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# Cops Play Losing Game With Robbers

OUTLAWS still are winning the game of "Cops and Robbers" in Oklahoma City, as well as in most other communities.

Policemen have been given raises in pay, armed with modern weapons, provided special training and late model cars to ride in. They also have been saddled with legal restrictions that hamper investigations, protect criminals from "brutality" and give outlaws "rights."

Rules favor the robbers, and cops are always playing a losing game. The OKC crime index has been rising again, with latest figures back up to the level of five years ago.

Because citizens are aware that legally constituted law enforcement agencies cannot patrol their neighborhoods frequently enough, residents of numerous areas have formed "vigilante associations."

Of course, they don't call themselves vigilantes, but that is what they are. They are volunteer organizations created to enforce the law when official procedures are inadequate.

Objectives and methods they use

seem to be within bounds of legality but the rising crime rate does not demonstrate effectiveness.

The organizations usually try to educate folks in each neighborhood on how to prevent crimes against themselves. Neighbors keep watch on one another's properties. They may call police if strange individuals, vehicles or actions are observed.

In a few cases, neighborhood patrols have been tried but more frequently participating citizens have contributed funds to hire off-duty policemen or other experienced guards to patrol their areas.

This has drawbacks. Either the vigilantes tend to duplicate regular police patrols or the regular police may reduce coverage to concentrate on other areas.

An area may be covered with increased thoroughness for a time, depending on extent of duplication. Then another problem often arises: The vigilante committee runs short on funds. Rarely does everybody in a neighborhood contribute to support such projects.

In order to stretch funds, manpower and patrol frequency are apt to be reduced. More reliance is placed upon warning signs posted to advise thieves and burglars to please go away.

Crime statistics do not indicate that outlaws are greatly frightened by any of the devices used.

Federal judges are referees in this game of Cops and Robbers and parole boards are sympathetic scorekeepers. Court interpretations of law and the constitution seem to have the effect in many cases of penalizing crime victims without seriously interfering with the freedom and subsequent criminal operations of the offenders.

So far, none of the neighborhood vigilante committees has hired a prosecuting attorney and built its own jail to incarcerate lawbreakers. It probably would be declared unconstitutional but maybe somebody ought to try it. Until some means is found to keep outlaws corralled, our crime rate is likely to continue upward.