

JUVENILE CRIMES

Radio-TV Gets Acquittal

MAMA'S radio or television set is not the electronic ogre that's going to turn her little offspring into a mobster, murderer or thief.

This is the general conclusion that can be drawn from a report on juvenile delinquency now released by the Senate Crime Investigating Committee.

The Senate group solicited letters from leaders in the field reprinting the comments in a 254-page booklet. It will be distributed to several thousand juvenile authorities, court officials and people in public office.

Devoted mainly to the influence of "crime comic books" on delinquency, the report also touches upon radio and TV as they relate to lawlessness among youth.

Majority of those who referred to the broadcasting media did not believe they contributed directly to delinquency. The same held true in the exhaustive opinion rendered on comic books.

Hoover Appearance

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, an authority on youth crime, appeared as radio-TV's champion. He said it was a lack of moral responsibility and not the influence of comics, radio or TV that is the basis of waywardness in youth. Child guidance, he said, is the factor which can dissipate crime tendencies. With such direction, Mr. Hoover pointed out, the child can set up standards and sift the good from the bad in comics and

other media such as motion pictures, radio, or TV.

Mr. Hoover noted that sentiment has been voiced against crime programs on the air because of the power of suggestion they may hold for the immature mind. But, he said, this type of irresponsible presentation is offset by those programs (or comic books) which conform to "carefully prescribed standards of good taste and authenticity."

Cited as an example of a radio program which throws the "proper light" on crime because of its portrayal was *This Is Your FBI*, which is sponsored by Equitable Life Assurance Society of the U. S. in cooperation with the FBI on ABC, Thursday 8:30 p.m. The pro-

gram has been produced with FBI aid since 1945, Mr. Hoover said.

"We feel that the fight against crime cannot be won by literally sticking our heads in the sand. We feel that programs which portray crime in its proper light and which, through educational means, awaken Americans to action have a proper place on the radio or television," Mr. Hoover told the committee.

A North Carolina county public welfare unit observed that often crime comic books and crime plays on the radio give a positive rather than a negative value.

Reply from a Wisconsin juvenile probation officer brought out the public service feature of radio. He said he has delivered talks on youth problems via the airwaves.

Another probation officer declared that in her experience in Denver, moving pictures on crime were most incidental in the increase of delinquency and gang activities.

A Minnesota probation authority listed factors in the "production of delinquency" in the following order: Pool hall, undesirable movies, lurid magazines, dramatic newspaper stories and comic books. Significantly, this listing placed an entertainment medium, which is in competition with some segments of broadcasting, and two competing advertising media up front as contributing to delinquency while radio and television were not mentioned.

'Worst' Influence

A New York authority opined that some delinquents draw from the "worst" of comic books, movies and the radio but that it was difficult to pinpoint relationships between wayward youngsters and entertainment media.

From Kentucky, the director of the Welfare Dept.'s division of corrections noted: "Juvenile delinquency is based on many factors in the community which have greater influence than anything persons read in comic books, hear on the radio, or see in the movies."

Some respondents saw in radio crime drama a threat to the unstable child. A California official said some evidence existed to show the greater a child's "own emotional instability, the greater his undesirable reaction to such type of reading and radio programs." An Ohio authority added comic books "are no more harmful" than radio, movie and television "gangster and crime programs."

A number of the respondents pointed to the good influence of such radio-TV and comic book-famed heroes as Hopalong Cassidy, who one social worker noted "is just as great a hero in the slums as he is among the children whose families can buy them Hopalong outfits."

Refuting the theory that comic books or other entertainment media generally are to blame as suggestive forces in anti-social behavior, a parole board head recalled that an article on auto theft rack-

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WEAU

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ATTENDANCE AT WEAU SPONSORED WISCONSIN PLOWING CONTEST and SOIL CONSERVATION FIELD DAY

Attendance at this annual farm event demonstrates powerfully the influence of station WEAU on a large portion of Wisconsin's farm audience. Coverage of the event by daily newspapers of the region and selection by Billboard Magazine of the promotion as second place winner in the Billboard 1949 awards testify to the station's thorough and skillful handling of programs and promotions.



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Juvenile Crimes

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ets printed in the '30s by a leading national magazine was proved to be responsible for a wave of auto thieving. He added: "I suspect the newspaper handling of much crime news offers more suggestions to adolescents than do the comics."

Constructive suggestion that newspapers, radio and TV "recognize they have a cultural obligation to perform" was forwarded by a New Jersey officer.

Two extremes were also represented—one by a comic book publisher and the other by Arthur J. Freund, chairman, Criminal Law Section, American Bar Assn., St. Louis. Mr. Freund charged radio, TV and the movies as well as comic books to be the "most powerful educational influences upon the mental growth of the child, the

adolescent and the impressionable." And according to Mr. Freund, these entertainment media when combined give a repititious diet of harmful affect for the young child.

Mr. Freund, appearing on the opposite end of the delinquency barometer than that occupied by Mr. Hoover, pointed up *This Is Your FBI* as well as *Mr. District Attorney* and *Gangbusters* as notorious examples of "crime by radio." He included in his brief, articles by such critics as Jack Gould, radio editor of the *New York Times*, who took broadcasters to task last July on the subject of summer programs dealing with crime on both radio and television.

The other viewpoint was expressed by the comic book publisher. He quoted an outstanding social officer from Chicago as saying: "It is my conviction that the recent furor over radio serials, wild

movies and comic books is sheer nonsense."

The Senate crime probe group originally had planned to hold hearings on the subject of juvenile delinquency, giving special attention to comic book influences. As an alternative, however, the committee decided to compile opinions from qualified experts in the field.

A committee staff spokesman, after having digested the material contained within the pamphlet, said: "It looks like there isn't a great deal of influence from radio and television on juvenile delinquency." Some 85 respondents' comments were reprinted as most representative of the opinions gathered by the committee's staff.

KVOS Bellingham, Wash., daily half-hour show *Dinner Bell Time* was theme of special resolution adopted by Whatcom County Farm Bureau at annual convention. Resolution praises program for services to farmers.