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PARENTS BLAMED FOR DELINQUENCY IN GIRLS *

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Much has been done since mobilization to combat venereal diseases, prostitution, and the interests which promote and profit through prostitution. A vigorous law enforcement program can eliminate the segregated and tolerated red-light district and all forms of prostitution which must be suppressed. An increasingly more difficult problem, however, is that of the good-time girl, who through misguided patriotism, becomes promiscuous and transmits venereal diseases to her soldier or sailor friend.

In 1942, according to an FBI report, prostitution and commercialized vice among minor girls rose 65 per cent over 1941 and the number of teen age girls arrested for other sex offenses increased 105 per cent. The nervous tension of war has promoted the clandestine meetings of juveniles in juke joints, concession stands, movies, bowling alleys, dance halls, and taverns whose operators are not too particular about serving minors. These surreptitious meetings lead to promiscuity which eventually results in the acquisition of a venereal disease and subsequent disaster.

Juvenile delinquency, clandestine prostitution, and high venereal disease rates all point to a

disorderly home and to parents who have fallen down on their job. There would be no need for curfew laws to keep girls off the streets or liquor laws to keep them out of bars, if parents had the courage and stamina to tell their children to stay home where they belong. While our men are fighting on the far-flung battle fronts, we should bend every effort to encourage and develop a better home front which is one of the most important battle lines in the fight against venereal diseases. The parents of our young boys and girls are primarily responsible for holding this line.

The American home and a well-ordered family life are essential to the well-being of the nation. There is no real reason for 12, 13, and 14 year old girls, or any girl under 18, running around the streets all hours of the night, but they are doing it and parents are doing little to stop it. Many a parent has been approached on this subject and the usual answer is, "Well, they must have some fun." Roaming the streets all hours of the night, "joking" and being sexually promiscuous, ceases to be fun, as some parents have learned (only too late) when their daughter acquires a venereal disease or becomes illegitimately pregnant. Mother and Dad can

* Reprinted from *Florida Health Notes*.

settle this problem quickly if they will, but a good many parents derive the same amount of pleasure from "jukiᅅg" and therefore actually contribute to the delinquency of their children, instead of taking a firm stand against it.

The necessities of war have practically made orphans of a great number of teen age boys and girls, while Dad and Mother are both working. It is not always necessary that both work, but in order to buy those "extras" which they have always wanted, Mother also takes on a war job and allows the children to shift for themselves. Children need the tender, loving care of a mother and the firm, wise discipline of a father. If parents fail in their obligations as father and mother then their children will suffer.

Along with the obligation for discipline parents have a related obligation toward these teen age children—to make their home an attractive place, a home which is friendly and to which the children can invite their friends with pride. There is safety in a home where teen ages gather to play games, to eat a "snack," to dance, or to sing around the piano. Effort on the part of parents to plan pleasant evenings with their children's friends can do much to make them the kind of children who do not go "jukiᅅg" or wandering about the streets searching for entertainment—or spending three or four evenings a week in crowded picture houses. Discipline should be a habit and attitude training—

education rather than law.

Girls will have ample opportunity after their 18th birthday to meet and share the companionship of male company. To foster or allow clandestine meetings before the legal age of consent promotes juvenile delinquency, sexual promiscuity, and infection with venereal diseases. If legal disciplinary measures were directed to negligent parents, rather than to unfortunate, misguided boys and girls, there would be less juvenile delinquency. A prostitute in most cases has a history of juvenile delinquency and sexual promiscuity, and if our wayward misguided teen age girls are left to this course, they will more than likely end up as commercialized prostitutes.

Many juveniles due to the exigencies of war have, with and without parental sanction, hastily entered the matrimonial state to enjoy the few remaining days with soldier or sailor husband before departing for foreign duty. Many girls are thereby left stranded in overcrowded, strange cities with insufficient funds to return home. A taste of the gay, social life creates a desire for more and thus this individual becomes a sexually promiscuous, misguided good-time girl. Many a catastrophe of this nature can be prevented by firm, parental guidance and advice.

Since most delinquents are the product of a broken home where parents have no sense of responsibility, every effort should be exerted to develop a better "home

front" to more adequately deal with this problem. Red-light districts were abolished because they were breeding places for crime and venereal diseases and by the same token, all places and conditions which permit or encourage delinquency among juveniles must likewise be abolished. The loss of life on foreign battle fronts is useless if we permit the loss of young American girls by venereal disease on the home front.

It is the parents' responsibility to instill in their children a knowledge and respect for their own

bodies, as well as those of others, and to correlate this information with the moral and religious principles which guide the conduct of all Christian people throughout the world. Juvenile delinquency and widespread venereal diseases are merely symptoms of a disorderly society. When a well-organized society fails and becomes a disorderly one, then laws must be enacted to help cure the social ailments. Such laws though are poor substitutes for the discipline that should be provided in the home.

THE SACREDNESS OF LIFE

BY REV. A. BONNAR, O.F.M.

The Catholic Church teaches that our life is given to us by God and that its duration on earth is in His hands: that it is the time given to us by Him who will call us, when the end of the day is come, to receive the reward of our labour. In the produce of the earth, He has given us the means to sustain our life and to combat the bodily ills which might bring it to a premature conclusion. It is clearly our duty to use these means. To fail in this, is to decide for ourselves when our life shall end.—Father A. Bonnar, O.F.M., D.D., in *The Catholic Doctor*.