

## Anonymous Pranksters' Actions Result of Rebellion or Boredom?

**V**ANDALISM is the wilful, malicious destruction or defacement of public or private property.

It is costly and difficult to control. It may be committed any time, any place. Often it is the work of persons not regarded as criminally inclined. But vandalism is a crime.

Recently, a number of street sign posts were bent over in northwest Oklahoma City. Those who did the mischief may have had an hour or so of anonymous pranking, and the city will have days of work and expense restoring the posts.

Elsewhere, mailboxes have been targets for vandals. Sometimes school windows have been broken, perhaps as expressions of dislike for teachers or classwork. Writing on walls long has been used to vent pent-up feelings.

Churches occasionally have been selected by vandals for desecration and damage.

Not infrequently, vandalism results in major losses, without gain for the vandals. Recently, more than 80 automobile tires were slashed in car lots along NW 39 Expressway. Last year, an Oklahoma City shopping center was reported to look "like a ghost town." Light globes and windows were shattered, graffiti smeared the walls and merchants were moving out.

Outbreaks of vandalism might be interpreted as rebellions against discipline by some and lack of discipline by others. Just as probable might be the possibility that youngsters have too little to occupy their energies, just plain boredom.

In a discussion of causes of alienation between young people and adults, published in *Scientific American* some months ago, it was suggested that "the crux of the problem lies in the failure of the young person to be integrated into his society."

The article said "He feels uninterested, disconnected, and perhaps even hostile to people and activities in his environment. He wants to do his own thing, but often is not sure what it is or with whom to do it."

Another authority has proposed that since many young people are not studiously inclined, they ought to be given basic reading, writing, arithmetic and geography for four hours a day and then put to work on useful tasks for another four hours.

Many people feel that we have gone too far in trying to protect children from labor exploitation, and have failed to teach them to work constructively. This is evident among teen-age dropouts, many of whom have no skills, do not know how to begin to find a job, and who do not understand the importance of dependability.

An adage that formerly was taught to youngsters in the lower grades said: "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." We may have abandoned the precept, but outbreaks of vandalism indicate that its truth remains.