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Court System Gets Turned Around

FROM published reports on crime and punishment, the public and the courts appear to be on opposite sides of the fence. Criminals are taking advantage of both.

Certainly, not all individuals having to do with trial, conviction, punishment, rehabilitation and release of accused persons are in accord on this, but the system has been turned around so that it seems they are more concerned about rights of criminals than about those of the public.

If the matter were to be put to a vote, present customs of coddling rather than punishing would stop.

It has been estimated that out of every 100 serious crimes committed, 20 result in arrests and only five in convictions. Many are incriminated but few are incarcerated.

A number of police, prosecutors and jurists have expressed the opinion that the best deterrent to deliberate crime is a strong likelihood of capture and near certainty of conviction, with punishment inescapable.

The more definite and certain the punishment, the less likely an outlaw is to carry out his plans. This point was brought out in a recent news report from Singapore.

The story stated that Singapore is "a safe city" because it's hard to find a place to hide on the island, there is a large, capable police force and courts are "extremely efficient."

One other reason was noted: They whip people who break the law. That might be brutal, but it discourages law breaking.

Two new books titled "The Criminal Personality" have been published by a couple of psychiatrists after 16 years of work at a federal mental institution. They challenge accepted thinking about criminal insanity, behavior and rehabilitation.

The authors argue that criminals possess a distinct personality (52 errors of thinking) that sets them apart from noncriminals, that criminals freely choose to commit crime, that criminals are not men-

tally ill and that criminals can reform if they choose to alter their thinking processes radically.

A rehabilitation system being used effectively is to put convicts to work. All states may do this to some extent, but several states have expanded work projects to new dimensions.

Texas, for example, has 21 kinds of industries, from making false teeth to printing books in Braille for the blind. These industries earn \$8.7 million a year.

Florida has a \$12 million prison industry that produces about 100 different items. Implicit in such programs is the need to keep prisoners long enough for them to learn to work and to acquire skills necessary to turn out marketable products.

Fundamentally, our crime problem will be solved only when parents, schools and churches cooperate in disciplinary matters and moral teachings so that youngsters will learn to do right before they become juvenile delinquents.