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NEW BREED OF CRIMINALS EMERGING

Parents' Uncaring Attitude Criticised

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Hong Kong is breeding a different type of criminal which must and will be catered for, the Commissioner of Prisons, Mr. T.G. Garner, said today.

In a speech to the Rotary Club of Kowloon, he also criticised selfish and irresponsible parents of many young offenders.

He said young criminals in Hong Kong today ganged together and acted in a manner "which surpasses all norms even in the known criminal field."

As a result, when sent to prison these young offenders were to some extent ostracised by older prisoners because of their way of life.

He described the so-called young thugs as "basically weaklings," and said they got their strength through joining gangs and quasi-triad societies.

Since 1965 the number of offenders under the age of 21 had grown from 5.21 per cent to 26.41 per cent. Of today's 6,282 prisoners, 1,659 were under 21.

Mr. Garner said parents of young offenders often seemed unconcerned that their sons or daughters might have committed a violent crime.

"Too often they are not so much interested in what their child has done but only that he or she has been taken out of circulation and placed in confinement which has resulted in the loss of a source of income to the family," he said.

/"The attitude .....

"The attitude adopted is often one of 'never mind how the money was obtained, only that it should continue! It reflects a lack of parental responsibility not only to the children but also to society."

Mr. Garner agreed that crimes of violence called for "stiff sentences" and in some cases "the full penalty under the law." But the aim within prisons must be rehabilitation, for only by working towards this could the Prison Service do its job effectively, he said.

By putting prisoners to productive work and giving them some form of training plus supporting facilities, there was some hope that some would become useful citizens on their release. He warned, however, "they do not become angels overnight when they enter prison."

Mr. Garner said the "short, sharp shock" detention centre system set up 15 months ago had been a success.

"The programme is designed to induce in young offenders a sense of responsibility as citizens, a sense of pride in themselves, an awareness of their neglected abilities and to teach them how to live with people and respect the rights of others," he said.

Steady progress, he went on, was being made within the penal system of Hong Kong to effect change within prisons so that in addition to their custodial role, emphasis was also placed on reformation.

He emphasised, however, that prison reform did not mean "making it soft for prisoners."

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Note to Editors: Copies of the full text of Mr. Garner's speech are boxed for collection.

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INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY IN REHABILITATION OF OFFENDERS

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In an attempt to evoke community involvement in the treatment and rehabilitation of offenders and in the prevention of crime in Hong Kong, the Probation and Corrections Division of the Social Welfare Department is operating a small pilot project to establish the feasibility of open recruitment of volunteers.

According to Mr. Wallace Lee, Principal Probation Officer, volunteer service has become an integral part of the probation service in developed countries and has met with a reasonably good measure of success.

"The idea of our pilot project is to assess if there are any difficulties we may come across if the scheme is introduced in Hong Kong," he said.

At present, there are five probation officers who are each supervising a volunteer for the probationers in the project.

Two of the volunteers are girls, one a student and the other a clerk. The others are a student, an accountant and a government servant.

"The volunteers come from different backgrounds and are sympathetic to probationers. The work they are doing with the probationers includes private tutoring, teaching them hobbies and introducing them to different social activities.

"This informal approach has so far proved to be useful in winning over the offenders to lead a better normal life. For the volunteers themselves it is an opportunity to gain a better understanding about delinquency," said Mr. Lee.

/"It is .....

"It is only through community involvement of this kind that the public can meet the offenders and see for themselves what makes a delinquent. The public would soon realise through the volunteers where the responsibility lies in the prevention of crime and delinquency."

Volunteers for this type of project, he added, must be carefully chosen. Besides having good characters they should be mature and have a good knowledge of the local community as well as wide personal contacts. Above all, they must have a desire to help their fellow men.

Mr. Lee said the volunteers were briefed about the work of the probation service before they were introduced to the probationers.

"While volunteers may be personally interested and enthusiastic about befriending and helping a probationer, it must not be taken to mean that they are taking over the work and responsibility of the probation officer who retains the ultimate and full responsibility for the supervision of those under his charge. The volunteers assist the probationers by doing something which requires no professional skills," Mr. Lee said.

An evaluation of the pilot project will be undertaken at a later stage when the service will be examined in the light of its practicability in the local situation rather than being adopted blindly following the pattern of other countries.

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JOINT CONSULTATION CAN AVERT LABOUR DISPUTES

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The "ostrich-like" approach to industrial relations by most Hong Kong employers had taught workers that striking paid handsome dividends, the Commissioner of Labour, Mr. I.R. Price, said today.

Employers, he added, could do well by completely overhauling their industrial relations or personnel policies.

Speaking at today's luncheon of Island South Rotary Club, Mr. Price said that too many avoidable strikes and disputes occurred in Hong Kong because management had failed to establish a method of regular two-way communication between itself and its employees.

"Also, all too often management has chosen to disregard early signs of discontent - no doubt in the mistaken hope that the trouble will solve itself," he said.

"In these circumstances, management often declines to negotiate or enter into discussions until a strike, sit-in, or go-slow has occurred.

"Ultimately, refusal to meet workers to discuss grievances until after a strike has taken place nearly always puts management in the invidious position of having to sit down and talk under duress - either because the strike is still in progress or because there is a strong possibility that the strike or go-slow will be re-started at any moment."

Mr. Price added: "I also suggest that before trouble arises, employers should consult their respective associations, which should be able to offer proper advice in any industrial dispute, actual or impending - though whether employers' associations in Hong Kong have experienced and trained staff to give such advice is another matter."

/Urging the .....

Urging the more wide-spread introduction of joint consultation procedures in Hong Kong industry, Mr. Price said that all too often management was apt to shy away from joint consultation as a "new concept." But, he stressed, it was a tried and proven method of communication, accepted throughout the world by industrial relations experts as an essential element of good personnel management in any business which employed more than a handful of people.

He said management would get out of joint consultation only what it put into it. A committee set up merely for appearances, and chaired by a management representative who had neither tact, patience nor understanding, would soon die a natural death.

More Goodwill

"Management must really believe in joint consultation, and believe that by talking to its employees it is likely to attain far more goodwill than by ignoring them until real trouble evolves," he said.

"Management must also believe that it is to its advantage to provide workers with advance information of changes and new methods of operation. It must encourage, and be prepared to listen to, comments and suggestions put forward by employees' representatives," he said.

"Management should also understand that - particularly in the context of Hong Kong, where there are few strong trade unions - it is in the very unusual position of being able to teach employees' representatives how to put forward their case. And, if it so chooses, management can inspire in the workers' representatives' confidence in their own ability to contribute to the operation of the undertaking.

/"Management .....

"Management must learn to try and understand the workers' point of view. The opposite is equally true - workers have to learn to understand management's point of view.

"But none of this understanding is likely to come about if management does not take positive and continuing steps in the field of joint consultation."

Mr. Price stressed that joint consultation machinery was not the same as negotiating machinery. "I suspect that because employees - and some managements - often do not understand the difference between these two terms, they consider that joint consultation is not really giving them anything," he said.

Wage Rates

"It should be clearly established that joint consultative committees are not a forum in which workers can negotiate wage rates. However, in practice, particularly in the context of Hong Kong, it may be impossible to divorce entirely some discussion of wage rates from other subjects."

Mr. Price added there was little point in trying to set up joint consultative machinery if industrial unrest was brewing. The best time to do so, he said, was when all was quiet.

He urged employers to read the Labour Relations Service's booklet on joint consultation, and to contact the Service for advice in setting up consultative machinery tailor-made to an individual firm's needs.

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Note to Editors: Copies of Mr. Price's speech are boxed for collection.

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IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT UNDERLINED

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The correct use of personal protective equipment could go a long way towards protecting workers against some of the dangers of work in industry, the Deputy Commissioner of Labour, Mr. J.N. Henderson, said today.

Mr. Henderson was officially opening a two-day Industrial Safety Seminar sponsored by John D. Hutchison and Co. Ltd. - the Hong Kong agent for Protector International Pty Ltd., manufacturers of industrial safety equipment.

The seminar - held at the Industrial Safety Training Centre of the Labour Department - is being attended by some 50 executives from the building industry, the shipbuilding and repairing industry and other utility companies.

Mr. Henderson said that, for example, 14 people were killed and 6,481 injured last year as a result of tripping over objects or being struck by falling objects.

"The wearing of safety helmets and safety shoes might have prevented many of these accidents," he said.

Mr. Henderson said the government was deeply concerned about the human suffering caused by industrial accidents. "Please do remember that we are talking about people, not statistics."

He said the use of protective equipment did not always appeal to workers in Hong Kong - and indeed elsewhere - for reasons of comfort. It was therefore up to the management to persuade and convince them to do so.

/In fact, ...

In fact, the use of protective equipment was mandatory in some cases - such as the use of breathing apparatus in confined spaces.

Protective equipment for workers was only part of the department's drive to improve industrial safety. Legislation was another means to tackle the problem.

To this end the Labour Department had already enacted a considerable amount of safety legislation, and was in the process of drafting new regulations on a wide range of subjects such as the safe use of cartridge-operated tools and lifting appliances.

However, said Mr. Henderson, without co-operation from employers and workers, legislation alone could not do the job.

"There must be a will among employers to introduce the necessary changes, and, on the part of the employee, to make the best use of such improvements."

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WATER CUT

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Water supply to a number of premises in Kowloon City will be interrupted for five hours starting at 1 a.m. on Saturday (September 22) to facilitate a test for leakage in the area.

The area affected is bounded by Argyle Street, Princess Margaret Road, Pui Ching Road, and Soares Avenue including Waterloo Hill.

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RICE IMPORT QUOTA

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The rice import quota for the fourth quarter this year (Oct-Dec) has been provisionally fixed at 81,000 metric tons -- 10 per cent below the basic quota of 90,000 metric tons, the Commerce and Industry Department announced today.

"The reduced quota takes into account the improving stock position and anticipated arrival of new crop supplies towards the close of the quarter," said Mr. M.D. Sargent, Assistant Director of the department.

He added that the department would continue to keep developments in the trade under close study and would issue a supplementary quota during the quarter should circumstances warrant.

Rice stocks at present, he said, amounted to just over 70,000 metric tons. In the first eight months of this year, Hong Kong imported a total of 198,000 metric tons of rice. Of this amount, China supplied 48 per cent and Thailand about 38 per cent. The remainder was imported from the U.S.A., Australia and Pakistan.

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SIX-POINT INCREASE IN AUGUST G.C.P.I

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The General Consumer Price Index for August was 176 -- a rise of six points over that for the previous month.

The increase was mainly due to a rise of 13 points in the index for foodstuffs. Increases of one point each were also recorded in the indexes for durable goods, miscellaneous goods, and transport and vehicles.

Movements in the indexes for other sections of commodity and service were insignificant.

Compared with the previous month, the average retail prices of bread and cakes, pork, beef, poultry, and fresh vegetables have all gone up. Many restaurants also put up their menu prices.

A spokesman for the Census and Statistics Department said the sharp increase in the retail prices of fresh vegetables was mainly caused by the rainy weather in August, which reduced the production of fresh vegetables and hastened the deterioration of cut vegetables.

On the other hand, the average retail price of salt and fresh water fish dropped because of adequate supplies.

He said the index for durable goods went up mainly because of higher prices for furniture, hardware and cutlery, and travel and sports goods. The index for miscellaneous goods also rose, mainly due to increased prices for stationery, soft furnishings and jewellery.

The index for transport and vehicles also advanced, following increased purchase prices and maintenance costs for motor vehicles.

The Modified Consumer Price Index for the month stood at 184, seven points higher than that for the previous month.

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WETTEST AUGUST IN FIFTY YEARS

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Last month's total rainfall was the highest recorded for any August in the past 50 years, according to the Royal Observatory.

A total of 826.4 mm of rain was recorded during the month -- more than twice the normal amount. This was the second highest on record for August, the highest being 871.4 mm in 1923.

The total rainfall from January 1 to the end of August was 2610.4 mm while the total from May 1 to the end of August was 2413.3 mm -- both were the highest ever recorded.

During the month, five tropical cyclones formed over the western North Pacific and South China Sea, and it was necessary to hoist tropical cyclone warning signals on three occasions. No gales or abnormally high tides were recorded.

A total of eight thunderstorms and heavy rain warnings were issued and 19 aircraft were diverted due to adverse weather conditions.

A maximum temperature of 32.9 degrees Celsius was recorded on August 3, and a minimum temperature of 23.6 degrees Celsius on August 10.

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Note to Editors: A full report by the Royal Observatory on the weather of August 1973 is boxed for collection.

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COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIPS 1974

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Hong Kong students of high intellectual promise are eligible to apply for a limited number of 1974 scholarships being offered by the governments of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Nigeria.

These awards are being made under the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan.

"They are intended for persons who may be expected to make a significant contribution to life in their own countries on their return from study abroad," a spokesman for the Education Department said today.

"The scholarships are primarily available for postgraduate study or research at universities normally extending over a period of two academic years."

Applicants should be Commonwealth citizens normally resident in Hong Kong. They should also be graduates of recognised universities or holders of equivalent qualifications.

Candidates should preferably be less than 28 years of age and in any case not more than 35 at the commencement of the scholarship.

Application forms are available from the Overseas Students and Scholarships Section, Education Department Branch Office, Bonaventure House, 2nd floor, 91, Leighton Road, Hong Kong.

All completed forms should be returned to the Section by October 20, 1973.

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Release time: 7.30 p.m.