serving committee in charge were Mr. and Mrs. Dee Hendrickson, Mr. and Mrs. Chet Parker, Mr. and Mrs. Bert Stancliffe and Mr. and Mrs. Wade Harmon.

Agriculture chairman Charley Hockersmith provided the program. Invited were Harold White from Southern Oregon Experiment Station who spoke on fertilization treatment and yield data and L. R. Thomas, who showed color pictures of Butchart gardens and Peterson's Rock garden.

Visitors attending the dinner, also the closed meeting were Mr. and Mrs. Cal Lusk, Mr. and Mrs. Jake Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Force and Mrs. Crete Carnall from Eagle Point Grange and Mr. and Mrs. Phil Mutschbacher and Mrs. Ida Otto from Shady Cove Grange.

Members voted to participate in the program visitation meet-



ROBBER COMES OUT SECOND BEST—Police Lt. T. A. Williams stands over Lloyd M. Pryor, handcuffed and bleeding, as they await ambulance at Memphis, Tenn. The police officer surprised Pryor just after he had held up a gas station. Williams said Pryor attacked him with an ice pick as he was radioing headquarters. He slugged the bandit with his gun rather than shoot him.

ings sponsored by Pomona Grange. Escorted to the Master's station for their attendance pins were Mr. and Mrs. Willis House and Al Floyd.

Lecturer Olive Floyd announced that a travelogue picture by Standard Oil will be shown March 8 starting at 8 p.m. and will be open to the public.

Central Point Grange

Central Point Home Economic club of the Grange will meet at the home of Mrs. Charles Taylor, Old Stage road at 1:30 p.m., Monday. All women are invited to attend.

Roxy Ann HEC

The Roxy Ann Grange Home Economics club will meet at the Grange hall Wednesday, March 2, at 1 p.m. Hostesses will be Mrs. Lucille Meadows and Mrs. Caroline Wolfe.

The sun supplies over three quadrillion kilowatt hours of energy every three days, more than is available in all the reserves of coal, oil, natural gas, and uranium on earth.

Social Security Office Adds Man

A new claims representative has been hired by the Medford social security office, making a total staff of eight, according to W. V. Nussbaum, district office manager.

Richard Keniston, 35, formerly in private business in Seattle, is here, and his wife and two children will arrive here in about two months.

The hiring of Keniston is the third staff addition since Jan. 1. Nussbaum said that the increase has been brought about by increases in social security coverage and the area's population.

Keniston is a former employee of Seattle Auto Dealer Stanley Sayres, who is best known for record-winning speedboats, Slo-Mo-Shun III, IV and V. Keniston is a graduate of Seattle university and a Navy veteran of World War II.

Mittleman Ordered To Clean Up Tract In South Portland

Portland — (U.P.)—The State Sanitary Authority has given Harry Mittleman, Portland contractor and operator of Cedar Mill Park, 90 days in which to provide adequate sewage disposal in the southwest Portland housing development.

If he fails to comply, the authority said he will be cited to show cause why proceedings should not be instituted against him.

Situation Deplorable

The authority, at its quarterly meeting Friday, said engineers have been surveying the Cedar Mill sewage plant and have declared the situation "deplorable."

In other action, the authority gave five meat packing firms along the Columbia slough in north Portland 30 days in which to contract with the city for sewage disposal or provide other adequate means to abate pollu-

tion in the slough. The authority decided to hold in abeyance decisions on proposed sewage programs by Hood River and The Dalles. The city of St. Helens was given 90 days in which to submit a construction schedule for a proposed \$615,000 sewage system.

Program Turned Down

The authority turned down a 10-year program by Empire for construction of a sewage treatment plant and lines. Dr. Harold M. Erickson, state health officer, said possible pollution of water supply from use of septic tanks in the Empire area might be a cause of Coos county's high rate of infectious hepatitis.

Bandonon was given a go-ahead

There are three great classifications of rocks constituting the earth's surface—igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic.

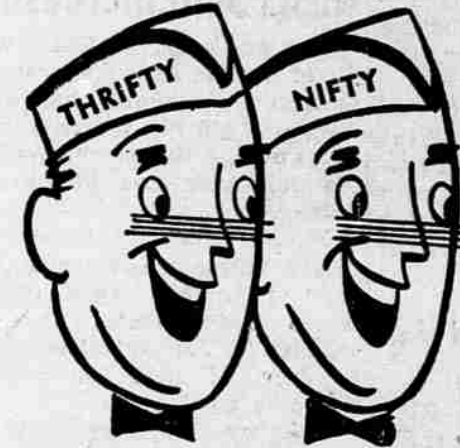
on its proposed five-year program for construction of a treatment plant.

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