

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Auburn, Maine
January 20, 1947

Hon. Horace A. Hildreth
Governor of Maine

My dear Governor:

Herewith is submitted a report by the Committee appointed by you for the study of Juvenile Delinquency in the State of Maine, and in accordance with your request that such report be presented with proposals for needed legislation in season for action by the Maine Legislature now in session.

From the general Committee of 25 members, six sub-committees were chosen for the consideration of the following subjects:

- I. Child Welfare Services
- II. General Community Resources and Conditions
- III. Education
- IV. Juvenile Courts - Laws and Procedures
- V. Adequate Probation for Juveniles
- VI. Institutional Programs for Rehabilitation

Generally speaking, it was the purpose to ascertain and consider present day conditions in the city and rural communities, to what extent delinquency existed, its causes and consequences; what agencies of civic, religious, municipal or State-wide character, were now operating and their scope; and then undertake to recommend what action in the judgment of the entire committee was feasible, with proper recognition of available funds and resources.

The various sub-committees, composed of members already well-informed upon their respective subject matters, have given careful study to the problems submitted to them, have made interim reports to the general Committee and received its advice and suggestions, and as a result in all phases except the one on Adequate Probation, have now submitted final reports, with recommendations, which, after study and discussion, have been adopted with a few changes by the general committees.

These reports have been mimeographed and are worthy of consideration by all who are interested and concerned.

It is our present purpose in connection with these reports to endeavor to coordinate our findings and recommendations in fairly concise summary.

I. Federal-State Welfare Services.

Since the passage of the Social Security Act in 1935, Child Welfare Services have received wider coverage, by making Federal funds available to assist the State "in establishing, extending, and strengthening, especially in predominantly rural areas, public welfare services for the protection and care of homeless, dependent, and neglected children and children in danger of becoming delinquent."

Federal funds now allocated to Maine amount to approximately \$ 40,000 a year.

While this development marks an important step forward, Child Welfare Services are still far from being able to meet essential needs.

Broad responsibilities are now required by our present statutes as listed below:

Services to neglected children committed by the Courts, including placement and supervision of children in foster homes.

Supervision of delinquent children referred by the Courts.

Investigation of petitions to adopt children when requested by the probate courts.

Investigation in divorce cases relative to custody of children, when requested by Superior Court.

Service to children "committed on probation" from juvenile institutions.

Investigation and licensing of homes boarding children under sixteen years.

(Approximately 1,000 homes are investigated yearly.)

Preventive services.

In addition to these legislative requirements, other functions are delegated to the Child Welfare Service by administrative arrangement.

Up to this time little preventive work has been possible, because of lack of personnel and money. Many of the cases are children in poor environment, in unhappy homes, or who are mentally retarded, undisciplined, or of hostile and aggressive behavior. Many are school truants. Such cases are frequently referred to the Child Welfare Service from families, churches, police, courts and schools.

To effectively curb juvenile delinquency, the needs of these children must be met in the early stages. Preventive services are least expensive and of greatest value to the individuals and the community.

The cost of additional workers is a minor financial outlay compared to consequences which are otherwise likely to ensue.

As to Child Welfare services, therefore, it appears that need does not exist for present additional statutory legislation, because the Administrative Department has been unable to fulfill all the present requirements, but instead adequate personnel should be authorized, and funds provided sufficient in amount to render the services already authorized by law. There is a staff and case worker shortage, wages are inadequate, State cars are needed for workers, more money is needed for board payments for foster home care, now fixed at \$20 per month, and special relief funds should be augmented for the care of unmarried mothers and their babies.

The Child Welfare Department suggestions in these respects receive the full endorsement of your Committee.

II. General Community Resources

We are glad to report that many communities provide recreational facilities, and that civic agencies, and some employers have made similar provision. The Churches, Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., Boy and Girl Scouts and other community organizations are doing fine work with a character building purpose, and thus saving greatly the need of rehabilitation.

The Committee commends the work of the Director of Physical Education, Health and Recreation, and it is suggested that other smaller communities could be helped to set up plans through his cooperation and guidance.

It is recommended that this Division be implemented by a proper appropriation to actively advise and provide cooperative service to communities in need of help in planning Community Centers and recreations.

III. Education

It is believed that improvement in educational and teaching standards, equipment in schools, consolidation of small schools, development of area schools, and payment of adequate salaries to qualified teachers, have a definite relation to the proper training and education of our children and the prevention of juvenile delinquency.

Truancy is on the increase. Trained attendance officers are necessary. There is need for a State Attendance Officer, who could cooperate with local officers and assist in their training.

The Committee recommends that the position of State Attendance Officer be created and appropriation be made to meet the salary, travel and other service-connected expenses of such employe.

It is also recommended that permissive legislation be enacted so that towns may join in the employment of a qualified full-time attendance officer.

Public School guidance programs are a great aid in preventing potential juvenile delinquency. The recent Federal law, known as the George-Barden Act, provides for the appropriation of Federal funds when matched by State funds, to be devoted to this purpose. It is recommended that, if it is found such Federal funds are now available, an appropriation should be made by the Legislature to meet the requirements to effect such a guidance program.

IV. Juvenile Courts - Laws and Procedures

At the present time, it is not suggested that a new, separate Juvenile Court should be established, but instead consideration should be given in this connection to the later recommendation herein made for the appointment of a special recess committee to consider the advisability and feasibility of a Domestic Court with jurisdiction of divorces, adoptions, guardianships, juvenile delinquency and all matters pertaining to the protection of families and children.

It is recommended that there should be a legislative clarification of certain features of our juvenile laws which will enable the Municipal Courts, now having jurisdiction of juvenile delinquency, to function more effectively in dealing with this important phase of the juvenile problem.

The bills for this purpose have been drafted, and their passage is recommended by the general Committee.

The recommendation with relation to a Recess Committee is in the form of a Legislative resolve for the general purpose noted above, and to consist of 8 members, made up of 1 member from the Senate, 1 member from the House, 1 member of the Supreme Judicial Court, 1 from the Superior Court, 1 Municipal Court Judge, 1 Probate Court Judge, 1 member from the Health and Welfare Department, and 1 lay member; members to be allowed \$5 per diem and actual traveling expenses; \$ 3,000 to be made available from the general fund of the State for expenses of the Committee, and other expenses incurred in the study and preparation for such legislation.

V. Adequate Probation

The Committee finds that the present probation system is inadequate in service to the Courts, the offender and the community, that specialized services in dealing with juvenile offenders are insufficient, that adequate pre-sentence investigation is not available to the Courts; that adequate supervision is not available to offenders placed on probation, both adult and juvenile; that not enough emphasis is placed on preventive methods before commitment to institutions.

It is recommended that a state-wide, state supervised probation service be developed for juveniles and adults.

Appropriate legislation has not been formulated because consultative service by the National Probation Association and the Children's Bureau has but recently been authorized by the general Committee, and is not yet completed.

VI. Institutional Programs for Rehabilitation

This sub-committee reported on each such Institution separately, and included the State School for Boys, the State School for Girls, the Reformatory for Women, and the Reformatory for Men. Its statement of facts as to each institution definitely supports its recommendations as follows:

For the State School for Boys, - the addition of a full-time trained teacher for the vocational training and shop program. The further addition of a trained teacher to do remedial teaching to improve backward boys of retarded mentality.

New construction is needed for a physical education and recreational center.

For the State School for Girls it is recommended that a social worker be added to the staff.

The addition of a teacher for remedial work is also recommended.

Reformatory for Women, the following recommendations are made -

Increasing the number of books in the library, relocating it, and making it accessible to the girls during afternoon and early evening hours.

Addition of courses of instruction of a commercial nature - clerical work, typewriting, office duties, business English, and simple arithmetic, in connection with the present education program.

Expansion of present instruction in training girls to become nurse's aides.

Expansion of courses in personal hygiene and the establishment of a beauty parlor under competent instructor.

Reformatory for Men - For teen age youths in particular there is now but little formal education.

It is recommended that the present half-day program for vocational instruction be lengthened and a full-time instructor employed.

Also a full-time teacher to organize and conduct regular classroom instruction in practical subjects.

The Department of Institutions submitted to the Committee recommendations which may have already been presented to Budget or other appropriate bodies.

They include the development of adequate psychological and psychiatric services for State institutions; at least one trained person for guidance work; to the end that the schools shall not be merely places of custody, but treatment centers with staff and facilities through which great benefit to the boys and girls can be expected.

The sub-committees and the general Committee have come to a realization of the value of such a program and endorse the departmental request for suitable appropriations to carry it into effect.

In closing, the members of the Committee express their appreciation of the honor of their appointment, and of the accommodations for the sessions of the Committee. It has been our purpose to give due consideration to the subject matter committed to us, to recommend such means and procedures as will advance the welfare of the boys and girls of our State and the betterment of our communities. At the same time, we recognized that there were at the present time limitations upon the financial resources of the State, and that some ideal plans which might be advocated were not now feasible, but believe our recommendations are worthy of sympathetic consideration and are within the power of our State to bring to fruition at the present time.

Respectfully submitted,

S/
Harry Manser

Chairman of the Committee