

September 19, 1954

**parade**

Wisconsin State Journal  
MADISON, WISCONSIN

**EXCLUSIVE:**  
**NOBODY'S CHILDREN**  
The Shocking Truth About Our 300,000 Runaways SEE PAGE 8



What's Happening to  
'Miss Universe'  
SEE PAGE 30

REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

**parade**

*investigators criss-crossed the U.S. to assemble an authoritative, up-to-date study of our mushrooming runaway problem. Here, in the first of four articles, they present a shocking story of misery and neglect that indicts every American*



# Nobody's Children

## How America's 300,000 runaway teen-agers get the runaround

**T**HE BOY looked like a bum.

His clothes were tattered and seedy. His face was grimy and wind-burned. He clutched a battered canvas satchel with just a few possessions in it. There wasn't a dime in his pockets and he hadn't had a meal in a day and a half. His name was Louis Morton, he said, and he had hitch-hiked from New Jersey to California. He was just 15 years old.

And how did a ragged, penniless 15-year-old travel 3,000 miles without attracting someone's attention?

"Oh, the cops stopped me," said Louis. "Four times, I think. In one town in Oklahoma, this cop looks me over and says, 'I wouldn't hang around here if I was you, kid.' A couple of miles farther on, a nice policeman—I think he was a deputy—he bought me some supper. I told him I was going to California and he said he hoped I made it all right.

"Then in a town in Texas, some cops picked me up in a police car. They said they didn't want no hitch-hikers in their town, so they gave me a ride to the county line and dumped me. In Arizona, a cop gave me a ride to an all-night truck stop where he said I could get a ride. The last thing he said was, 'I don't want to turn you in, so don't let the next shift find you.' But I couldn't get a ride that night, so I walked a mile or two down the road and slept in a ditch."

There it is: the story of a 15-year-old human baton in a relay race run by police across the country. Always the rule is, "Get rid of him, let somebody else worry about him." Nor is Louis (that is not his right name; all the names in these stories have been changed to protect the children) an unusual case. The same story could have been told by 13-year-old Carlos Gonzales of Texas, 14-year-old Nancy Warren of Colorado or 14-year-old James Pennock of Louisiana. Only the place names would have differed.

The shocking truth is that Louis, Carlos, Nancy and James are members of a vast army of wandering kids being shuttled from place to place like so many freight cars in a yard. No one knows how many there are;

many estimates run as high as 300,000. And the number is increasing annually.

It's not your problem, you say? It doesn't happen to "nice kids" from your town? And kids passing through—they get a sane, humane treatment and are handled in an up-to-date way? You're wrong. It happens everywhere, right under the noses of the most sympathetic citizens. PARADE found kids from every stratum of life getting the fast shuffle in every conceivable kind of community. It's happening in your town today—but, like just about everyone else, you've closed your eyes to it.



**SEN. ROBERT C. HENDRICKSON**

**agrees that runaways are a national concern. The juvenile-delinquency investigator says:**

● The alarming increase in runaway children is a blight on the social conscience of the United States. The Senate Juvenile Delinquency Subcommittee has been probing this matter for months. The investigation is continuing.

Every child on the loose is a potential delinquent. Penniless and friendless, they may eventually steal or rob to obtain food and the all-important ticket home. We find that when parents cannot (or will not) supply funds for the return of runaways, the children are often dumped at the city or county line and told to continue hitch-hiking. Thus they are virtually driven into acts of delinquency.

The plight of these children is a challenge to parents, to enforcement and social agencies, and to lawmakers who must cope with what has been termed a social nightmare.

For the children of the road are nobody's children. To lump them all together as "runaways" is not quite accurate. Some have indeed run away from home. Others are fugitives from detention homes and reform schools. But many are on the road with parental consent. Some never really had homes in the first place, like the Ohio boy whose parents, informed he was being held by Miami, Fla., police, wired back:

"Feed Billy to the sharks. Nobody wants him here!"

They may be as young as 7, or as old as 18 or 19. (In most states, a youth over 16 is considered an adult, free to come and go as he pleases.) But they remain "drifters," kids without roots, looking for something—love, adventure, a job. All too often they are finding cold, hunger, depravity—and the business end of a billy club.

The methods of buck-passing ("floating," the kids call it) are many. A soft-hearted cop may dig into his pocket to help out with 50 cents. Some pack kids into the patrol car and whisk them off to the next county; one boy even told PARADE a policeman had instructed him in how to reach the railroad yards and hop a ride on the rods.

In some towns, the trend is toward "scare" psychology instead of floating. A drifter is picked up on a vagrancy charge and thrown into jail. Next day he is fingerprinted, photographed and released with the warning, "Now we've got a record on you. Don't ever come back this way again."

Or a hitch-hiker is handed a "sundown parole": "Better not be here tonight or you'll see the inside of our jail." All these methods boil down to the same old bum's rush.

Virtually every police force in the nation stands indicted by these kids' stories. But the police who shrug "What can we do?" are not alone to blame. America has played ostrich about the problem of drifting kids for a long time. But instead of going away, the problem has grown bigger and bigger everywhere. PARADE found *not one state* which did not, as one policeman put it, "pass these kids back and forth like hot potatoes."

*Continued on Page 10*



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NOBODY'S CHILDREN CONTINUED



**BOB, 16:** Fugitive from a broken home, he hitch-hiked from Yonkers, N. Y., to Florida, then to California. Broke and hungry, he was placed in a juvenile detention home. "You don't have

to tell me what cops do," he says. "They shoved me all over the country. 'Keep moving,' they told me. 'Go anywhere, any direction, just as long as you get away from our town.'"



**JIMMY, 16:** Parents separated eight years ago. On probation for car theft. Sulen, morose. Ran away to Florida from Houston because cops kept "hounding" him.



**CARLOS, 14:** Ran away from aunt in El Paso, rode freights to Los Angeles. Stole fruit to keep going. Cops picked him up, showed him where he could hop another out-of-town freight.



**NANCY, 14:** Left Colorado home with girl friend. Passed from truck driver to truck driver around Midwest. Cops who stopped them checked truck weight, but ignored her.

It's a short trip to the end of the line

Listen as a few of them tell how they were "processed" along the nation's highways:

"I was hitching to Louisville when the cops picked me up in Bardstown, Ky.," says 17-year-old George Rader, a Michigan boy. "They rode me out of town and told me not to come back. On the way back I had to go through there—that's the way my lifts went. They gave me nine days in jail for vagrancy. I didn't have no money so I guess I was guilty. They didn't even get in touch with my parents."

Nancy Foster was passed from truck driver to truck driver around the Midwest, romancing with "those I felt like." No observant policeman would have estimated her age at more than 14. "The state highway patrols stopped us lots of times," she says. "But they were just interested in whether the truck was overweight."

Are these "bad kids"? Undoubtedly, some are—but that doesn't apply to the majority. California, which bears the brunt of the drifter problem, published a survey—*Transient Youth in California in 1947*—which was the classic study in the field until PARADE

began looking into the problem. And almost every one of its conclusions stands up today. Here is one of them: "The... lasting impression is that these are essentially good kids who can be swayed one way or the other, depending on the 'breaks' and the availability of intelligent guidance."

"Essentially good kids" they may be when they start on the road, but a few weeks usually brings them to the end of the line—geographically, financially, morally. This is particularly true of girls (estimated at one-eighth to one-third the drifter population). "Girls away from home are quite often persuaded to do things they'd otherwise never dream of," says Sgt. John A. Hampton, supervisor of the Los Angeles Police Department's Juvenile Division.

Fortunately, some wanderers turn to police for aid before that last step. In many cases, it's just in the nick of time.

"I don't know what I'd have done if I'd been hungrier," Stephen Marks, 16, of Tennessee, told Miami police after wandering around penniless for three days. A boy picked up in El Paso, Tex., told police that he had

leaped out of a car a few minutes before when the driver propositioned him.

For others, help comes too late. "We had a 13-year-old girl picked up," says Sgt. Hampton. "She had been given four shots of heroin and held for three days in a dingy hotel. The men who had latched on to her were ready to set her up in business as a prostitute." A boy tells of a hitch-hiking trip from Florida to California. "Of course, we pulled a few stickups to keep going," he says casually.

Not only their morals but their health is impaired. "We find them digging through garbage dumps for food, sleeping in parked cars, vacant lots, ditches, boats and on the beach," said one Dade County, Fla., officer. A PARADE reporter picked up two who hadn't eaten in a day and a half. The older ones are easy pickings for dope peddlers.

And yet a police sergeant in Barstow, Cal. (which sees hundreds of kids a year pass through on Route 66) told a PARADE investigator, "I have the personal theory that if a kid gets out for a little while and gets thirsty and hungry, the experience is good medicine for him!"

Nor can spending a few days in a tumbledown jail be regarded as psychologically uplifting. Worse is the matter of a juvenile record, which can brand a kid for life. "The law specifically states that a kid on whom the juvenile petition has been filed has not been convicted," says Ralph B. Wright of the California Youth Authority. "But let that kid try to get bonded for a job, and he'll be stopped dead. Even the armed forces won't take him while he's on probation."

When the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency dipped briefly into the problem last spring, Counsel Herbert Hanoach asked Dr. Martha Eliot, head of the U.S. Children's Bureau, "Do you know that in some states, in order to get these children home, they have to convict them of a Federal crime, so that the Federal Government has an excuse to send them home?" And Dr. Eliot replied, "I am told that is true." Although PARADE found no case in which a teen-ager had been convicted on trumped-up charges, variations were found with the same aim: get rid of him.

But most drifters are never arrested. Those who are wind up in custody because they have dabbled in crime, attracted attention in some way—or because hunger made them turn themselves in. The Children's Bureau estimates that 30,000 a year pass through courts, jails and agencies. No one pretends this is anywhere near the total number.

"We patrol pretty well but I don't think we get more than 15 per cent," said one Miami officer. No estimates are as high as 50 per cent. And Heman Stark, director of the California Youth Authority, figures that 2,000 youngsters drift into his state every month.

Continued on Page 12



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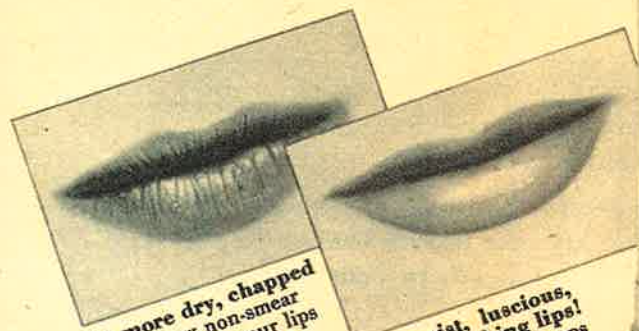
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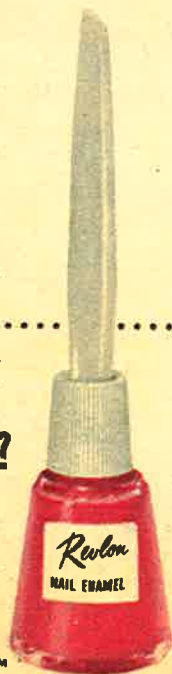
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**NOBODY'S CHILDREN**  
 CONTINUED

Runaways learn to steal, to lie, to cheat. But it's not too late to save them—if you will wake up in time

The California study found that the average wanderer was about 18, came from a city, had a high-school education. Most came from broken homes—and Stark suspects that even those seeking adventure had home troubles. More than 25 per cent hadn't funds to last a week. Surprisingly, 50 per cent came by train or bus, even a few by plane. But today most hitch-hike, or ride freights.

For the runaway, all roads lead to California or Florida. The lures are the much-publicized glamor, the ballyhooed climate, the possibilities of jobs. In addition, these states are literally the end of the line for "floating." "What would we do?" asks one Los Angeles officer. "Drop them in the Pacific Ocean?"

Because of the magnetism of California and Florida, states forming natural highways to those goals get a staggering number of drifters—and are often most guilty of "floating." Along Route 66 to California or Route 1 to Florida, you might count 50 young hitch-hikers a day.

So vast has this army of wanderers become that it has developed its own communications system. The hitch-hikers' grapevine offers tips on towns to avoid, places where a bed can be had cheap, agencies that are good for a sympathetic handout. Another tip it passes along: locations of gathering



HOW TO HANDLE 2,000 kids a month is the headache of Heman Stark (seated) and Ralph B. Wright, of California.



**WEAPONS** picked up on runaways in El Paso include automatic, knives, stilettos. Here Capt. John M. Fuller displays a few.



**TATTERED RAGS** taken from kids on arrival at El Paso juvenile home are displayed by matron. Many hit the road without even a change of clothing.

places for homosexuals, where a runaway can pick up a quick \$5 or \$10. And runaways have become such big business that Los Angeles recently had to crack down on racketeers who specialized in printing phony identification cards, with faked ages, for teen-agers.

Is there any chance for these youngsters to grow up into worthwhile citizens? Social workers, welfare agencies and police in California think there is—provided they get competent adult guidance, and get it soon enough.

Spelled out, this means a full investigation of the home, to determine whether a child's best interests are served by returning him or by placing him in a foster home (or, if he is older, finding him a job) in the state where he is finally stopped. But no such far-sighted program has been put in operation—largely because home states just won't co-operate.

#### Many Are 'Repeaters'

**T**O BE SURE, most of these teen-agers want nothing more than to be left alone.

"Floating" is fine with them. But their subjective wishes are only half the story. Many would gladly go back home if it did not mean returning to the same situation that drove them away. "I'll run away from that place 100 times," one New Orleans boy told Los Angeles police, and his comment is typical. Police all over the nation say a high percentage of runaways are "repeaters."

But running away is no criminal act. Rather, in the judgment of experienced social workers, it is a warning signal: something is wrong at home. It is a signal for everyone, police included, to see; but too many people are blind to it.

Because of the present jungle of medieval court procedure, red tape and buck-passing, only yawning jail doors lie ahead of these youngsters.

Wright recalls a 15-year-old New York runaway whose "travelogue" included "floating" in one Pennsylvania town, an overnight jail stay in another and similar treatment in Tennessee, Oklahoma, Texas and Arizona. "Every time this happened," he says, "this boy was learning how to 'get by' with the law. He was learning to lie, to avoid police, to

look on them as enemies. He learned how to take care of himself, which included stealing autos and committing other petty crimes. By the time he wound up here, he was an expert in rolling drunks and breaking in. If, when he was first picked up in Pennsylvania, he had been taken care of by a method that would get him home safely, we could have avoided all this."

Of course, the runaway problem has been around since the dawn of the world. It has always been every boy's inalienable right to dream of running away, and this has been a healthy sign. Many of America's pioneers were runaways.

#### The Problem Is Here to Stay

**B**UT THE PROBLEM of a shifting mass of rootless juveniles did not become a major one until this generation. First it was written off as purely a depression problem; then it was attributed to the uncertainty of wartime and postwar society. But now states and social agencies are beginning to realize that it is still here—and growing.

Several are starting to stir. The Senate committee headed by Robert C. Hendrickson of New Jersey, alarmed by the disquieting facts it dug out last spring, has scheduled a series of full-dress hearings this fall. These may dramatize the problem and bring it to the attention of less alert states.

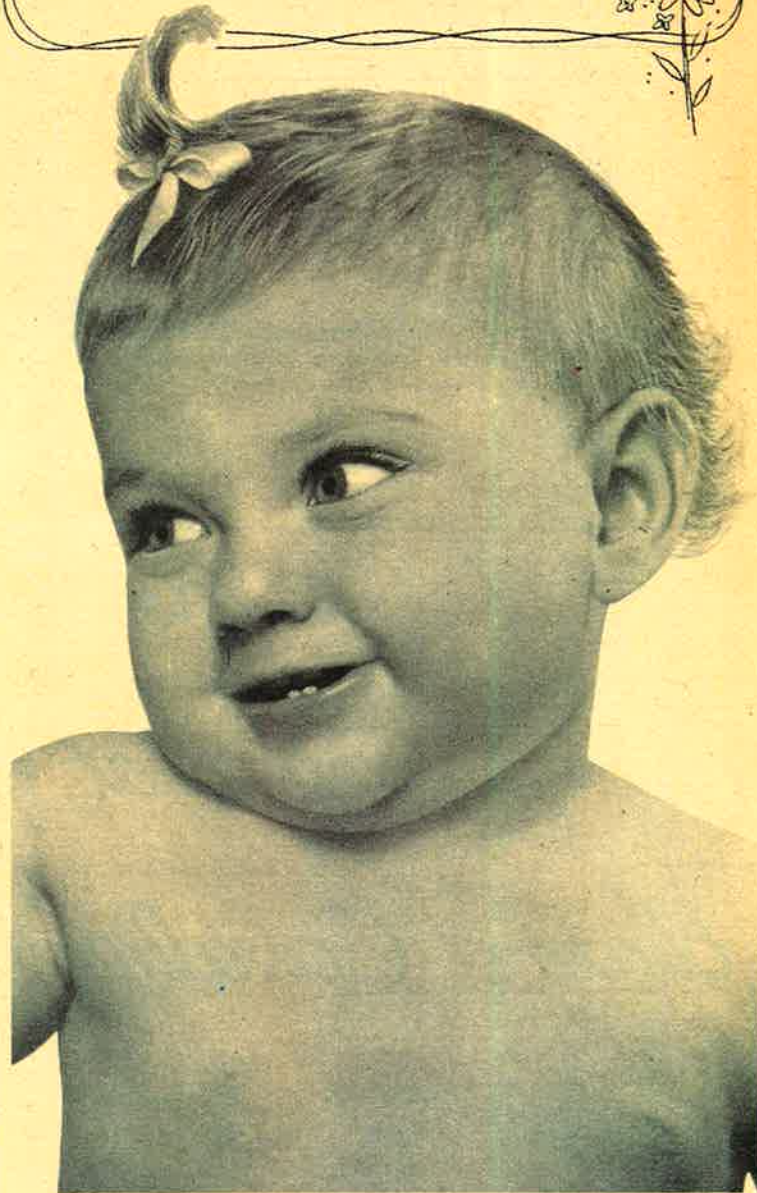
California has been struggling for some time to organize a modern, humane system of handling drifters. Now Pennsylvania has taken the first steps to deal with the problem. So has Iowa. The Joint Council of State Governments has become interested.

Assistant Police Chief Bob Mabry of Yuma, Ariz., probably sums it up best. "If I ignore these kids," he says, "I'm not only delinquent in my duty to them. I'm delinquent to Yuma County—and to myself, too."

#### NEXT WEEK

● **Why does a boy run away? To find out, PARADE went back to Wisconsin with Allan after he had been halted in El Paso. PARADE learned a lot—and so did his family. Their story is an education for everyone.**

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# PARADE MAGAZINE

## Nobody's Children

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By Sid Ross and Ed Kiester

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*The boy looked like a bum. His clothes were tattered and seedy. His face was grimy and wind burned. He clutched a battered canvas satchel with just a few possessions in it. There wasn't a dime in his pockets and he hadn't had a meal in a day and a half. His name was Louis Morton, he said, and he had hitchhiked from New Jersey to California. He was just 15 years old.*

And how did a ragged, penniless 15-year-old travel 3000 miles without attracting someone's attention? "Oh the cops stopped me," said Louis. "Four times I think. In one town in Oklahoma, this cop looks me over and says, "I wouldn't hang around here if I was you, kid. A couple of miles farther on, a nice policeman -- I think he was a deputy -- he bought me some supper. I told him I was going to California and he said he hoped I made it all right."

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"Feed Billy to the sharks. Nobody wants him here!" They may be as young as 7 or as old as 18 or 19. (In most states, a youth over 16 is considered an adult, free to come and go as he pleases.) But they remain "drifters," kids without roots, looking for something -- love, adventure, a job. All too often they are finding cold, hunger, depravity and the business end of a billy club.



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#### **It's a short trip to the end of the line**

Listen as a few of them tell how they were "processed" along the nation's highways.

"I was hitching to Louisville when the cops picked me up in Bardstown, KY," says 17-year-old George Rader, a Michigan boy. "They rode me out of town and told me not to come back. On the way back I had to go through there – that's the way my lifts went. They gave me nine days in jail for vagrancy. I didn't have any money so I guess I was guilty. They didn't even get in touch with my parents."

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Essentially good kids they may be when they start on the road, but a few weeks usually brings them to the end of the line – geographically, financially, morally. This is particularly true of girls (estimated at one-eighth to one-third of the drifter population).

"Girls away from home are quite often persuaded to do things they'd otherwise never dream of," says Sgt. John A Hampton, supervisor of the Los Angeles Police Department's Juvenile Division.

Fortunately, some wanderers turn to police for aid before that last step. In many cases, it's just in the nick of time.

"I don't know what I'd have done if I'd been hungrier." Stephen Marks, 16, of Tennessee, told Miami police after wandering around penniless for three days. A boy picked up in El Paso Texas told police that he had leaped out of a car a few minutes before when the driver propositioned him.

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Although PARADE found no case in which a teenager had been convicted on trumped-up charges, variations were found with the same aim — get rid of him.

But most drifters are never arrested. Those who are, wind up in custody because they have dabbled in crime, attracted attention in some way or because hunger made them turn themselves in. The Children's Bureau estimates that 30,000 a year pass through courts, jails and agencies. No one pretends this is anywhere near the total number.

"We patrol pretty well, but I don't think we get more than 15 per cent," said one Miami officer. No estimates are as high as 50 per cent. And Herman Stark, director of the California Youth Authority, figures that 2,000 youngsters drift into his state every month.

The California study found that the average wanderer was about 18, came from a city, had a high school education. Most came from broken homes — and Stark suspects that even those seeking adventure had home troubles. More than 25 per cent hadn't funds to last a week. Surprisingly, 50 per cent came by train or bus, even a few by plane. But today most hitchhike or ride freights.

For the runaway, all roads lead to California or Florida. The lures are the much-publicized glamour, the ballyhooed climate, and the possibilities of jobs. In addition, these states are literally the end of the line for "floating." "What would we do?" asks one Los Angeles officer, "Drop them in the Pacific Ocean?"

Because of the magnetism of California and Florida, states forming natural highways to those goals get a staggering number of drifters and are often most guilty of "floating." Along Route 66 to California or Route 1 to Florida, you might count 50 young hitchhikers a day.

So vast has this army of wanderers become that it has developed its own communications system. The hitchhikers grapevine offers tips on towns to avoid, places where a bed can be had cheap, agencies that are good for a sympathetic handout.

Another tip it passes along, locations of gathering places for homosexuals, where a runaway can pick up a quick \$5 or \$10. And runaways have become such big business that Los Angeles recently had to crack down on racketeers who specialized in printing phony identification cards with faked ages for teenagers.

Is there any chance for these youngsters to grow up into worthwhile citizens? Social workers, welfare agencies and police in California think there is — provided they get competent adult guidance, and get it soon enough.

Spelled out, this means a full investigation of the home to determine whether a child's best interests are served by returning him or placing him in a foster home (or if he is older, finding him a job) in the state where he is finally stopped. But no such far-sighted program has been put in operation largely because home states just won't cooperate.

#### **Many Are Repeaters**

To be sure, most of these teenagers want nothing more than to be left alone. "Floating" is fine with them. But their subjective wishes are only half the story. Many would gladly go back home if it did not mean returning to the same situation that drove them away.

"I'll run away from that place 100 times," one New Orleans boy told Los Angeles police and his comment is typical. Police all over the nation say a high percentage of runaways are "repeaters."

But running away is no criminal act. Rather, in the judgment of experienced social workers, it is a warning signal; something is wrong at home. It is a signal for everyone, police included, to see but too many people are blind to it.

Because of the present jungle of medieval court procedure, red tape and buck-passing, only yawning jail doors lie ahead of these youngsters.

Wright recalls a 15-year-old New York runaway whose "travelogue" included "floating" in one Pennsylvania town, an overnight jail stay in another and similar treatment in Tennessee, Oklahoma, Texas and Arizona. "Every time this happened," he says, "this boy was learning how to get by with the law. He was learning to lie, to avoid police, to look on them as enemies. He learned how to take care of himself, which included stealing autos and committing other petty crimes. By the time he wound up here, he was an expert in rolling drunks and breaking in. "If, when he was first picked up in Pennsylvania, he had been taken care of by a method that would get him home safely, we could have avoided all this."

Of course, the runaway problem has been around since the dawn of the world. It has always been every boy's inalienable right to dream of running away, and this has been a healthy sign. Many of America's pioneers were runaways.

#### **The Problem Is Here to Stay**

But the problem of a shifting mass of rootless juveniles did not become a major one until this generation. First it was written off as purely a depression problem; then it was attributed to the uncertainty of wartime and postwar society. But now state and social agencies are beginning to realize that it is still here and growing.

Several are starting to stir. The Senate Committee headed by Robert C. Hendrickson of New Jersey, alarmed by the disquieting facts it dug out last spring, has scheduled a series of full-dress hearings this fall. These may dramatize the problem and bring it to the attention of less alert states.

California has been struggling for some time to organize a modern, humane system of handling drifters. Now Pennsylvania has taken the first steps to deal with the problem. So has Iowa and The Joint Council of State Governments has become interested.

Assistant Police Chief Bob Mabry of Yuma, Arizona, probably sums it up best. "If I ignore these kids, I'm not only delinquent in my duty to them, I'm delinquent to Yuma County — and to myself too."

#### **NEXT WEEK**

Why does a boy run away? To find out, PARADE went back to Wisconsin with Allan after he had been halted in El Paso. PARADE learned a lot — and so did his family. Their story is an education for everyone.

# PARADE MAGAZINE

## Nobody's Children

September 26, 1954

By Sid Ross and Ed Kiester

### WHY A BOY RUNS AWAY FROM HOME

Second in a Series (Reprinted)

A 15-YEAR-OLD SPEAKS FOR 300,000 OTHERS: 'MY PARENTS DON'T WANT ME!'

Last week, PARADE called attention to America's army of wandering teen-agers and revealed how police in every state pass them from hand to hand until they wind up broke, hungry and all too often, ripe for some criminal act. Today, PARADE offers the case history of one runaway.

On the evening of June 27<sup>th</sup>, just about dusk, Capt. Mike Sullivan of the El Paso County, Texas Sheriff's Patrol, picked up a 15-year-old hitchhiker on Route 80 west of the city.

A lean, owlish boy from a small town near Madison, Wisconsin, Allan had been on the road a week. He had left home he told Sullivan, after "some trouble with my parents." Now with \$3.50 in his pocket, he was headed north to Colorado and Wyoming to see the country.

Sullivan placed Allan in the county's modern juvenile detention home. His parents were notified he had been picked up. Four days later, his father wired bus fare and Allan went back to Wisconsin.

The handling of Allan's case was certainly a cut above the standard bum's rush America's teen-age runaways get-but it still fell short of the ideal. No probation department could be contacted to handle the home end of the case. As a result, Allan left El Paso with no real effort to answer the most important question of all.

Why did he run away? Yet this is the question that America with perhaps as many as 300,000 roaming teen-agers on its hands must answer before it can find a cure for the runaway problem. To cut this vast army of wanderers down to size, we must first identify the social pressures that caused its growth. To straighten out an individual youngster, we must learn the conditions that warped him.

But teamwork among the states has been badly lacking. The few attempts that have been made have so bogged down in red tape that police and welfare agencies have ignored them. In this vacuum, the ruthless, if often well meaning practice of "floating" passing the drifter on the next community has flourished.

Why does a teenager run away from home? One Miami juvenile officer thought he knew the answer. "Tell parents in your article that they ought to treat their kids a little more decent, and give them

more love and affection," he told PARADE. "Then they wouldn't run away."

A slightly different slant comes from Judge William G. Gardiner, of the Pinellas County, Florida Juvenile Court. "To me, our society does everything to destroy the home," he says. "You have to look right into the home to solve the runaway problem. With children, the schools say we'll give them the religion and the Government says we'll feed them if they're in need. All this destroys the institution of the family.

#### The Kids' Reasons

These replies are close to the truth, but they don't quite hit it dead center. Often the causes aren't so clear cut. When California studied its runaway problem, each youth was asked why he left home. "Home trouble" was listed most often, adventure was second, hunting for a job was third. But Herman Stark, director of the California Youth Authority, thinks the reasons overlap. "If a kid was happy at home," he says, "no amount of adventure could lure him away."

A bad home situation doesn't always imply open warfare between the boy and his parents. Quite often, tension boils just beneath the surface. The parents are completely flabbergasted when a child runs away from what they consider a perfectly serene home life, but he considers an intolerable relationship.

Allan was such a case. Imaginative and with a flair for adventure, the boy turned naturally from the harsh realities at home to the romantic fancies of the road. He was naïve and somewhat embittered. He walked with temptation but managed to sidestep it. In short, he was representative of many thousands who are nobody's children. For this reason, PARADE visited him in Wisconsin after his return to try to dig out the makings of a runaway. From one boy's story, a good deal of light is shed on the whole problem.

When Captain Sullivan stopped Allan, the boy looked hurt. "I'm not doing anything," he said, "Can't a person travel?" The policeman opened Allan's small bag and inspected his gear, a pair of swimming trunks, a towel, two bars of soap, a lightweight jacket, a jar of honey, some raisins, a hunting knife with a 7-inch blade. "The honey and raisins were for energy," Allan explained, the knife was to protect myself from rattlesnakes and things."

This was Allan's story, told politely but reluctantly. He had run away five times before. "The others were short trips up to 30 miles." On this trip, he had slept in small hotels, three nights in the open, building a small campfire and using his jacket as a pillow on the other nights. No, he had never been "floated." He hadn't even seen a policeman on the way southwest.

A few minutes before, a man had picked him up and bluntly propositioned him. Allan asked to be let out of the car immediately. "If he would've got rough, I was thinking I'd wave the knife at him," the boy said.

Cautiously, he asked Captain Sullivan, "What'll you do with me now?" "Contact your parents and see what they want done with you." "I know what they'll say!" the boy burst out bitterly. "They'll say they don't give a dam! They don't like me, that's all!"

Allan's parents, a hard-working couple in their mid-30's were frankly baffled when told of this outburst. But they admitted a lot of Allan's behavior baffled them.

His mother, Lucille, thin and bespectacled, said they had been losing their hold over Allan since he was 9 years old. That year a brother Danny was born. "I think Allan resented Danny," their mother says. He was the only child in the family up to then.

In the following six years, there were a number of points of friction. But each one seemed to trace back to Danny's birth when Allan was gradually eased out of the Spotlight and began to feel unwanted. Looking back, you could imagine each incident proving to him that his parents didn't love him.

#### **He Never Opened Up**

Allan's resentment wasn't open. He withdrew into himself. "He never opened up," his mother said, "You never knew what he was thinking or feeling inside." Allan's explanation is a tip off on his feelings. "I didn't want to bother them," he says.

Each time Allan ran away, his parents tried to find out what was wrong, but they had no success. They also tried to be demonstrative and to buy him gifts, which showed they really did care for him. In fact, they moved from Milwaukee to their present home, a two-bedroom basement apartment in a small town surrounded by open countryside in the hope that Allen's love of the outdoors might keep him at home.

But none of these ideas worked. The first time Allan ran away, he was 13. His trip took him from Milwaukee to Waukesha, a distance of 30 miles. A few days later, he got as far as Kenosha. On his third try, he reached Chicago.

After that trip, Allan's teacher suggested the parents arrange with welfare authorities for some treatment for the boy. Instead the family decided to try moving to the country. The outdoor life did seem to agree with Allan, at least for a while. He often went into the woods to camp overnight, usually alone, and sometimes he sat under the trees for hours watching the birds and animals.

About the same time, in the manner of all adolescents, he began to "notice himself." He brooded about his glasses and his thin build. He withdrew even more. When things got too tough last May, he cashed a \$25 bond and ran off again to Chicago. In a week he came back-by train. He seemed more balky than ever. "I couldn't do anything with him," says his mother.

He refused to help his father around the house, particularly with heavier chores like laying sod for the lawn or gravelling the driveway. One day, Allan wanted to go to town to shop. His father told him to finish his work first. The boy's answer was to run away for the fifth time.

He got as far as Hayward, in northeast Wisconsin, and then after two days, he came back. For the first time, his parents had an inkling of why he left. He wrote a note saying what he had been "through" with them for four years and that they didn't care for him anyway. When he came back his parents tried to be casual, but Allan kept his bag packed. On Father's Day, he began running again.

He and his father had been working in the yard that day. His mother took some snap-shots, and it was obvious Allan was unhappy. "You could see the resentment in his face," she says.

After his father had gone out, Allan announced to his mother that he was leaving, "I said, 'Please Allan, talk to me once and tell me

what's the matter," she says. "He said again that he and his dad were through four years ago, and that nobody cared for him. I tried to find out why but he wouldn't talk. So I asked him why he bothered to come back from Hayward. He said, 'Okay, if that's the way you want it, I'll keep going and not come back.' He didn't kiss me goodbye or anything, all he said was 'I'll see you.'"

A few days later, his parents received a postcard in Allan's awkward handwriting, postmarked Abilene Texas. It read:

Dear Mother and Dad-I love you and am sorry I hurt you. Hope you will be all right. Am cold, tired and wish I was home. Hope Danny and Kathy are OK. Say Hello to Dan for me. Wonder if Dad got the sod in. I wish I was home. Your son, Allan.

A few days later, came the telegram from El Paso, followed by an airmail letter, announcing that Allan had been picked up. And a few days after that, Allan was back home. The boy who wouldn't talk to his parents was perfectly responsive when PARADE asked why he and his Dad were "through." The words tumbled out.

"Everything that my father ever gave me, he said he was going to break it or burn it whenever he got angry with me. Sure, he had reason to get angry with me, I guess we never really got along. There was not particular reason just a lot of little things."

Many of the "little things" seem to be rooted in the six-year-old resentment of Danny's arrival. Here are a few of them: Allan and his dad quarreled over his schoolwork, "He tried to help and he'd lose his patience and call me stupid," the boy says. "I wouldn't answer back, he was my father, I'd just carry it inside."

"I just didn't realize what the effects would be," his father says. "I was really mad at the school system that wasn't teaching him right. It was because Allan wasn't dumb, that I was mad at him."

Allan resented being a baby-sitter for Danny and his sister Kathy. "I'd have some plan to do something and then I'd come home and find I had to baby-sit. I guess I didn't like my baby brother too much because I always had to take care of him."

"He didn't like to work around the house. He never liked to be told what to do or when to do it," his mother says. "Then there was the matter of the accordion lessons. I had a bunch of money stuck into that accordion," his father, a factory hand says. "He resisted it after a while. I think that's why he left the first time."

His parents have been trying hard to change things since Allan came back from El Paso. "I think we've all learned a lesson," his father says. "I told him when he came back, 'Remember Allan, this is your home here and your family. You're always welcome here. We want you around us.'"

To show he meant it, his father bought Allan a motor scooter-although he couldn't afford the \$200 it cost, and Allan has warmed up to Danny. "I know guys who don't have brothers and sisters. They don't have company. I take Dan fishing and places that's fun for both of us."

His parents are trying to cut down on his baby-sitting chores. But his father asks, "The once in a while we go out, surely he don't expect me to hire a girl and pay out \$3."

Most of the time he watches TV or reads books anyway at night. As for working at home; "He's got to do a little around the place, he lives in it too."

Allan's father also has promised to keep his temper in check. A little man - he's only 5 ft 6 ½ in tall, "always had an inferiority complex," he says. "What you can't do with your hands, you do with your tongue. I guess that helps explain the ribbing and ridicule I threw at Allan. But there'll be no more of it."

Will this new deal overcome the old resentments and keep Allan at home? His Mother who thinks maybe they should have taken that Welfare Department offer to help "hopes and prays" that it will. His father, who hit the road as a youth himself, doubts it. And Allan talks a little wistfully of heading for the Coast next summer.

Today, Allan is at a crossroads. One road will lead him to a stable life and acceptance of adult responsibilities. If he takes the other, he may keep running and running until he reaches the end of the line.

#### **NEXT WEEK:**

No one admits it, but everyone is responsible for the present runaway problem. PARADE reveals the shocking lack of program and facilities in your state - and every state.

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**12/20/00**

**AJCA Note: There are two more articles in this series, however, at this time we are unable to locate and obtain them. The other two articles are dated 10/3/54 and 10/10/54.**

**Thanks to Jody Taylor, AJCA Secretary, Idaho ICJ, for locating these two articles.**

# PARADE MAGAZINE

## Nobody's Children

October 3, 1954

By Sid Ross and Ed Kiester

### WHO'S A RUNAWAY

Third in a Series (Reprinted)

How Americans dodge their responsibility to provide care and comfort for nobody's children'.

**AN ARMY of runaways, perhaps 300,000 strong, is on the move in America. In the first article of this series, PARADE disclosed how they are ignored by the public and kicked around by police. Last week, one boy's story showed they can be helped-if help comes in time. But it rarely does. Today we see why.**

Who's to blame for the current mess in handling wandering teenagers?

All over the country, PARADE asked this question. After a while, the answer came to resemble a vaudeville routine: the person being questioned always jerked his thumb over his shoulder and said, "That guy back there." If you followed this thinking to its natural conclusion, you decided that the existence of "nobody's children" was nobody's fault.

Actually, the existence of these 300,000 kids is *everybody's* fault.

But who will admit it? Not the Federal Government, which sees the problem as one for the states. Not the states, which point out that runaways cross state lines and therefore are a Federal headache. Not local officials, who just blame everybody in a scatter-shot way.

The worst symptom of the problem is "floating" - giving a kid the bum's rush instead of treating him humanely. Every policeman admits "floating" is an evil. But few own up to doing it.

Yuma, Arizona, police boasted: "Not a kid gets through here!" A few minutes later, a PARADE investigator found two California boys thumbing rides on the main street. A Miami juvenile-court official told PARADE proudly, "We give every child under 17 welfare handling." But a directive from the same court states:

"We are beginning to get cases of 16-year-old boys . . . [who have not] committed any crime other than being a runaway from home . . . It has been the policy of the court for some time not to take jurisdiction in such cases . . ."

If police admit it's shortsighted, why do they "float" runaways? Hard-heartedness could be one reason. But Martha, 14, an Alabama girl picked up in Miami, told PARADE that policemen all along her route dug into their pockets to stake her to meals and rooms. Similar stories came from other young hoboes - boys and girls alike.

The basis of "floating" can be boiled down to two lacks: funds and facilities. All too often, the alternative is lodging the youth in a ramshackle jail, trying to alert his home state to take an interest in him, haggling with his parents over bus fare.

When Karl Holton, chief probation officer of Los Angeles County, testified before the Senate Juvenile Delinquency Subcommittee, he estimated the county's annual outlay for runaway care at \$60,000 to \$70,000.

"We have had two children for over eight months," he told the Senators. "That alone will cost \$200 a month. Probably there will be no one to help defray the cost of going back, and if the children need an attendant, and if they live on the East Coast-well, you can figure it out for yourself."

#### Federal 'Help'

Washington does help to finance runaway returns, in a rather left-handed way. After pressure from Miami's Judge Walter H. Beckham and others, Congress amended the Social Security Law in 1950 to allow rural-child-welfare funds to be used for returns.

But there were several catches. Only children 15 or under were covered. And the states actually didn't get a cent more. If they wanted to use Federal funds to buy tickets home for runaways, some other phase of the welfare program suffered. So the amendment was largely ignored.

Further, the law required the state to act in the child's "best interests"; this meant a full investigation at home. As a final roadblock, states were required to exhaust all other chances of paying the fare before using Federal funds. All this ate up several months; most states figured it was cheaper to give the kid a homeward shove in the first place.

And the Federal grants were based on the number of children living in rural areas. But the problem can't be measured in these terms. The states that receive the most runaways are not primarily rural but urban.

So the states have turned to their own fund-raising systems, which are only slightly less complex. They dip into poor-relief appropriations, or child-welfare funds, or special nest eggs set up by court order. Or they call in a private agency, like the Travelers' Aid Association. Last year, Travelers' Aid underwrote the homeward trips of 2,070 boys and 939 girls.

Most communities try to dun the child's parents for his fare. These attempts often are fruitless. Herman Stark of the California Youth Authority estimates that in 50 per cent of the cases handled by his agency, the parents just aren't interested ("Subject got there. Let him get back same way," one wired) and in another 25 per cent they haven't got the money.

If an empty treasury doesn't persuade a policeman to "float" runaways, the lack of machinery or facilities for handling them usually does. Only a handful of towns have a place to lodge juveniles -- detention homes, camps or juvenile "tanks" in the jail -- that can be called even adequate. Fewer yet have trained personnel to delve into the kids' troubles on a sociological basis. And the number with *enough* personnel to do a thorough job is somewhere near zero.

Even New York City falls short in this regard. Although children under 16 are well cared for in the municipal Children's Center, the only refuge for runaway boys 16 and over is the privately run Home for Homeless Boys, which has no supervision, no program -- and no funds. Neither the city nor the Community Chest helps out, and the superintendent, the Rev. Harry C. Eva, sometimes has solicited in the streets to keep the kids eating. But this gentle, 80-year-old minister never turns anyone away, so several hundred boys are lodged there each year.

Only a few communities are in a class with Phoenix or Los Angeles, both of which have up-to-date homes that stress outdoor work and planned recreation. More often they rank with Pennsylvania, where, a survey showed, 20 of 67 counties use some part of the county jail to house runaways.

California, host to an estimated 2,000 runaways a month, has dreamed up a revolutionary -- and controversial -- method of returning some of them. Four times a year, a "deportation train" heads east, dropping off youngsters all along its route. In a year, several hundred kids get home this way; a typical trip, in April, took 52.

Usually the train is run in two sections. One starts at Sacramento, the other at Los Angeles; they hook up at Barstow. On the April trip, one

boy rode as far as Boston. Usually, however, the train breaks up at St. Louis and the youngsters are assigned to other trains, often in care of an attendant.

Although under 24-hour supervision, the kids have a wonderful time, according to T. O. Heer of the Youth Authority. For many, it's their first train ride. Cracked one boy, "I rode the rods out here and California's sending me home in style."

Not a few are disconsolate at being sent home. "I don't care if I live or die," one boy told Heer as the train chugged him back to a broken home. A girl, being returned to a New York reform school after running away 35 times, ranted bitterly at her mother. "If she had stayed home once in a while, I wouldn't be in this trouble," the girl said.

### **Railroad Fare: \$35,000**

Four trains a year costs California \$35,000. The state figures it's getting a bargain. Otherwise, the runaways' board bills in industrial schools and forestry camps would keep mounting. The CYA tries to pressure parents into paying for the trip, but it seldom works. Last year, the state regained only \$2,300.

The system has been in operation for some years and has been tried by the state of Washington, but it still kicks up a fuss. "I often wonder what happens to these youngsters when they're just dumped off a train like that," Dr. Martha M. Eliot, Chief of the U.S. Children's Bureau, commented to PARADE.

Heer and Stark insist, however, that case studies are made of every runaway before he's assigned to the train. Some agency at home must agree to supervise his parole. Often the courts refuse to send a kid home "no matter how loud the parents holler," Heer says. In such cases the CYA finds jobs or arranges schooling for the youth in California.

At least this one state is taking active steps to do something about the problem, even if some critics do call it "floating in reverse." Swamped with runaways and quite often stymied by uncooperative home states, which flatly refuse to help out, California has hit upon the deportation train as its best way out.

"We get 'em wholesale," Holton told the Senate committee, "so we have to send 'em back wholesale."

Unfortunately, the nationwide problem of runaway teenagers, extending into every city and hamlet from coast to coast, won't be solved until all America realizes that these kids aren't wholesale freight at all.

Until that day comes, they are passengers on a speeding train to potential crime -- routed via Misery, Depravity and several other whistle stops between.



# PARADE MAGAZINE

## Nobody's Children

October 10, 1954

By Sid Ross and Ed Kiester

### What's Ahead for Our Runaways?

Fourth in a Series (*Reprinted*)

They need more facilities, more personnel -- but, most of all, a change in your attitude.

For four weeks, PARADE has been discussing a "social nightmare" -- the problem of America's teen-age runaways. As one boy's story showed, they drift away from home yearning for affection; often they find only misery instead. Even the most progressive states handle them haphazardly. What can be done? Here are PARADE's suggestions.

"The runaway problem," says Richard Clendenen, executive director of the Senate Juvenile Delinquency Subcommittee, "dates from the creation of a neither fish-nor-fowl status between childhood and adulthood. A child used to be grown up at 16; now he's not grown up at 20. Modern America created this problem; modern America will have to solve it."

But how? So little spadework has been done (indeed, most states only dimly realize a problem exists) that a pat, three-simple-steps solution can't be suggested. America must start from scratch, with a change in thinking. The bum's-rush treatment must be discarded; it simply kicks a kid around until he winds up warped, twisted -- and often with a gun in his pocket.

Year by year, the number of runaways has been climbing until some estimates run as high as 300,000 a year. All this time, responsible agencies (even in your town) have been burying their heads in the sand. Until everyone owns up to the problem, the battle can't be won.

And it can't be won single-handed, as California and Florida have learned. Much more aware of the problem because they are overrun with runaways, the two states have been stalemated by "home states" that just can't be bothered with runaways.

Trapped by one of these stalemates is 15-year-old Donald, a New Yorker who fled to Miami after his father died and his mother was placed in an institution.

Donald reached Florida almost broke, and spent a week living on hot dogs and sleeping on park benches before police picked him up. He claimed to be 18, so he spent a week in the adult section of the city jail. Then his true age was discovered and he was transferred to Juvenile Hall. That was 60 days ago.

"We can't get New York to take this boy back," says Miami's Judge Walter H. Beckham. "They don't want him even if we pay the transportation. They're using all kinds of subterfuge to dodge their proper responsibility. And we're not

### Whose Responsibility Is He?

When a runaway hits the road, with or without parental consent, every state along his route has a responsibility to stop him. The state that eventually does flag him down, and his home state, also have these important duties.

*The home state* should agree to pay his fare home; investigate why he ran away; recommend whether he should return home, be placed in a foster home, given a job or assigned to a different school.

*The state that stops him* should pay his board during the investigation; house him in a foster home or camp designed for children, not adults; try to place him in new surroundings if a return home seems an awkward solution.

Which states have examined and accepted these responsibilities? Even California and Florida, the most forward-looking of all, drag their feet on the "home end" of a case -- according to states that have dealt with them. But until the states begin pulling together, no campaign to assist runaways will make much headway.

A good start would be an interstate compact, or agreement, guaranteeing cooperation to see that the child's best interests are served. The Joint Council of State Governments has mapped a tentative compact, paralleling the present agreement on adult parole violators.

Under its terms, each state would accept its responsibilities toward its legal residents, and would agree to supervise the probation of a child returned home from another state. The compact would cover kids who stepped over the line into "delinquency" as well as untainted runaways.

Before such a compact could be approved by the states, Congress would have to pass an enabling act allowing them to negotiate. The Hendrickson Committee introduced this measure at the recent session, but no action was taken. Even if action were taken, the Joint Council is frankly pessimistic about the chances of approval by the states.

An interstate compact, with each state shouldering its own burden of responsibility, also would divide the heavy cost of up-to-date programs more justly. As things stand now, Clendenen says, "Those states which recognize their social responsibility to the nation's young are being penalized." California shells out several hundred thousand dollars a year for returns alone; some less progressive states may spend only a few hundred. But often these same states furnish a high proportion of "nobody's children."

A new, more realistic yardstick ought to measure distribution of Federal funds. The present formula of basing grants for child welfare on proportion of rural population has no relation to the runaway problem. Again, states with the most acute problem get a short count.

The Federal Government, which has been stepping carefully to avoid treading on sensitive "states' rights" toes, should adopt a more vigorous role – in terms of money as well as action. Certainly a teenager who runs from New Jersey to California is as much a Federal case as a fugitive from justice who covers the same ground.

Obviously, some money must be spent. Recently the National Probation and Parole Association reported that 100,000 children between 7 and 17 – both runaways and delinquents – are still held behind bars. And the Children's Bureau found that only 50 per cent of 611 large cities had any juvenile officers at all. Up-to-date juvenile facilities are called for. Juvenile staffs need to be bigger and better trained. This is primarily a long-range investment.

#### **\$4,000 a Year per Child**

"It costs \$4,000 a year to keep a kid in one of our training schools," says Ralph B. Wright of the California Youth Authority. "But if the kid's problems are solved at home, or he's stopped earlier in his journey, this cost is avoided."

Some of the more elaborate plans for dealing with runaways would cost a good deal more. For instance, the California Conference on Children and Youth, held last winter in Sacramento, discussed construction of a coast-to-coast string of youth hostels. The hostels would cater to the adventuresome streak in youngsters and be open to runaways as well as those traveling with parental permission. Not only shelter but supervision would be provided. The cost, the delegates admitted, might be high, but the dividends ought to be well worth the investment.

Less sweeping is Clendenen's idea of a modified CCC, which would enlist teenagers in state-forest work gangs and help them fill up the yawning years between childhood and maturity.

But these are long-term projects, aimed at solving the runaway problem by squaring off

against the whole puzzler of the "between years." Revolutionary as they are, they undoubtedly deserve serious study. But the runaway problem is here, today, and it needs an *immediate cure*.

As a start, every state and every community ought to take stock of the runaway problem—a thorough analysis, beginning with a census of the runaway population and a hard look into every phase of the program. Facilities should be examined and evaluated. Procedures should be scrutinized, criticized and tightened. Personnel should be re-educated.

A complete, white-glove inspection of this sort would be a solid foundation for a farsighted program to deal with the problem. And these steps also could be taken immediately to bring questions and answers into sharper focus:

- The Children's Bureau should draw up a code of uniform procedure and recommend its adoption by every agency.
- Each state attorney general should study the possibilities of entering into an interstate compact.
- An educational program should be launched to teach police to recognize and halt runaways sooner.
- The Social Security Act should be amended to raise to 18 the age limit for runaways returned with Federal funds.
- Each state should provide for regular, systematic reports on the number of runaways handled and their disposition.
- The next Child Welfare Conference should conduct a thorough study of long-range methods of coping with runaways.

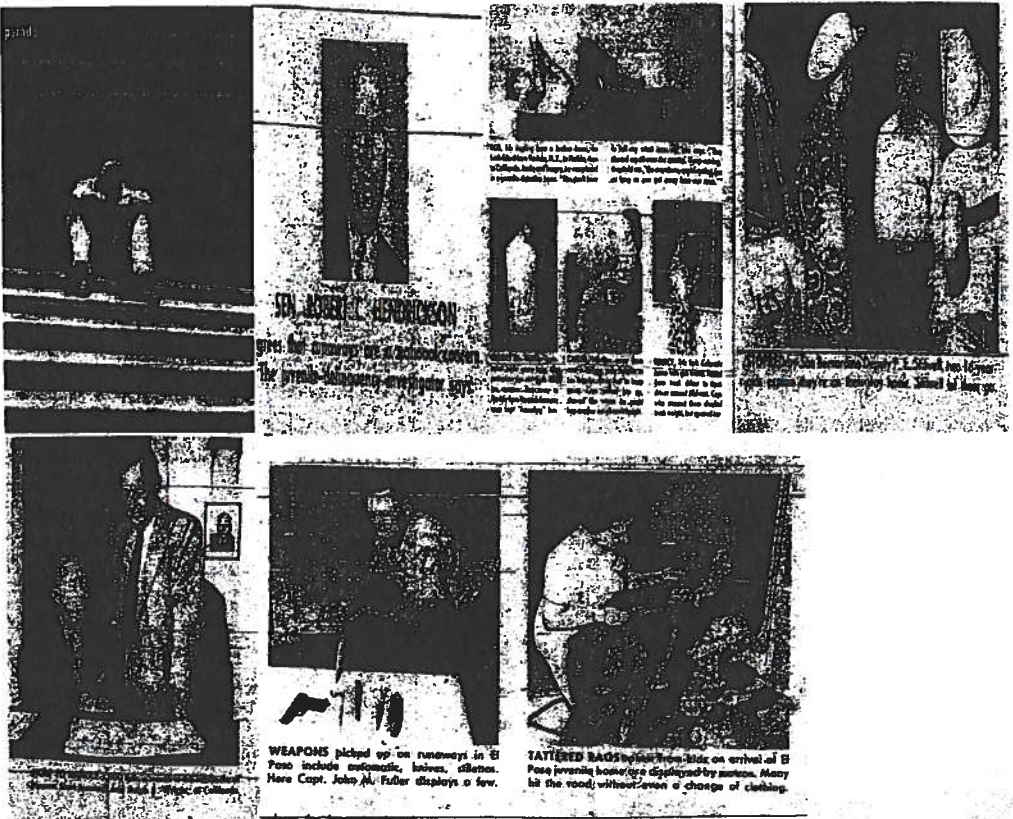
If all this were suddenly done overnight, the runaway problem still would not vanish. The seeds have been planted; America will be reaping the harvest for a long time to come. But an aggressive offense against it would at least indicate that we were coming out of our slumber and looking at the problem squarely.

Until America opens its eyes – and arms – to "nobody's children," you, your neighbors and your community stand indicted on the counts leveled against you in somber tones by 16-year-old Bob Jones. His trip from Yonkers, N.Y., to California taught him, he says, that "nobody is interested in us – the people, the cops, nobody. The cops just shove us along and shove us along. They're sure not doing their duty. Nobody is."

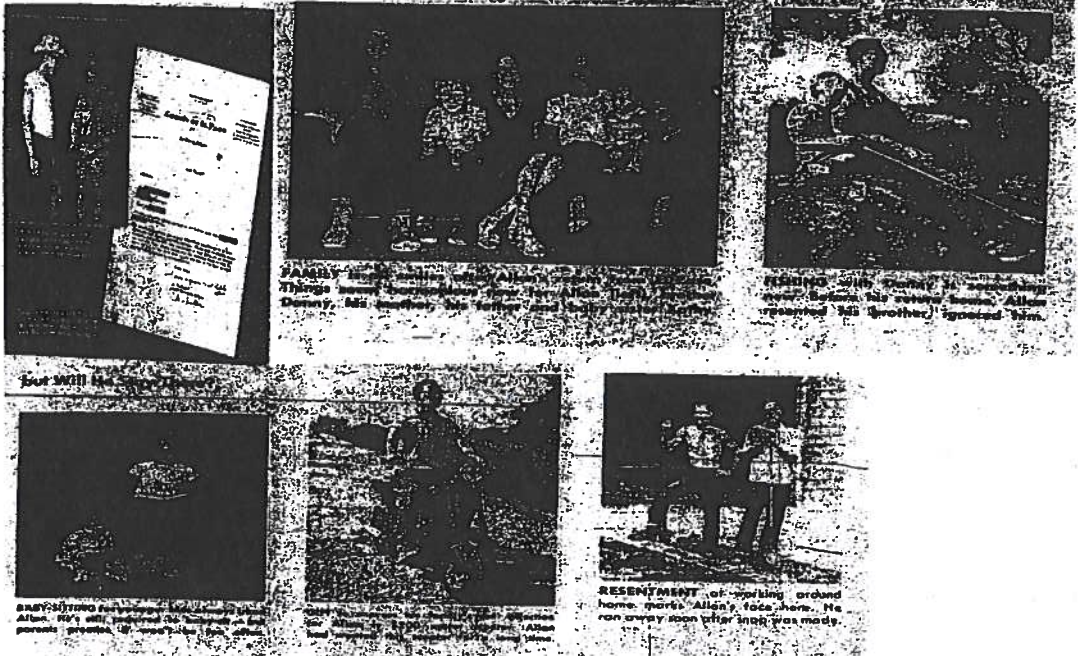
"There were times when I was so hungry I was tempted to break in somewhere, to steal, just to get food. I was lucky, that's all, that I didn't."

Suppose Bob hadn't been lucky; suppose he had yielded that last inch to temptation. And suppose you were on a jury trying him for burglary, or robbery, or murder. What would be your verdict, America? Whom would you convict?

Article 1 – Nobody's Children - Sept. 19, 1954



Article 2 – Why a Boy Runs Away From Home - Sept. 26, 1954



Article 3 – Who's a Runaway – Oct. 3, 1954



**"DEPORTED"** from California, 16-year-old breaks down in tears. Many passengers on state-run "deportation train" are bitter about home, will run away again.



They'd been away a day at El Paso juvenile home. Each heading to jail.



**PINCHED-IN** runaway at Sheriff Stanley Center, in Los Angeles, stares dejectedly at the ground.



**MARTHA**, 14, refuses in Miami juvenile home. Police had straddled her to room, meals.



**JUDGE Beckham** of Miami persuaded Government to grant funds to return runaways.

Article 4 – What's Ahead for Our Runaways? – Oct. 10, 1954



"Cade's" line up of California's Fresno School. Some are runaways, others have been committed for crime.



**WHERE TO?** in Yuma, Ariz., two 15-year-olds hitch hike. Their plight symbolizes runaways' problem.