

Point of View

To Be Equal

CURBING CRIME

By John E. Jacob

Being "tough on crime" is in fashion, especially around election time when candidates for offices with little power to deal with crime try to make headlines by denouncing crime.

Unfortunately, most of the discussion panders to the worst in people — the desire for retribution, punishment and vindictiveness.

Build more prisons, longer sentences for those convicted, and weaken protections for the accused, are all part of the anti-crime arsenal, as they have been for years and years without having much effect on the crime rate.

Unless the root causes of crime are dealt with we will always be plagued by criminal activity. Crime rates usually move in tandem with unemployment rates — when jobs are hard to find, illegal activity increases.

Most of that illegal activity centers around young people, both as perpetrators and as vic-

tims. Again, that should not surprise anyone who knows that youth unemployment rates are from 60 to 80 percent in many inner city neighborhoods.

It always amazes me that people are willing

not appreciably affect the crime rate.

If we really want to do away with crime we had better start to deal with the causes of criminal behavior. And if we really want to get tough on criminals, we ought to start not with building bigger prisons but with mobilizing the

to the streets and taking an active part in keeping their communities safe, and by helping youngsters avoid falling into the trap that leads to criminal activities.

Prevention also includes working with local forces to ensure that black and poor



John E. Jacob

to support huge expenditures on prisons but unwilling to spend tax dollars on education, skills training and job programs that help keep people out of prison.

The President's Task Force on Crime, for example, has urged a \$40 billion prison building program and an added \$8 billion in annual operating costs for prisons.

That ambitious program would be at the expense of programs that help keep people out of jail and would

community to help protect itself.

I don't think there is anyone in the entire criminal justice system — whether policeman, prosecutor or judge — who doesn't know that a safe community is one whose citizens defend themselves by coming together to enforce community standards.

Many of us remember growing up in poverty stricken neighborhoods under the watchful eyes of neighbors who would step in and set us straight when we got out of line. Today that role is still important.

So, too, are community organizations. They can set up street watching volunteer patrols, escort services for the elderly, and similar programs that make the streets safer.

And those community groups, churches, and other organizations can work with young people to channel their energies into more positive directions.

Keeping crime to a minimum depends on stressing prevention — prevention in the sense of getting people out in-

communities get the protection enjoyed by affluent ones.

And prevention applies not only to stopping first offenses, but also to ensuring that those who have been found guilty of crimes and sent to prisons are rehabilitated. That means providing them with the education and skills to make it once they are released.

We already have enough experience to know that more prisons won't solve the problem. Our sentences are already among the longest in the world so adding several years extra punishment won't reduce the crime rate.

That does not mean we have to learn to like to live with crime. The devastation it causes our communities cannot be tolerated. But it does mean that we can cut crime by pursuing alternatives such as community preventive roles, more and better attention to the needs of our young people and substitutes for spirit-corroding prisons for all but the most hardened who constitute a danger to the community.

PEOPLE, PLACES and POLITICS

By Joe Neal



Sometimes, when I read the newspaper and see a headline or a picture of some person in the community, I often wonder what goes through the mind of the person who selects a particular headline or picture.

I am told that the selection of an article or picture for print is done by an editorial staff in large news organizations. The editorial staff shoulders a large responsibility for what the public sees, reads and hears. And it is often true that these editorial staffs do not reflect the views of the community as a whole. These decisions are apparently based upon what will sell the newspapers.

If the news organization is owned by one individual or a family, we only read and hear what the individual or family wants us to read. Few reporters have the gall or means to resist things going into print, that appear to be unethical or downright slanderous.

Then there are those reporters who are eager to please their superiors and who often lay claim to that unidentified individual called the "source." The source often says things, whether through the press or over the air, that should never be said in the first place.

The "source" more often than not, engages in a great deal of manipulative powers; as it seemed last week when the "source" notified some members of the press, that Attorney Robert Archie would be arrested. The informing source knows that he has one thing working for him when manipulating the news media. He has a curious, gullible public that will buy the newspaper.

In the arrest of Bob Archie, the "source" turned out to be the Metro Police Intelligence Unit. For some unexplained reason, the Intelligence Unit wanted some members of the press to be aware that Bob Archie would be arrested. I do not have to say that these members of the press responded in grand fashion. By having Archie's name and picture in all the major newspapers, charging him with felonious acts, there was not one single inquiry as to how these charges came about, only what was found at Archie's home. It is as if to say that since these charges were brought by the Intelligence Unit of Metro, no other explanations were needed.

In my quarters, people see it a different way. It's my opinion that in an election year, anything that Metro or their Intelligence Unit does must be suspect. They are not beyond appealing to the racist nature of the community, maintaining themselves in power. We would not have made these statements if it had not been for the second arrest of Bob Archie; an arrest which was allegedly caused by the complainant's call to Archie, to have him meet her at a designated location. Being the smart attorney that he is, Archie employed two private detectives, wired himself for sound, and went to the location where he was to meet the complainant. But instead of meeting the complainant, the Metro Intelligence Unit showed up.

They arrested Archie the second time. The cats in my quarters are now wondering about this second arrest. With the election for sheriff just

See NEAL, Page 15

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