Report of the Committee of the Youth Conservation Act

Minn. L. Rev. Editorial Board

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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE YOUTH CONSERVATION ACT

To the Minnesota State Bar Association:

Your Committee recommends:

Recommendation

That the Committee be continued.

Report

The Committee has held two formal meetings during the year. Its charge was to observe the operation of the Youth Conservation Commission, make recommendations for changes in the law where these seemed advisable and to make recommendations concerning its administration.

The members of the Committee have kept in close touch with the administration of the Act. Three of them have visited the institutions and the Reception and Diagnostic Centers in the training schools.

We reiterate what we said in our 1948 report: “The program undertaken by this Act is a large and complex one relatively new to this state. In some instances it has required the readaptation of facilities and personnel designed for an essentially penal approach to a program of genuine rehabilitation. It would be unreasonable to expect that the correct answer to every problem always has been or will be found. Hence, this association, as father of the Act, should continue to offer its assistance where needed. It should provide careful observation of the administration of the Act and positive support for any measures that may need to be taken to assure the full realization of its objectives.”

REHABILITATION—THE FIRST YEAR

The Commission began receiving commitments from the Courts on March 10, 1948. The following are the statistics to March 10, 1949.

1. Care of Delinquent Children and Young Offenders.

The Commission began receiving commitments from the courts on March 10, 1948, or one year ago.

Significant Statistics 3/10/48 to 3/10/49

Total Commitments to Y.C.C. ........................................... 545
(Boys 465; Girls 80)

Sentences stayed and placed on probation by courts .......... 112

Received at Reception Centers ............................................ 433

In Reception Centers on 3/10/49 .......................................... 118

Personally interviewed and disposed of by Commission .... 315

Placed in Institutions ..................................................... 188—60%

Placed on Probation by Y.C.C. .......................................... 127—40%

Of the 127 placed on probation, only 10 have so far violated probation. Another 5 have of their own accord asked the Commission to return to the Reception Centers to get help in developing new plans as the initial plans were not working out due to such factors as parental drunkenness.

It costs the taxpayers over $1,400 a year to keep a boy at Red Wing or a girl at Sauk Center; it costs between $50 and $100 a year to supervise a child on probation. It would appear that this Y.C.C. procedure saves money as well as children.
The Youth Conservation Commission has also developed for the first time in the State of Minnesota a method of securing the number of juveniles who come to the attention of the courts and law enforcement agencies. In the first nine months of 1948 there was a total of 5,209. Forty-four per cent of these were reported from the courts of the state and fifty-six per cent by the law enforcement groups.

**Delinquency Prevention and Control**

Rescue of a larger proportion of committed delinquents and young offenders from criminal careers is the first need. But by itself, more effective correction at the State level amounts to endless bailing of the boat without trying to stop the ever-widening leak. Common sense calls for major effort to arrest delinquency in its early stages in the community and to remove the causes of delinquency.

To aid communities to improve and coordinate their services to youth the Commission's prevention division has established contact with 437 agencies in 129 communities and 75 counties. It has assisted in the establishment of 36 coordinating councils and is now working with 12 other communities in the creation of such councils.

The Committee furnished the administrative services necessary for the organization of the Governor's Conference on Youth held October 18 and 19, 1948, in St. Paul. This conference attracted 1,035 registered delegates who paid their own expenses, including a registration fee, to help develop a program for the youth of the State of Minnesota. Dr. J. L. Morrill, President of the University of Minnesota, was chairman of the conference, and the chairman of your committee served as a member of the planning committee with Michael J. Dillon, Hennepin County Attorney, also a member of your committee. Copies of the printed report of this conference can be obtained by writing to the Youth Conservation Commission. The conference was conducted in 16 panels followed by a general assembly at which resolutions were considered and adopted. Most of the members of your committee served on one or more of these panels. Tentative individual panel reports were submitted for the consideration of the panel by pre-conference panel committees which had worked for three to six months prior to the conference. The conference adopted recommendations which for the most part became the basis for the Governor's legislative program on Youth Conservation.

**Legislation Adopted**

The 1949 Legislature transferred jurisdiction of the State Training School for Boys at Red Wing and the Home School for Girls at Sauk Center from the State Division of Institutions to the Youth Conservation Commission.

It authorized an intermediate facility in the form of a rehabilitation camp for treatment of boys committed to the Youth Commission by the Court. No funds were appropriated, however, to implement this program.

It provided for an additional member to the Y.C.C., who must be a woman.

It provided for review by the District Court of the orders of the Y.C.C., determining treatment, and of the determination made by the Commission of the hearings which it must conduct annually under the law. This is a safeguard which will protect those committed from any arbitrary action on the part of the Commission, should such be the case. It was recommended by a number of the judges following the adoption of the original act and is recognized as a meritorious provision for safeguarding the rights of those committed.

In addition the legislature appropriated $280,000 to the Commission for its administration during the next biennium.