

The fact that juvenile court statistics furnish the most comprehensive figures collected on a country-wide basis makes it important that their possibilities and limitations be understood. This Section gives a picture of juvenile delinquency in Canada from the viewpoint of legal action taken, for in the eyes of the law *a child is a delinquent only when he or she is adjudged before the court to have committed a delinquency*. To many people the term 'juvenile delinquent' has a broader interpretation but that adopted in this Section does not include those boys and girls whose misdemeanours have not been reported to the courts or who have been given the necessary advice and aid from their parents, their school, the police or a child-caring agency. Moreover, it does not include those cases which are handled unofficially by the court, where the judge or probation officer makes an adjustment without filing a legal record of the offence. The tendency to follow this practice and thus keep children's names from court records is growing and may account to some extent for the almost steady decrease in the number of recorded court cases in the past seven years. In 1950 approximately 4,900 cases were disposed of in this way.

These statistics represent cases of delinquency reported to the courts from the most trivial infractions to the most serious, that of murder. The number of cases brought before the courts is influenced by such factors as personnel and facilities of the court, community interest in and understanding of the function of a juvenile court, and by variations in the policies of the courts in the disposition of cases. As more courts are established the additional returns may exaggerate an apparent increase in delinquency or may under-estimate a decrease. In some communities, the juvenile court is the only available agency to provide services to children; in others, there are well-established agencies serving children, of which the juvenile court is only one.

It should be noted, too, that the total figures do not represent the actual number of children charged and found guilty, but rather tend to exaggerate them, for a child referred to the court two or more times during the year for different offences is counted as a different case each time. Neither do they represent the number of offences committed by offenders, as when a child is charged with more than one delinquency at a hearing the most serious offence only is counted.

Reports of juvenile delinquents were received in 1949 from 131 of the 149 judicial districts; the remaining 18 districts reported no offenders. In 1950, reports were submitted by 147 districts. Twenty-nine of these had no cases to report. Separate reports were received in 1950 from 129 incorporated urban centres of 4,000 population or more.

**Juveniles before the Courts.**—The number of cases of juveniles brought before the courts declined steadily each year from 1943 to 1949. In 1950, according to the reports received by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, this trend was broken when the cases of 7,304 children were heard for behaviour that was contrary to the law. However, this number, though 266 higher than that for 1949, was the second lowest in the past 25 years.

The rise of 3.8 p.c. in court appearances was accounted for by the Provinces of New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario. Among the other provinces, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan showed the most marked decreases. The effect of the Saskatchewan Correction Act, 1950, may have a bearing on the sharp drop of cases in that Province.