

# Juvenile Delinquency

by FULVIO RIVERA AGUILAR, *Commerce-1*

... "Young Medical Intern Killed by Teenagers" ... "Victim of Mass Rape Died" ... "Son of a Millionaire Figured in Holdup Case" ... etc. etc. ...

THESE ARE SOME of the many tragic and sickening daily occurrences carried by newspapers with even young people belonging to good prominent families involved. Yes, juvenile delinquency has now become such a great national problem in this land, so-called the bulwark of Catholicism in the Far East. With newspapers playing up teenage vandalism, crimes of teenage gangs, sex pervasions of the young, the teenagers in the provincial cities and towns are now aping the notorious criminal exploits of young hoodlums in Manila, Pasay, and Quezon cities.

But let us ask ourselves: Why do they do these things? To be publicized, to be notorious. They are aping the juvenile delinquency exploits of young American screen actors, thinking that what the American movies show, must be the things being done in the United States. Juvenile delinquency is the result of trying to be great imitators, making-believe it is nice to be dubbed as "tigas" and playing up the movies in the most westernized way they can fashion. It is the product of trying to follow up blindly everything that is "modern". Ask them why and they will just say, they did it just for the fun of it or they feel like doing it.

Blame whom . . . teenagers or parents? Educators, government officials, juvenile court judges, will tell you that parents are partly to blame for the waywardness of the teenagers today. And why are parents to blame? Because they no longer stay home to rear their young properly. They believe it is fashionable for both husband and wife to work, leaving their child-

ren and house at the mercy of servants. Hence children learn to stay out on the streets, play hooky and become despicable streets urchins. Or if parents stay home, they play cards and mahjongg, they gossip, they quarrel among themselves thus making home an obnoxious place to live in. At every or end of the day, they just greet their children with a pat on the shoulders and say, "hello kid," "goodnight kid" etc. They forget that children need something more than a pat on the shoulders. Children need the warmth of a parent's love more than the money they give. Parents must wake up to the fact that kids growing up don't need luxurious provided by a working mother's pay check, so much as they need a mother at home to keep an eye on them. Parents should stop attending night socials. They should stay at home and make church a family "must". "The family that prays together, stays together."

Yes, if we are going to curb juvenile delinquency, we've got to curb it where it starts . . . in the home. Discipline and guidance should start right at home when children are still below ten years old. This is the period when children obey their parents for fear of being whipped.

But unfortunately, parents sometimes try to be modern by not spanking their children nor correcting them when they do wrong. Or worse still, they think that they are being modern by spoiling and pampering their children with new clothes, money for movies, parties and cigarettes; they even go to the extreme of giving them liberty to stay out late in the night.

## A National Problem

Parents should teach their children to enjoy staying at home. And of course, the home should have books and magazines to read. Parents should guide their children in developing good hobbies; mothers should be big sisters to daughters, listening to their girlish problems; father should be big brothers to sons beginning to go around. Parents should attend school plays, organize picnics with their sons and daughters for the purpose of having fun together. Let us make these young people responsible by listening to their ideas, making them feel wanted, loved and cared for. Let us teach them to enjoy being alone with good music and good books; to think independently and to develop their own individuality. And most of all let us give them a share of the household chores.

Having become a national problem, juvenile delinquency is also the government's concern. There must be some means to overcome this social cancer if we are to expect good, law-abiding citizens after the childhood dreams of our national hero, Dr. José Rizal, in his "fair hopes of the fatherland." The government must impose a strict curfew for teenagers. It must devise means and plans to prohibit young people from going to movies that are "For adults only", depicting teenage hooliganism; prohibit them from going to bars and night clubs, from smoking at an early age, and give stiff warning to parents for granting their children excessive liberties. Thus we need enough policemen, moral enforcers to keep watch over wayward teenagers.

Children are by nature perceptive. They easily sense what is expected of them and they are human enough to try to get by with doing less than what is expected. If we do these things to our youngsters, our efforts will not go to naught, and, with the battle half won, victory is in the bag. ♪