

THE ISSUE OF
S.T.R.E.S.S.

THE
 INDEPENDENT
 VOICE

BULLETIN

OF
 THE POOR

SPECIAL ISSUE

REGISTERED UNDER ASSUMED NAMES IN 1953.

**STOP
 ILLEGAL POLICE
 TACTICS**

EDITORIAL

One noted writer on the subject of crime, who is in disagreement with the current concepts, has placed his argument this way, and I concur: "One of these current concepts that most people believe, is that poverty breeds crime. This can be substantiated by statistics. However, this is not the end of the story. In the first place, laws are always in some sense the codification of the customs of the dominant group, and laws define crimes. Dominance, here refers to a measure of power, not a measure of numbers. The poor are in the majority in practically every country in the world, including, probably, even the United States, but they are in power nowhere and seldom have been. So they are put in the position of living according to an external set of rules as far as the law is concerned. One should not be surprised if they break them often.

Secondly, laws being made by the dominant group, they provide the maximum protection for the same group. Legal technicalities and customary arrangements provide for the same group. Legal technicalities and customary arrangements provide that members of the dominant group will run afoul of the law as infrequently as

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THE VOICE OF THE POOR

possible. We are all aware, for instance, of the intimate connection between justice and financial resources. We are aware, too, that there exists in every city quite different procedures for handling, for instance, the cases of two groups of boys of the same ages caught redhanded at the commission of the same crime, such as stealing automobile tires. In one case the young men are booked and jailed, even if legal procedures are not violated, and thus initiate a criminal record. In the other case the parents are most likely to be called in for consultation. Already there is a wide difference, and this difference goes deeper than the handy distinction that one group was only out on a frolic and that the other was deadly serious. It goes deep into cultural differences and how they are to be managed by the dominant group. Even the statistics of crime are largely culturally derived and cannot be admitted as evidence of any supposed connection between crime and poverty.

A subsidiary notion is that poverty breeds more crimes of violence. From the statistics, one might agree, but in reality, who knows? Passing up the question of whether it is more violent to occasionally beat a wife with the fists or to browbeat her into alcoholism with insults or whether it is more violent to kill a man with a rifle than it is to drive him to suicide with a checkbook.

THE EDITORS