

Probation Officer a Responsible Job

by Brian Ward
Oakville Journal Record

"The said accused shall keep the peace and be of good behavior and appear before the court when required to do so by the court, and in addition the accused shall:

"Report to and be under the supervision of a probation officer"

These words intoned by a judge to an accused person after his conviction often means the difference between spending time in one of the cold, inhuman and often antiquated jails, and having freedom.

BIG JOB

Tom Barker, 30, is a probation officer and is responsible for 80 probationers in the North Halton area.

It is a big job for one man to handle and not only does he handle probationers but Barker also prepares an average of ten reports a month on those who have not yet had sentence passed on them.

"Tom hasn't quite got the time to help his probationers the way he would like to," admitted his supervisor, John Milton, supervising probation officer for Hamilton and Halton County.

80 CASES

When an offender, both juvenile and of legal age, has been placed on probation, a period which could last up to three years, he comes under Barker's charge.

With 80 cases to handle and only 18 per cent within walking distance of his headquarters in the provincial court office, Barker's probationers are not under close supervision. But police officers in their district keep an eye on them.

As a condition of the sentence, probationers are required to report to Barker, usually once or twice a month.

DISCRETION

"There is always an element of discretion to be used in enforcing a period of probation," said Barker.

But if there is a breach of any of the conditions, the probationer is liable to a jail sentence of up to six months and he may, at the discretion of the crown attorney, be returned before the judge to be sentenced

to a term for his original offence.

Once on probation, the offender has the opportunity to talk over his problems.

A Bachelor of Arts degree in social sciences plus training in teaching, psychology and regular in-service teaching programs makes Barker and men like him well qualified to provide this type of counselling service.

CONFIDENCE

"The probationer and probation officer develop a relationship of confidence," he said. "Their problems, hang-ups and hopes can often be communicated as we go through their interview sessions which are often an hour in length."

"I don't try to stick my nose in someone's affairs unless I'm asked to," he cautioned. "and the probationer doesn't even have to enter into a counselling situation if he doesn't want to."

"When you start with him, you should try to let him make his own decisions about his problems whether they be with marriage or drugs or society."

FRUSTRATIONS

Barker was reluctant to talk about the frustrations or satisfactions of his job because he felt most offenders have to help themselves on the right road. He just makes suggestions which could help him make the right decision.

Very often, a presentence report can make the difference between probation and a jail sentence to an offender, and preparation of this report is also Barker's job.

"I would like to see that when a judge says a report is favorable to the accused, he doesn't mean I put in a good word about him."

ALL THE FACTS

"The probation officer's only job is to put the facts in the report, although he could give his opinion if the facts were strong enough to back him."

The presentence report is requested when an offender has committed a crime and the judge would like a more detailed history before he makes up his mind on the sentence. Barker must gather all the facts

often interviewing a man's parents, relatives, friends, police lawyer and the accused person or anyone else who had a close relationship with him before he committed the crime.

'PARENTS HOSTILE'

"With young offenders who compose about two thirds of my case load, the parents are often hostile towards you at first. But you try to be sympathetic with them while you're doing the report and they usually open up," Barker said.

With an offender from outside Halton County, Barker must rely on his colleagues in other areas to help him.

Also included in the report, is an interview with the offender which is often done behind the steel bars of the jail.

Barker submits copies to the

'Fighting At A Disadvantage'

Halton riding MP Rud Whiting said this week he is "completely dismayed" that Canada's two rail lines are getting out of passenger service in southern Ontario and in most other parts of the country.

The Liberal MP said in Halton riding several passenger runs have been cut off and the Canadian Pacific Railway is now seeking permission to end a Toronto to Windsor run which provides commuter service to Milton.

At the same time a Canadian National passenger run between Toronto and Guelph is being cut, although it provides service to several North Halton communities, including Georgetown.

"It is quite obvious that the railways are simply dumping their passenger runs at every chance, and despite any public hardship or inconvenience caused," said Whiting.

He said both local MP's and municipalities are at a disadvantage when it comes to fighting railway decisions to cut off passenger service.

As an example he noted the losing fight waged by himself and the Town of Acton in an effort to prevent the CNR from

HUMAN TYPE GUY

He has yet to be called by any of the parties concerned to back himself up.

Often a period of probation is enough to straighten out an offender and rid him of some hostility towards society and authority. A problem which often leads to the first offence.

"We try to make him see a probation officer, who represents authority, as a human type of guy," Milton stressed.

And society's attitude towards offenders is changing as well.

"In the mind of the public,

probation is now a more appropriate way of dealing with offenders, especially young ones," he concluded.

FOUR OTHERS

Probation officers only came into being in Canada in 1921 and were employed by municipalities. Pre-sentence reports in the early days, now a probation officer's job, were verbally given in court by a police officer who knew the accused.

In Halton County, there are four others beside Barker with two in Oakville and two working in Burlington. They are employees now of the Department of Justice of Ontario.

Besides his Milton office, Barker manages to meet his probationers in Acton and in Georgetown offices on a regular basis.

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PAGE 8

On New Year's day Mr. and Mrs. Holmes welcomed guests from Port Credit, Mr. and Mrs. Ken Gleh.

AIN'T IT THE TRUTH
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Holiday Visitors Here and There

Mr. and Mrs. John Holden, 7 Margaret St. spent the Christmas holiday with Mr. and Mrs. George Holden in Oakville. For the New Year's celebrations Mr. and Mrs. John Holden were the hosts and they also welcomed Mr. and Mrs. George Johnson from Scarborough.

Mr. and Mrs. Wardell of Coe Hill held a family party over the holiday season at their home for Mr. and Mrs. Bruce W. B. Pinkney, 50 Byron and Mrs. Pinkney's sisters Miss D. Wardell and Miss G. Wardell from Florida and her brother Mr. Wardell who travelled from Nova Scotia.

Mr. and Mrs. Archie Holmes and their children Brian, Linda and Lisa, 12 Roydon Place spent Christmas in Brampton at the home of her sister and brother-in-law Mr. and Mrs. Dave Tuffa.

CN'S Passenger Dumping Dismays M.P.

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As an example he noted the losing fight waged by himself and the Town of Acton in an effort to prevent the CNR from

shutting the local station and transferring operations to near-by Guelph.

This station was important to Acton, but the railway bulldozed ahead and closed it despite public protest," said Whiting.

University Students Home for Holidays

Well the celebrations are all over for another year, the decorations are down now and the tree thrown away, the new calendars are hung up and we are started into a new year, may it bring Peace and Happiness to everyone.

Mr. and Mrs. James Carney and their three daughters and sons-in-law motored to the sunny south for the Christmas holidays, one day they reported it was eighty degrees where they were.

We're very glad that Claude Pickett was able to be at home

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