

"Compulsory Reserve"

A Vicious Circle

SHALL ILLINOIS HELP
TO RE-DRAW IT?

Some Things the Women of Illinois
Should Ask
State Legislature of 1919

ISSUED BY
THE GIRLS' PROTECTIVE BUREAU OF THE WAR DEPARTMENT
COMMISSION ON TRAINING CAMP ACTIVITIES

CHICAGO
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A PROGRAM OF REFORM.

The Post War Crisis for Women Offenders; Old Needs Reiterated.

Read the recommendation of past investigations!

I. ABOLITION OF FINES.

"In dealing with prostitutes in the courts, fines should be abolished and imprisonment or an adult probation system substituted."

Vice Commission of Chicago, 1911.

II. FINGER PRINT SYSTEM.

"An identification system for prostitutes should be established in the State Courts."

Vice Commission of Chicago, 1911.

"A visitor at either of the Night Courts, or at almost any day session of a Magistrate's court in New York, will see some person brought before the Magistrate on the charge of intoxication, and say, 'Judge, it is the first time.' It may be the first time or the second time or the twentieth time, and this fact not be revealed by the records, for aliases are common. * * Finger-printing defendants, after conviction in the Magistrates' Courts, is not a new proposition, because since September 1st, 1910, this system has been in very successful operation in the Women's Night Court. Finger-printing in the prostitution cases not only distinguishes the new from the old offender, but shows the number of times the old offender has been convicted. During the first three months of 1912 two convictions were for the 11th time, one for the 10th time, three for the 9th time, 11 for the 8th time, 25 for the 7th time, 44 for the 6th time, 79 for the 5th time, 115 for the 4th time, 184 for the 3d time, and 226 for the 2d time. During the same three months 466 persons were convicted and found to be new offenders."

What is true of New York is true of the courts of Chicago and other municipalities.

III. ADULT PROBATION.

"We recommend: 'That the adult probation law be so amended as to make it obligatory upon the court to (a) secure from probation officers a written report on a complete investigation of each applicant for probation, touching the question of previous convictions, arrests, habits of life, and family history. (b) Secure from the Psychopathic Laboratory a complete written report on his mental and physical con-

dition. (c) File these reports with other proceedings in each case. (d) Make these reports decisive in determining the question of probation within the limits of the law. (e) Forbid probation in cases of feeble-mindedness, insanity, dangerous infections, and such unstable conditions as render the applicant, in the judgment of experts, unable to adjust himself to normal conditions. (f) Commit all such persons, on the recommendation of the probation officers and the Psychopathic Laboratory, to a farm colony or hospital 'until cured.' (g) Amend the law by removing the upper limit to the number of probation officers. (h) Make only murderers and traitors exempt from probation. (i) Create a non-partisan State Probation Commission with authority to fix the qualifications of probation officers, both adult and juvenile, and to prepare a certified list from which the court shall make appointments."

Chicago's City Council Committee on Crime, 1915.

IV. WOMEN'S FARM COLONY.

"The success of the New York Reformatory for Women at Bedford Hills, New York, has convinced many people that a State farm to which girls above the Juvenile Court age and under thirty may be committed is very much needed in Illinois. Such a farm, with separate buildings for the different types of girls, with opportunities for industrial training along these lines which will be useful to them in securing congenial work after they leave the reformatory, together with an indeterminate sentence, and an adequate follow-up system should enable a very much larger per cent of the girls to be returned to right living than is now possible. An immediate campaign for securing legislation providing for the establishment of such a reformatory and the necessary appropriation should therefore be begun."

Chicago Crime Commission, 1916.

Since 1911 recommendations have been made. Shall we act upon them now?

A PICTURE OF THE DAILY GRIND.

Have you ever sat through a session of the morals court in Chicago and watched the stream of bedraggled young womanhood answer to the charges of a life on the city streets? Some are there because they have been guilty only of disorderly conduct, some because they have solicited in public places. Some have been taken from houses of prostitution raided by police, who "booked" the women and girls they found as "inmates." Some seem only to be beginning the commercial aspect of this "profession." They look so like all the other girls one knows, a little less intelligent, perhaps, a little more painted and foolishly dressed, but still with something of the appeal of girlhood about them.

Their cases are heard in an atmosphere which seems to accept the life they have led, and deal with the hideous facts revealed, as if they were the most natural things in the world. One hears the most sordid tales of shame from some of the prisoners at the bar, related without blush or hesi-

tation. Curious spectators in the court look on and listen eagerly; professional bondsmen and "shyster" lawyers hang about to secure the defendants as clients; the court officials visit and joke together; everyone chews gum; and the daily routine is ground.

These persons arrested by law, leave the judge's bench, discharged because of insufficient evidence or because of "circumstances which convince the magistrate that clemency is wisdom"; a few placed on probation to an overworked adult probation department; others with a sentence of commitment to the Bridewell; and still more with the penalty of a fine.

It is a weary procession of young offenders who pass before the bar of justice, to have one more mark branded upon a life, perhaps already scarred, or to be discharged to "go and sin no more."

Disposition.

Last year (1917) through the morals court there passed 5,940 persons, on trial on complaints involving public immorality. Of the 2,768 who were not discharged, 2,089 were fined; 591 sent to the House of Correction; 88 were placed on probation.

What Happens After Fine.

What happens after a fine is pronounced, is not far to seek. The easiest and the quickest method of securing the money to pay it, is by means of the life which brought the girl into court. And all the influences surrounding her trial drive her back to it. In the words of Miss Maude Miner, of New York's correctional field, "Imposition of fines in cases of women arrested for prostitution or of men patronizing prostitutes, virtually licenses prostitution. When sent to the House of Correction for non-payment of fine, offenders are imprisoned for debt,"—a system of criminal procedure abolished by England centuries ago.

Recidivists.

That girls and women do return after court experience, to this mode of earning a living, is illustrated over and over again by the train of repeaters who reappear in court. Out of a list of 255 names of girls in morals court in a two weeks' period this fall, 112 were identified at once—from memory—by the keeper of records, as having been in on several occasions.

The case of Betty—released in October from a hospital to which she had been sent for treatment of venereal disease, arrested the following night for disorderly conduct and drunkenness and brought into court the next morning, is typical. She has a long record in the morals court and was also known to the court of domestic relations. On this last occasion, the judge fined her \$10.00, saying, "I don't like to do it, but what are you going to do in a case of this kind?"

Bridewell Sentences.

Short time commitments to the Bridewell are little better than fines. It is illuminating to note the disposition of cases of women in court because

of habitual drunkenness, complicated with immorality. Out of a group of eighteen such women, recently observed, in morals court, 4 were discharged, 4 sent to the Bridewell because of inability to pay the fine imposed, 3 were sent to the Bridewell without recommendation concerning treatment, 1 was sent to Lawndale and 1 case continued. In less than a month, 4 of these same women were brought into morals court as "repeaters."

Another girl said to be a hermaphrodite, in court twice during the same period, and such a recurring visitor that the judge merely shakes his head in despair, discharges her and admonishes her to keep away from drinks and the street, illustrates the need of an institution where such as she could lead directed lives under proper restrictions.

Still another young woman, said to be of good family, was recently sent to the Bridewell with her four months old baby. Her history is well known in the morals court. She has been in court before with just such another puny, illegitimate child, that the juvenile court found it necessary to take away from her and place in a home. Her story is a sorry one of drink, immorality of all kinds, consorting with colored men, and in one case, jumping from a second story window with her baby in her arms, to escape arrest. Her case has been examined in the psychopathic laboratory and found to be one of low mentality, although not committable for feeble-mindedness. Obviously, however, this is a psychopathic case in need of special treatment and not of punishment.

It should be figured out in dollars and cents just how much such cases as these cost the community in time of police and court officials for arrest and trial, for detention in jails and House of Correction; for medical treatment and for the care of the diseased and handicapped children they bring into the world, for whom society cannot assume the responsibility.

There are probably few cases which, if rightly understood, would be punished in the old vindictive fashion, happily going out of date. With a more general use of psychopathic tests and more scientific knowledge of psychopathology, some other provision than the House of Correction, must be found for the care of the large number of recidivists who appear in the morals court.

Woman's Department of the Bridewell.

The building in which the Woman's Department of the Bridewell is housed, to which the city sends its misdemeanants, was built about ten years ago. It is overcrowded and with its tiers of cells not well adapted to any kind of reformatory work for women.

"The largest industry in the woman's department is the laundry, which does the work for the Bridewell and for a number of other public institutions; some of the women sew and some are engaged in domestic service for the warden, or the matron, or in the prison itself. There is a small outside court where the women exercise."*

*What Should Be Done for Chicago's Women Offenders? Recommendations and Report of City Council Crime Commission, 1916, p. 3.

The woman's department at mealtime leaves the observer with a haunting sense of animalism. Prisoners are ranged in rows at long benches, facing a proctor who sits upon a high stool watching every sign and movement. There is the noise and clatter of tins and dishes, but the noise is not broken by verbal sounds, for conversation is prohibited.

Something quite apart from a city House of Correction or a State's Prison is needed for these women convicted by their various courts. New York launched out some years ago, upon a really brilliant example of what a state farm colony for women may offer. In 1894, its legislature provided and appropriated for an institution for the State of New York where girls over 16 and under 30 years, convicted of "felonies other than murder, manslaughter, burglary and arson," might be committed for a term "not less than three or more than five years, unless sooner discharged by board of managers." Its Board was charged with provision for "necessary custody and superintendence," and with the "safekeeping and employment of women committed, with regard to the formation of habits of self-supporting industry in such women, and to their mental and moral improvement."

To New York's Bedford Hills, just such moral failures as enter the morals court of Chicago, are sent for care and treatment. Many of them are returned to their homes restored mentally and physically, able to lead useful lives. Each woman who comes is studied as an individual and is given the treatment that suits her best. Bedford Reformatory is more like a boarding school than a penal institution. Girls are housed in cottages or colonies. Effort is made to develop their initiative and cooperation. They are kept busy. They have their part in the work of the institution and are taught how to do it well. They learn to cook, sew, mend. They do the housekeeping and buying and much of the farm and garden work of the institution. Their teachers work with them and their tasks are made interesting and instructive. At Bedford Reformatory the girls built a silo and a cement walk and felt enormous pride in having created something difficult and useful.

So many of the girls sent to an institution of this kind have left school in the lower grades, that many of them can scarcely read or write. These deficiencies of education are corrected so far as is possible, for a school with highly trained instructors is a part of the reformatory. Instruction is given to them in the terms of their daily lives. Their arithmetic and the use of weights and measures are taught them through the buying, counting and handling of the supplies used in the institution. Manual dexterity, utterly lacking in most of them, is taught them through the necessity of doing the necessary tasks of every day. They make their own clothes, knit their stockings, make hats, weave rugs and carpets, and are taught various trades at which many of them have been able to earn good wages upon their release. As Miss Ida Tarbell says of Bedford: "The result of all their activities,—work, school, lectures, amusements and religious instruction, is a community life of interest and vitality, of which each girl comes, sooner or later, to feel that she is a part."

Plans for such an institution in Illinois, to which even a few of the thousands of women yearly arraigned before the courts of the state might

be committed, do not, so far, exist even on paper. That Illinois needs such a colony, and needs it now, is beyond question. Two published reports in the last two years, have focused their readers' attention on Illinois' total lack of the one method of care which can be said to have succeeded in the treatment of this type of offender. One was that of the Committee on Penal and Correctional Institutions of the Crime Commission, which advocated such a colony. The other report was that of the City Council Committee on Crime, published in 1915, which made its first recommendation, the establishment of farm colonies for adult offenders.* That New York's provision of a period of commitment of three years or more, is of primary importance in Illinois as well, is evident from one glance at figures kept at Chicago's House of Correction.** Of the 1,568 women committed to it in 1913, 679 it is true, were held there for the first time. But 889 had been there before! One hundred and twenty-six of them had been there on three different commitments, 221 had been there from five to ten times; 182 from ten to fifty times; and 18, from fifty to one hundred times. Five women said they had been there 101 times or more. The revolving circle such women tread, from streets, to courts, to Bridewell, and back again, is a weary, wasteful, vicious cycle of community treatment.

With the coming session of Illinois' own general assembly, it can be redrawn. Illinois' Department of Public Welfare has in the last few weeks put itself on record as advocating a state institution "designed for the women offenders who are now being held in jails and prisons and who return to the streets to earn their fines through the same methods that caused their arrests."

Shall Women's Clubs open the door to a new era for those young women of eighteen and nineteen and twenty, who pass the courts of Illinois? War time has sharpened realization of public needs. Peace time is a challenge to make that vision effective! Shall we at last heed that "wistful, over-confident creature who walks through the city streets, calling out, 'I am the Spirit of Youth. With me all things are possible?'"

*Report of the City Council Committee on Crime, p. 150.

**Report of the City Council Committee on Crime, p. 42.

Express your approval of the State Public Welfare Department's proposed legislation!

Urge a Woman's Farm Colony appropriation at this session of the Illinois State Legislature!

Telephone, interview, write, wire your senators and representatives now!

“There should be no peace with prostitution, no truce with the red-light district, no armistice with venereal diseases.”—United States Public Health Service. A Woman’s Farm Colony will assist in the abolition of these three evils.

A State institution for women offenders may cost cold, hard cash, but it can be proved to be much cheaper in dollars and cents than the enormous industrial and human waste in court fines.

“Reformatories are protests against prisons. They aim to help instead of to punish, to inspire hope in place of despair.”