

Youth Problems and the Teen-Age Canteen

If we should be marking the days of importance in the historical calendar of the Hunt relocation center, then certainly March 13 should be one of them. It should be singled out for distinction not simply because it marked the opening of the teen-age canteen, but because it was the first constructive step taken by any group in this center toward the correction of a recognized juvenile delinquency problem. However, we are not so brazen as to suggest that the mere setting up of a youth center will solve the delinquency problem overnight, but what we do say is that the founding of this youth gathering-spot is a step in the right direction. Credit for this should be accorded to the persons in charge such as the C.A. staff, interested youth groups and volunteer elements from the local high school.

In operating this canteen, problems of management which have confronted other teen-age gathering-spots which were organized in various parts of this country, are naturally present. In coordination with these practical administrative problems, the persons in charge of this canteen must realize that they are assuming positions of great stature in the community, for they will be expected—whether rightly or not, to keep down juvenile delinquency within reasonable bounds. Parents especially will expect that juvenile problems such as those which made the newspaper headline in recent weeks involving Hunt youths will be—in some measure—solved by the administrators of this teen-age canteen. Also, in order to make this youth lounge a wholesome and recreative spot, these supervisors must be careful to deal with all patrons equally and fairly and prevent catering to special interest groups.

Admittedly, this problem of delinquency within our high school ranks is serious and the people are seriously concerned because it has reached such chronic proportions in recent months. If we evaluate the situation realistically, we must arrive at the inevitable conclusion that this problem will not be wiped out with one isolated corrective action. Rather it must be fought all along the line with a sustained, progressive social action program. Also, we should not—under the guise of relocation, soft-pedal reforms on the grounds that "it is too late." If relocation is actually our true goal, what better way is there to mold upstanding citizens than to guide them along the right tracks of life with a concrete program while in the center?

Generally speaking, the setting up of this youth center proves that even at this late date, we can still reasonably expect and hope for some progress in the solving of youth problems in the project. Once again we must emphasize that the teen-age canteen is just one step and not the whole solution and that it must be followed by other constructive steps lest we lose the initiative and interest displayed and the progress thus far made. Actually the youth canteen brings to the fore three important aspects of the situation: one—that the gathering-spot is really only a theoretical solution to a perplexing problem; two—that the matter of the actual operation of the canteen brings up problems in itself; three—that there is a definite necessity of having a realistic follow-up step which would further the progress made. The latter step could easily take the form of the completion of the gym unit for active sports use.

We warmly commend the progress made, but we recognize also that the problem is far from solved. Both the administration and the residents recognize the need and the importance of solving this problem of youth delinquency and using that common basic understanding as a foundation, we should strive on from here and press the progress represented in the start of the teen-age center . . . C.N.