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Juvenile Court in the Second Judicial District

Glenn Parker

E. Berniece Brown

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JUVENILE COURT IN THE SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Since the passage of the Juvenile Court Act in 1951, every County and Prosecuting Attorney in the Second Judicial District has, with the exceptions later noted, proceeded in accordance with this act in the handling of cases of all persons in that age group. We think the results are very satisfactory, although we are aware of the difficulty in making fair comparisons in the methods employed to cope with problems arising in any vocation or profession.

Actually, the metamorphosis was not abrupt, since my predecessor, Judge Tidball, had for many years preferred that children's cases be presented under the statute providing for procedures "In the interest of the minor child" (now § 58-602, WCS 1945). As a Prosecuting Attorney I had handled such cases under Judge Tidball's direction for some ten years and had seen him preside in a kindly, informal manner, liberally considering the possibilities of probation, parole, rehabilitation, supervision, placement in foster homes and dozens of related problems. In fact, I was, at first, a little surprised at the apparent urgency for the passage of the Juvenile Court Act, since I assumed that all children's problems in Wyoming were handled in a manner similar to that employed by us.

Nevertheless, we all agreed that it would be best to adopt the new procedures—at least until we could determine the relative advantages and disadvantages. Accordingly, we have used the Juvenile Court Act for all cases of difficulties with children under 18 years except where previous bad records and incarcerations showed the futility of attempted rehabilitation.

Our experience indicates that the Act provides several specific advantages:

- (a) Procedures are uniform.
- (b) There is a definite investigative period and a uniform method of investigation, i.e., social background, physical condition and mental ability.
- (c) The county Department of Public Welfare work with the child is prescribed and routine, and, therefore, neither reluctantly provided nor subject to criticism, as is often the case when it is voluntary.
- (d) The records of the Clerk of Court are segregated and cases are not confused with criminal matters.

We like and endorse the plan, even though we are fully cognizant of the fact that like "the proof of the pudding . . ." adage, the *proof of any plan is in the administration*. We realize that an unsympathetic Judge or a disinterested County Attorney could vitiate the new law, while an understanding Court and an altruistic County Attorney might well secure

outstanding results from the old system. By and large, we think the best interests of wayward children, careless parents and the general public can all be better served by an understanding administration of the Juvenile Court Act.

Glenn Parker,
District Judge, Second Judicial District