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Special Report

# Does Publicity Curb Delinquency?

Here are the results of the Family Weekly

SHOULD NEWSPAPERS print the names of all youngsters under 18 who run afoul of the law? Yes, according to more than two out of three readers who participated in a Family Weekly poll. The poll was based on the recent article, "Does Publicity Curb Delinquency?" by Dow Richardson.

Should papers print only the names of repeaters and serious law violators under 18? Slightly more than half of those participating voted "yes" on this question. Should juvenile-court judges decide what names should be printed? Almost five out of every six ballots said "no" to this proposal.



poll on this vital question.

The results of the poll generally agreed with a similar survey conducted by The Cleveland Press and discussed by Richardson in his article. In the Cleveland poll, the majority of citizens felt that the names of juvenile offenders should be published as a deterrent to crime.

who learned from the newspaper of his 14-year-old son's implication in a car theft. The young man's exploit made such a hero of him to his classmates that he had to withdraw from high school for the remainder of the term. This boy has accepted counseling, as have his parents.

Hundreds of Family Weekly readers who submitted ballots also wrote letters expressing their opinions in greater detail. As one writer put it, "There is a need to elaborate on this important subject; a ballot hardly does the job." Coming from nearly every state in the union, the letters told of deep concern about the growing juvenile problem.

His father wrote, "I am in favor of publishing the names of parents of delinquents, who I feel are really to blame. . . I realize the position I would have been put in if my name had been published . . . but my son only became what I let him become. I should be willing to face the accomplishments of my work."

Comment approving publication of all names came from teachers, former social workers, mothers, businessmen, a former state policeman, and teen-agers, among others. They ranged from vehement suggestions that public whipping and stocks be revived to matter-of-fact statements agreeing with the position of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover. The nation's top crime fighter recommends publicizing the names of all young criminals, whatever their age.

Quite a few other readers agreed that parents' names and addresses should be published along with those of offending youngsters. They cited lack of discipline and parental neglect as the chief causes of delinquency.

The group favoring publicity included many readers with recent experiences in which youngsters' names were or were not published in connection with misbehavior. One was a mother whose son's name had appeared in the local paper by mistake; another related the case of a boy riding with others in a car he didn't know had been stolen; and a third told of a lad picked up without a driver's license. He had been afraid to tell his parents that he bought a car with savings from extra work.

The count of five to one against juvenile-court judges deciding on publication of names may seem surprising, because judges should know more about individual circumstances and are in a good position to decide fairly. Reasons most often given by writers were that judges were inclined to be lenient, that they were subject to pressures allowing for favoritism, and that favoritism violates democratic principles.

A number of thoughtful letters from teen-agers made the point that the publication of names, far from being a deterrent to crime, often makes heroes of offenders and gives vicarious pleasure to their friends. Their arguments are supported in at least one case—that of a father

But one police judge in a Southwestern city wrote that after ten years on the bench he felt "that we should publish the names of all law offenders, regardless of age, and, in the cases of juveniles, their addresses and the names of their parents." A city detective with considerable juvenile experience said he believes in "giving them a second chance; then if they are picked up again, their names should be published." A number of readers complimented their local newspaper editors. They said that editors, serving as the community's conscience, do a good job in deciding when to publish the names of juvenile offenders.

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Fashions

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