

Ferdie J. Deering

JUL 20 1976

Discipline Should Begin in the Home

HE that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him will chasteneth him betimes, King Solomon's Book of Proverbs centuries ago, summing up wisdom of his time.

Juvenile delinquency is not new, and the surge of thefts, burglaries and vandalism that has occurred since schools closed is what might be expected of idle youth.

Much of this is classified as mischief, because there isn't even entertainment value for anonymous youngsters who slash tires, cut garden hoses or push over mail boxes.

Such costly misdeeds reflect a sad lack of discipline that exists in many homes, in schools and elsewhere. If left uncorrected, children involved may drift into major crime.

More than half of all murders, rapes, assaults, robberies, burglaries, larcenies and car thefts are committed by youths under 17. Many violators have received little

moral training.

At a recent convention in Dallas, a speaker said more than 60,000 teachers were assaulted in classrooms and hallways during the past school year. Discipline is very inadequate.

While Oklahoma City youngsters are reported to be "literally carrying off" some neighborhoods, angry citizens are afraid to report violators because of possible reprisals. Such fear is plain terrorism.

Obviously, there are shortcomings in the moral and social training of youngsters who resort to thefts and vandalism to kill time. It might be a natural tendency for them, but it still is the parents' responsibility to teach them better.

Youngsters need constructive activities and there is little work for them to do. The child labor law prevents them from being employed, leaving the burden upon parents, schools, churches and community leaders to keep them occupied.

The public attitude seems to be to

"get tough" with young offenders, but courts still are lenient and the law-violating youngsters know it. Two courses of action are open.

One would be to hold parents responsible for damages and thefts. Too often victims stand severe losses while youngsters are put on probation or given suspended sentences.

Another course would be to assign youngsters to jobs providing restitution, instead of to jail or correction homes.

A San Diego judge sends teenagers caught snatching purses from old ladies to work in convalescent homes. New York graffiti artists are put to work erasing their vulgar scrawls.

Tire slashers might be required to wash their victims' cars a certain number of times. Hose cutters could be assigned to mow or rake the owners' lawns so many weeks.

A child old enough to steal or commit vandalism is old enough to work.