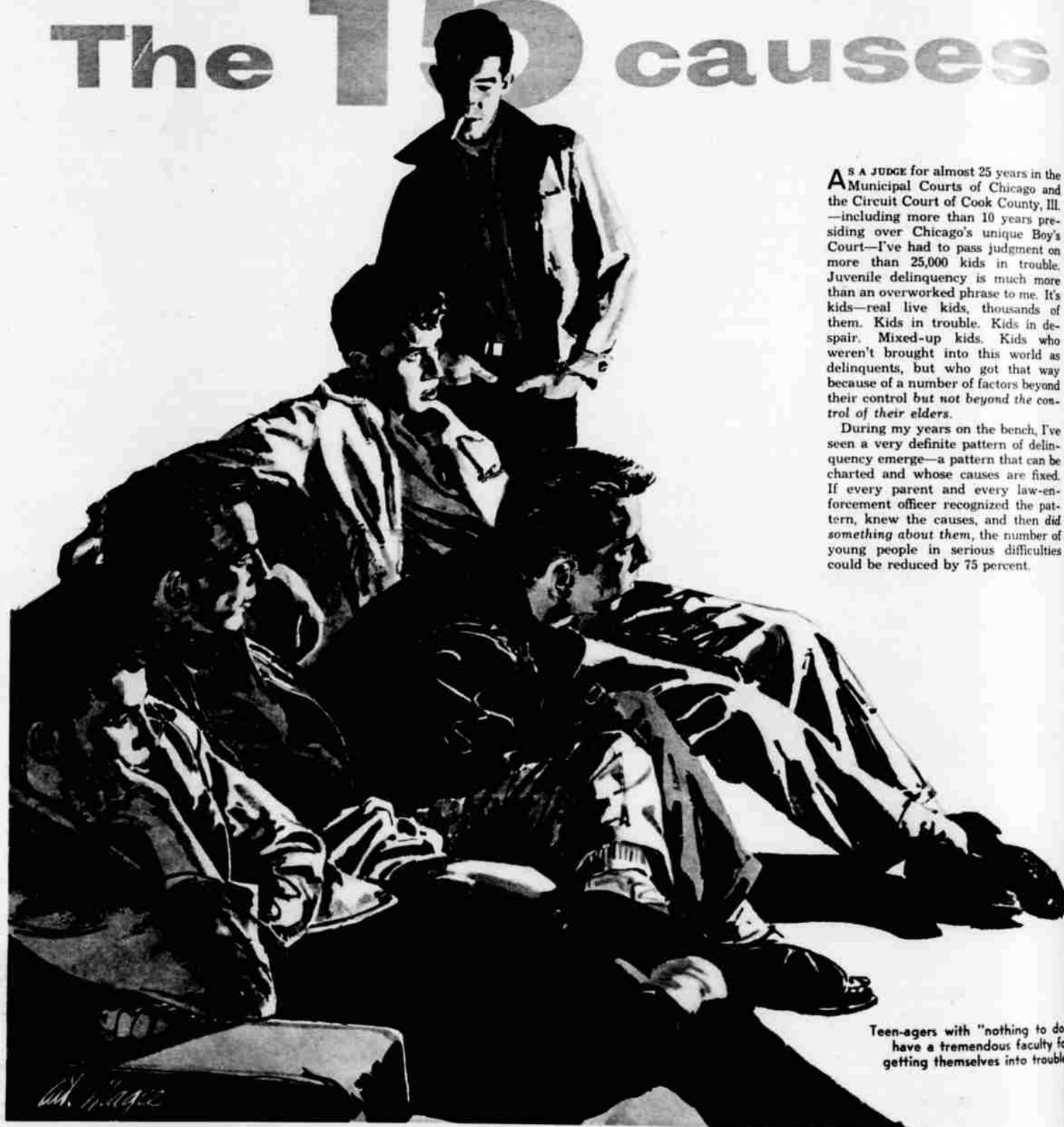


The 15 causes



AS A JUDGE for almost 25 years in the Municipal Courts of Chicago and the Circuit Court of Cook County, Ill.—including more than 10 years presiding over Chicago's unique Boy's Court—I've had to pass judgment on more than 25,000 kids in trouble. Juvenile delinquency is much more than an overworked phrase to me. It's kids—real live kids, thousands of them. Kids in trouble. Kids in despair. Mixed-up kids. Kids who weren't brought into this world as delinquents, but who got that way because of a number of factors beyond their control but not beyond the control of their elders.

During my years on the bench, I've seen a very definite pattern of delinquency emerge—a pattern that can be charted and whose causes are fixed. If every parent and every law-enforcement officer recognized the pattern, knew the causes, and then did something about them, the number of young people in serious difficulties could be reduced by 75 percent.

Teen-agers with "nothing to do" have a tremendous faculty for getting themselves into trouble.

of delinquency

by Jacob M. Braude



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There are 15 factors in the pattern of delinquency besetting our young people today. I can think of no instance of a boy or girl in trouble in my court where one or more of these factors weren't directly responsible. And all of them can be controlled. Here they are:

1. Destructive Toys and Games.

Almost from the swaddling stage, our youngsters are weaned on guns or other destructive toys. The other day, I saw a one-year-old fondling a toy pistol in his play pen. These toys are symbols of violence; little wonder that as the child grows, so, too, does his penchant for violence.

I remember two 12-year-old lads who were picked up in the washroom of a Chicago railroad station—carrying a loaded revolver. They had run away from home, without money or extra clothing—but with a loaded gun. Fortunately we found them before they killed themselves—or others.

It may seem cute to you when your youngster says, "Stick 'em up or I'll shoot" instead of "Hello, Dad," when you come home from work. But once a child has learned to point a toy gun and pull the trigger, the next step is the real thing. And remember, a child has little interest in commercial distinctions between gangsters and police; indeed, often as not, he's conditioned to sympathize with the gangster.

If I had my way, there would be laws against destructive toys. But until that time comes, parents can provide the necessary checks—by buying their children cameras or books or basketballs instead of guns.

2. Working Mothers.

Children need supervision, and that means having someone in the home to guide and direct them—and provide a necessary checkrein on their activities. As long as the father is earning the family income, the mother should be at home overseeing the activities of the children. Even if this works an economic hardship, it's far more important to make sure the children have adequate home supervision during their formative years.

3. Moonlighting.

A social factor peculiar to these times is the father who holds down

two jobs—one during the day and a part-time job at night. Called "moonlighting," this practice effectively deprives the children of a father, often during the years when they need him most. Again, it's difficult to conceive of the economic necessity which makes a second job more important than providing a father's steadying hand.

4. Improper Literature.

Any parent who thinks that the violence, sadism, and smut dealt out in some comic books and other "more respectable" literature have little effect on children should sit in on some of my court sessions. The apologies offered by the publishers of this junk—that the "crime-doesn't-pay" angle is always emphasized—is pure hokum. All the kids get out of it is the excitement and glory—and the conviction that they won't make the same mistakes the culprit did in the story.

So-called sociological literature has made a considerable contribution, too, to the corrupting of young minds. I've had dozens of teen-agers in court charged with having relations with 14- and 15-year-old girls, and many of them cited Dr. Kinsey as their authority and justification. I've had hundreds of others who got their blueprints for trouble-making from the detailed analyses of crime and sex appearing in current fiction and non-fiction. These books are not for children. Parents and teachers should constantly be on the alert to know what young people are reading.

5. Gambling.

Children who are raised on the proposition that they can get some-

thing for nothing grow up to apply this premise in their everyday life. Sometimes they get into serious trouble before they find out it doesn't work. Gambling is a disease that can easily surge out of control—leading to thievery in order to continue the habit. The "something for nothing" philosophy should not be allowed to flourish in your home.

6. Automobiles.

A boy or girl under 21 has no business owning a car, period. These young people simply don't have the sense of moral and social responsibility that should go hand-in-hand with the ownership of an automobile.

Now I don't mean by this that it's wrong for properly licensed boys or girls to drive the family car under effective parental supervision. There are many circumstances under which boys and girls put automobiles to constructive use—as, for example, the lad carrying rural newspapers or driving a delivery truck.

But the key to the automobile problem is proper adult supervision—and this is difficult, indeed, when the juvenile owns the car. Youngsters who buy automobiles legitimately are faced with the constant drain of buying gas and maintaining it, a problem that too many of them solve with a siphon hose or money stolen from home. A large percentage of sex offenses can also be traced directly to juvenile ownership of cars.

7. Drugs and Narcotics.

The lowest filth in our society are the people who sell dope to children. A startling number of young people

have experimented with it—particularly with marijuana which grows wild in many parts of the country. Parents should learn to recognize marijuana cigarettes; the shape is different—hand-rolled and tucked in—and the odor is pungent and weedy. There should be no temporizing with dope peddlers or children who are becoming victims of the habit. Both should be dealt with severely.

8. Movies, Radio, and Television.

Much of the inspiration for the juvenile crimes of today comes from motion pictures, radio, and television, where the gunman, the outlaw, the illicit lover, the gangster is often glorified and—at the very least—is made out as a perfectly normal and necessary part of our civilization.

The hope that the men who produce this junk would be sufficiently enlightened to police themselves and accept their tremendous responsibility in building youthful morals and standards intelligently and constructively is apparently useless. They have demonstrated that the certainty of dollar profit in smut and violence is more important to them than the moral profit in constructive fare.

So it's up to parents to know what their children are watching and hearing, and to exercise some intelligent restraint for them. Parents also have the power of life and death over what is shown on television. Get vocal. Make yourself heard. Refuse to buy products. You'll get results.

9. Alcohol.

Between one-fourth and one-half of all the cases that came into Boy's Court during my service there had alcohol in the picture somewhere. Either the children were under the influence, or they had been neglected and turned loose on society by alcoholic parents. This is a startling and depressing figure. It indicates to me that the use of liquor in American homes is so far out of bounds that almost half of our young people are either permitted to use it themselves or see nothing wrong with it as a result of home experiences.

10. Unsupervised Group Life.

It would be both foolish and useless to forbid our young people to organize

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