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# THE JUVENILE AND THE TRAMP

NELS ANDERSON<sup>1</sup>

(Reprints of this article can be obtained from the Association, at 816 S. Halsted Street, Chicago.)

## THE PROBLEM

The United States has a peculiar tramp problem; a problem that has been largely the product of a peculiar set of historical circumstances and a peculiar industrial situation. For many reasons it is different from the tramp problem in any foreign country.

The American tramp class is practically a one-sex group. Few women ever enter it. Again, it is a young man's group. It is more mobile than any tramp class abroad. The American tramp is a traveling man, many of them migrating thousands of miles each year. While we have the inefficient and handicapped types which predominate in foreign tramp groups, we also have a large per cent of workers. The greater proportion of the American tramp class are hoboes or migrating and seasonal workers; perhaps the non-workers of the class do not exceed thirty per cent.

When we look for the explanation for the existence of an army of perhaps two million homeless, wandering men we are forced to the conclusion that the most significant reasons are to be found with the men themselves. Inadequate personalities, defective mentalities or physical defects are exceedingly frequent among these men. To what extent these deficiencies exist cannot be said from the meager data at hand. But aside from the many who are the victims of habits and weaknesses or handicaps there are many who are in the tramp class for reasons largely external to themselves. These might be designated impelling forces as unemployment or crises in the person's life, and attracting forces such as the following:

1. Pioneering attractions. This country has always had a frontier which has attracted many foot-loose men, especially young men. Many of these have been unable to fit into the pioneering life and they continue to wander.

2. Work attractions. Except when we have industrial depressions, there are in many industries yearly fluctuations in the demands for labor. At certain seasons the demand for workers in certain com-

<sup>1</sup>Of the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago.

munities is greater than the local supply can satisfy. This always calls for the importation of workers for a brief period, after which they must seek employment elsewhere.

3. Climatic attractions. The temptation to migrate to a warmer climate in winter has always been attractive to transient men.

4. Transportation attractions. The railroad has done much to bring the migratory worker into existence. He has played an important role in their construction and he has used them freely as a means of travel. It is difficult to think of the American tramp apart from the railroads.

Given these various inducements to travel, on the one hand, and the opportunity to travel, on the other, it seems only natural to expect men who are restless and foot-loose to take advantage of them. There is, we must admit, a real work reason for the existence of a certain migratory population, but little has ever been done to ascertain the approximate number needed in any community. The result of the lack of organization in this regard has been that there have been from two to three times the necessary number of migrants on the road. With many, work reasons serve as an excuse, and they drift aimlessly about doing a little work here and a little there as it comes convenient.

Regarded even as a working group, the tramp class is an exceedingly unwieldy and undisciplined body. The members of the group are always living anonymous lives, and generally they are shifting and moving to avoid responsibility. They are a group of men with no home attachments and few interests that would identify them with any community. They are not burdened with the moral problems of any group nor are they even put in a position where their own conduct gives them much concern.

Life, to the average tramp, is a problem of "getting by." He is out to get all the joy he can with the least effort, and he seldom puts himself into any position where he will be saddled with another man's load. Seldom does he linger long enough in any community to carry his own load. Being a tramp he is always in the position of an outcast and, feeling this, his hand is usually against anything that is established and regular in organized society. His becomes a negative attitude which, undesirable as it may be, is but natural.

On the other hand, whether the tramp is anti-social or not, he frequently drifts into conditions that react negatively toward him. In his work he is often taken advantage of. He is generally misunderstood even when he has good intentions. He is often abused and even beaten by the police. If he tries to rise out of the life he finds it

difficult, for there is little help offered him by the upper strata. Under these circumstances the easiest thing to do, and the thing he does, is to drift along the path of least resistance, remaining in the class until he finally falls beside the way.

This is a life in which one comes into most intimate contact with vice and immorality. The tramp class spends its leisure in the cities, and usually in such sections of the city where the most undesirable conditions and influences exist. No other group comes closer to the bootlegger or the "dope" peddler; indeed, they are his fellow outcasts and for them the tramp develops a frank tolerance. Not only does he become tolerant, but he not infrequently indulges with them.

This is the life that tempts the boy.

#### THE ATTRACTIONS OF TRAMP LIFE

In spite of the hardships that tramps endure, and in spite of the bitter end at which most of them arrive, the life has its attractions. The boy who lives in a dream world where he is constantly building aircastles, only to see them toppled by the stern realities of the daily routine, is strangely attracted by the tramp's life. He sees in the life on the road a charm and fascination that no other offers. To him the tramp is a very interesting individual with a fund of information about life, and a man who goes where and when he pleases with no one to boss him and none to watch him. It is a life in which there are no daily tasks and no chores; it is a promise of escape from everything distasteful. He can only learn the bitterness and hopelessness of the life after he has spent years on the road.

Tramp life to the boy is a promise of all that he wishes. It promises him change of scenery and variety of experience. In it he can see prospects of wealth and fame and, best of all, it is an invitation to be off to gain a background of adventure. It is the ideal existence, and the tramp is the only person whom he regards as having the ideal philosophy. He sees him as does the poet:

We are the true nobility;  
 Sons of rest and the outdoor air;  
 Knights of the tide and rail are we,  
 Lightly meandering everywhere.  
 Having no gold we buy no care,  
 As over the crust of the world we go,  
 Stepping in tune to this ditty rare;  
 Take up your bundle and beat it, Bo!

—H. H. Knibbs.

Who hasn't felt that urge to cast off all responsibility and strike out for parts unknown? No grownup can feel it more than the average red-blooded boy who has access to the railroad and who has confidence in his ability to do what other boys do. It is some unusual expression he yearns for; to prove himself in some unusual way. He may want to go to sea, to fight Indians, to dig gold or be a cowboy or movie actor. He may only have visions of seeking work in the city. Whatever his ulterior motives may be, somewhere in his plans is the resolve to play to some degree the role of a tramp.

TYPES OF BOY TRAMPS

Perhaps one-fourth of the tramp class in the United States are boys under twenty-one. This would be considerable when we remember that various estimates place our tramp population at about two million. Anderson found fifty-one boys, nineteen and under, among the four hundred tramps he interviewed.<sup>2</sup> Other observers have estimated the number of boys in the tramp body as nearer one-third. Boys are not numerous in the areas most frequented by the tramp population in the cities. In Chicago's Hobohemia one finds more old men than boy tramps. When conditions are favorable the boy becomes tired of life on the "stem" and moves on.

The boy tramp must be met on the road where there is movement and change. If he is a normal boy and does not become frightened by the dangers and uncertainties he is almost sure to develop into a daring and clever tramp—the type of tramp who will travel more miles in a day than the average man. He will take more chances; he will go longer without food. When he begs he goes about it with more energy and tact than the adult "moocher" or "panhandler." He is out to learn the game and nothing escapes his observation. This is the behavior to be expected from the normal, intelligent boy who finds his way into the tramp class. There are many exceptions.

<sup>2</sup>These 400 tramps were interviewed while in transit between Chicago and the west coast during the summer of 1921. There were 143 under 25 years; about 60% were under 35 years, and but 70 were over 45. These men left home at the following ages. Given number and age at which they left home:

- |                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Four left home before 12 years. | Thirty-four left at 20 years.     |
| Four left home at 13 years.     | Eighty-nine left before 25 years. |
| Seven left home at 14 years.    | Eighty-one left before 30 years.  |
| Four left home at 15 years.     | Thirty-six left before 35 years.  |
| Twelve left home at 16 years.   | Fourteen left before 40 years.    |
| Sixteen left at 17 years.       | Ten left before 45 years.         |
| Twenty-three left at 18 years.  | Eight left before 50 years.       |
| Thirty-seven left at 19 years.  | Later than 50 and not known, 21.  |

There are many boys on the road who are not seeking variety. Many of them are away from home because of crises or misfortune. Some have had home trouble, while others may have become offenders and are avoiding the law. Many are mentally or physically handicapped, while others have personalities that will not permit them to fit into any group. They have gone away because they were not wanted or to start anew elsewhere. These mentally defective boys and otherwise psychopathic boys who find their way into the tramp class do not often become successful tramps.

The following cases illustrate some of the many types of boy tramps.

#### WANDERLUST TYPE

At the age of fourteen M. S. got tired of things at home. One day he became disgruntled because his father would not permit him to go to a fireman's carnival in a near-by town. He had been to the town many times to play ball. He had ridden there on the freight trains. He sulked when his father told him to mow the lawn. This caused his father to tell him that if he didn't like it at home that the world was big. He had been humbled before by this retort, but never again. It was a challenge.

He and a chum got their things together and left. They went to the carnival, stayed a few hours and lost interest. They had made up their minds to go west and they caught a freight to Omaha; worked in Omaha a few days; saw a man from their home town, got frightened and went to Denver; from Denver to Ogden, back to Denver and then to Pueblo, where the chum had some relatives.

In the fall they returned home and went to school; had much to talk of during the winter. Left again in the spring. The following are some of the things they did during the two summers they were away. Went to Ogden to visit the gambling halls where they heard that the gold was stacked on the tables. Went to Cripple Creek, got job in gold mine expecting to see gold and get some; became frightened of mine and quit. Went to Rocky Ford, Colo., to pick melons because they wanted to see fields of melons and to eat their fill. Walked from Colorado Springs to the foot of Pikes Peak to see the soda springs; stayed all day, drank themselves sick. Made a trip to Wyoming to pick potatoes.

They worked only when forced to it or to get variety. Begged without fear. Begged for each other. Rode only fast trains.

#### EGOCENTRIC TYPE

Case 21. Age 19. Active, intelligent, robust. Left home two years ago (about 1920). Since that time he has traveled a great deal. His home is in Wisconsin and his folks are farmers. He became restless and his parents permitted him to go away to work, thinking he would be glad to return after a while. He returned after six months or so, but he could

not get along with them. He had learned to smoke, which they objected to, and he had learned to take an interest in girls. He would take no advice from his parents. "They were always trying to make me think I was a damn fool, but I know what I'm doing." He has ceased to write home because they still endeavor to advise him.

He likes to tell of his affairs with girls. This is how most of his affairs ended. "A red-headed girl got stuck on me, and not caring for her I let her go. The other girl got jealous of the red-head and I let her go, too." He does not admit having ever been jilted.

When asked how he got about the country, if police bothered, etc., he said that he could ride any train he wanted to and that the police only made fun for him. He told of several affairs he had had with railroad police and in all of them the police had got the worst of it.

How he got his money was a question. It was evident that he did very little work. During the last year he has been arrested three times. Once in Los Angeles in connection with a robbery: "Proving myself innocent, I was released" is his verdict. He was also arrested in Chicago for begging on the street—"the police, not liking my looks, run me in for 'stemming.' The judge did not like me so he gave me fifty dollars and costs." This he worked out in the House of Correction at fifty cents a day.

He likes to tell about his experiences gambling. He claims that he always wins. Investigator gave him fifty cents and followed him. He went into the gambling house at 732 West Madison Street.

#### MENTALLY DEFECTIVE TYPE

Age 19. This boy came from farm in Minnesota. At home he was very much imposed upon. It was hard for him to make his grades. He was truant from school. His parents had so much trouble that they found it easier to permit him to remain at home than to force him to go to school. Finally they reached the conclusion that it was useless to send him to school. This suited him and he remained at work. He was even imposed upon at home, for he was given tasks that really should have been done by his brothers.

He was large for his age and during the war someone told him that he might get a job in town, so he went to Minneapolis. He got a job and things went fairly well. Of a sudden he developed considerable confidence in himself. During his first year away from home he had several jobs. He learned to like to move. He spent money like the other migrants with whom he came in contact. He learned to play fast and loose with work as they do. He learned to ride freight trains, to beg on streets; but he was not a good beggar.

He left home largely because he had been imposed upon. The neighbor boys teased him and he could find no companions. This cause enters into his moving from job to job. After he has been on the job for some time he becomes the object of much teasing. When it becomes unbearable he moves. He prefers to work alone and his favorite job is unloading

coal cars. He likes this kind of work if he can work by the ton, and then, he can work as hard as he likes.

Winter of 1921-22 he was in Chicago most of time. Dirty and ragged. He spent much time in missions. Worked some, but not enough to pay his way. When spring came he got a job and cleaned up. He does not care to go home. He says the people in his home town are "Hoosiers."

#### HOME TROUBLE

M. is the product of a broken home. He is fifteen years old and has traveled considerable both by train and automobile. He has developed into an efficient tramp and a good beggar. His parents divorced and later both remarried. His mother and her husband moved to Colorado. His father and step-mother remained in his home state, Oklahoma.

M. elected to live with his father and step-mother. For some time he got along fairly well, but soon trouble arose and he decided to go to his mother and step-father. His mother sent for him, but he was not with her long when he found that he could not get along with his step-father. He ran away and beat his way back to Oklahoma. This trip gave him a measure of himself. He learned what he could do. When he arrived at his father's home he found that he was still not in the good graces of his step-mother, so he "hit a freight" for Kansas City. He kept it up for two or three months until he finally drifted into Chicago, where he was picked up by the police and sent to his father. While traveling he was begging his food and having a good time.

#### WORK

N., aged 16, lived in a little farming community in Michigan where he could find little to do aside from farm work, which he did not like. He had visions of being a mechanic. He tried to get a job near home in a garage, where he hoped to learn something about automobiles, but there was no chance. He tried to take a course by correspondence, but that was not satisfactory. Finally he got restless and ran away to get the kind of work he wanted.

He came to Chicago, but he was too young and too small and no one cared to hire him, so he left town and beat his way to Kansas City where he got a job. But he could not get a job that suited him so he began wandering again. He discovered that he could get over the country very well and that he could live very well from odd jobs here and there. But he couldn't save any money for his purposes.

When last seen he was in Chicago. He didn't want to go home because he felt that it would look like he had given up. He left to get work and to save money to learn auto mechanics, though he was getting lukewarm on his resolution to be a mechanic.

Concerning the homes the boy tramps come from we can say little. Many do come from broken homes or homes in which there is a bad influence. Boys often leave good homes for the road. Home trouble,



being misunderstood or in some way antagonized are not uncommon factors in making boy tramps. Most of the normal boys in the tramp body come from good homes or at least average homes. It is not uncommon to find them keeping in touch with their folks. They may not remain in one place long enough to get mail, but at least they write home occasionally.

#### THE ADAPTABILITY OF THE BOY TRAMP

The boy on the road is an apt student of tramp lore. Every situation common to the life he learns to meet in a regular fashion. He learns to outwit the police, and, like all veterans, he likes to tell of his escapades. If he can ride one passenger train from five hundred to a thousand miles in spite of the opposition he has something to talk about. He makes a studied effort to absorb everything that he should know; the slang, the habits and all the tricks of the road; anything that will give him the air of an old-timer. The following was written by a fifteen-year boy tramp who had been held in the Chicago Detention Home for a few days. No corrections have been made.

#### TWO MONTHS' ADVENTURES OF A ROAD KID

"My folks sent me to P. C. on a visit. I hit P. about eight-thirty in the morning. About fifteen minutes later I hit the blind of a fast passenger bound north.

"I held it until I got into the yard limit of Arkansas City, Kansas. I jumped off it there, walked over to the elevator about a block away and caught a ride uptown on a truck, when I hit the main drag I thought I'd better throw my feet (that is, bum a meal. I mooched me set-downs in many restaurants and then hit up some fellows for a light piece (a quarter). As it happened I hit a bull (off duty). He grabbed me and started around the corner to take me to the can, but I wasn't of any mind to be pinched and pay for my board making little ones out of big ones for the county roads.

"We stepped down from the sidewalk to the pavement and I stuck my foot in front of the flatfoot. He fell and I ran. I beat it about four blocks down the alley before I hit the main drag again. I tried to rustle for a light piece and I had such good luck that in about an hour I had two dollars and fifteen cents, so I caught a ride in a car to the next town, for the railroad dicks and the special officers in Arkansas City were hostile."

It is not difficult to see that here is one boy who is at least familiar with the slang of the road. Some of it, of course, was used for display, but it came without effort. He was one of the many boys who could get over the country as well by automobile as by train.

Recently, and especially in summer, the automobile has become a popular means of transportation for transient boys. The following is typical of certain types of boy automobile tramps.<sup>3</sup>

David S. in office on Sept., 1921. States he never applied to a social agency before, but that he is compelled to do so today because of the inclement weather, which makes it impossible for him to pick a ride westward out of Chicago. He came here from New York City. With the exception of a short stretch of rail riding on the Pennsylvania out of New York, he claims to have made the whole trip by automobile. This is not his first adventure. He estimates that in his career as a wanderer he has used up at least \$500 worth of tires and an equal amount of gasoline for neither of which he has paid. He has made a mental note of the fact that besides having gotten over a thousand lifts from sympathetic automobilists, he has also received from about half of them a meal in the next town in which they landed.

David states that he never knew how many good natured people there were in the world until he took to the road and found that he never had to walk more than a half a mile a day between various lifts to get to his destination. He recalls only on one occasion when he was picked up by highway police, whom he approached for a ride.

David claims that he did not have to tell any imaginary tales to get a lift or a meal at the end of his lift. When he gets to a large city he usually walks around the main highway towards the city limits and there he gets his pick-up. He carries no baggage and has with him only the clothes that he wears. When he came here from New York he stated that upon leaving he had \$2.00 in his pocket.

David is representative of a great many boys who get over the country in this manner. Perhaps this practice is indulged in more frequently on the West Coast and in the East than in the Middle West where the towns are so far apart. It is a kind of travel at which a lone boy will succeed better than a man. Autoists fear to give a lift to an adult and they will generally pass if two men are in company.

The sea has always been an attraction for the boy. There have always been opportunities to work on ships for boys who cared to go to sea. Even the lake traffic has a tendency to attract boys of tender years, as shown by the case of R. B.<sup>4</sup>

Rub. B. came to the attention of the Boys Dept. of the J. S. S. B. July, 1920. Father complained that R. hangs around State and Harrison Streets with gang, often coming home after midnight. The boy was then fifteen years of age. He left home in Feb., 1920, and had begun to work in the post office, giving his age as 18. The boy was sent to various prospective employers for work, but invariably failed to report.

<sup>3</sup>Submitted by Mr. Wirth, Homeless Man Department, Chicago Jewish Charities.

<sup>4</sup>Also submitted by Mr. Wirth.

One day, late in July, R's father appeared in our office with a card from the boy reading, "Am working as a gunmate X on this ship and getting \$87.50 a month." The card bore the name of "S.S. Jimmie of Brein" of Milwaukee. In a card received a few days later he stated that he had been promoted to the same job (gunmate!) on the Steamship Columbus of the Goodrich Transfer Company. Upon investigating the purser's book of the "Columbus" which docked the next morning, we found that R. had worked as cabin boy for one trip. Upon leaving this job the boy informed the purser that he intended joining Barnum and Bailey's Circus in Grant Park. We lost track of the boy until September, 1920, and then we learned that he had enlisted in the United States Army at the South State Street Recruiting Office.

This boy later deserted the army and has not been heard from since.

It is important to keep in mind the roles played by the boat and the automobile as means for facilitating the wanderings of the boy tramp, but both these modes of travel taken together are not of so much consequence as the railroad. The railroad can be used throughout the year, whereas the highways and the steamship lines are in operation only part of the year.

The boy tramp seldom carries anything except what he wears unless it be a pair of overalls to protect his clothes while he rides the trains. The most that he carries is what will go into his pockets without inconveniencing him. He may carry matches to build a fire and a roll of paper to lie upon in case he gets into a dirty car. Sometimes, after the fashion of the veterans, he may carry a small bag of coffee and a little sugar which come in handy when he cooks in the jungles. Often, if he is the kind of tramp who rides the trucks and the tops of passenger trains, he may have a pair of goggles.

The boy usually travels with a partner who is sometimes an adult, but more often some other boy. As we shall see later, this is partly for protection, but it is chiefly because boys get along better. Their interests are more in common. They dare to do many things together that they would be slow to do in the company of older men. The boy who likes to ride passenger trains is more apt to travel in the company of another boy than a man, for the older tramps are content to ride the freights. Boys want fun and they can have it better when together. Sometimes they will travel several in a group.

I. A. These two boys came from Boone, Iowa. They left home together at the close of the school term (1921). They went into the northwest, visiting Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and coming back they traversed Utah, Wyoming and Colorado. They traveled a long ways to see Pueblo, Colorado, where a flood had devastated the town. They

went here and there at will, but they always went together. Even when they quarreled they remained together.

If they were riding on top of a freight train and one wanted to sleep the other would watch that he did not roll off. They used to beg food and meet some place to divide up. They would fight and wrestle a great deal. Each had a list of stories to tell about the other, about being chased by police and dogs, about getting good meals, etc. They would read each other's letters and when they wrote home they would sometimes put two letters in the same envelope. Their folks were neighbors. They said that their folks didn't care what they did so long as they got back in time for school in the fall. They were both about fifteen.

#### THE BOY'S CONTACTS WITH THE TRAMP

From their contacts with seasoned tramps we may say that most boys get their first stimulus to travel. The tramp with his tales of adventure and travel (and most of these types recommend themselves highly) is able to thrill the average boy; at times the boy stands in awe of the old-timer.

Boys need not go on the road to meet the transients. There are a hundred points of contact in the parks, the railroad yards and in the areas to which the tramp population gravitates when in the city. In Chicago the places of contact are not essentially different than in many other cities, though they are probably more numerous. The principal section of Chicago's Hobohemia is along West Madison Street, a few blocks west of the river. Here may be found the bulk of the labor exchanges which make of Chicago the greatest hobo labor market in the country. The next important area is South State Street between the loop and Roosevelt Road. A great many of these men live in the lower North Clark Street area. Jefferson Park or "Bum" Park, Union Park, Washington Square or "Bughouse" Square, Grant Park and the docks are also favorite rendezvous for the homeless men, as well as for boys.

Once a boy breaks home ties and gets out on the road he is in company with the tramp most of the time. As we have pointed out, if he is inexperienced, he seeks the company of the tramp who knows the game. A boy and a man may become partners and travel together; however, this is not frequent, for they do not seem to agree. They certainly do not agree very well after the boy has begun to get some confidence in his own ability.

Most boys found in the Hobohemian areas have had experience on the road. Many of them are not Chicago boys, but are only temporarily stopping in the city. Some of the local boys found there are

runaways; others live in the neighborhood and are only there to pass the time. Many of them, however, follow some of the street trades such as peddling papers or shining shoes. Some have jobs that take them into these localities. In the South State Street area of Chicago's tramp section there are the cheap burlesque shows and movies that attract many boys.

#### THE BOY'S RELATIONS WITH THE TRAMP

Not infrequently the tramp is an easy-going, devil-may-care man of pleasing personality. Generally he has the "gift of gab" and likes to be listened to. Out in the country when he has more leisure and can sit with his fellows about the fire he is apt to have a number of the local boys in his audience. The boys make themselves generally useful by giving information about the trains or the police, in gathering wood, furnishing potatoes, water and such necessities. There is a spirit of fellowship here; a spirit that seldom enters into the relations of the tramp and the boy in town. There is less opportunity in the city where each man faces alone the problem of getting a living. Each man becomes a rank individualist. Partners may cling together a year, but separate when they come to the city.

There are intimate contacts between the tramp and the boy in town, but they are usually relationships that revolve about sex. Sex perversion is very prevalent among the tramp population. How extensive it is cannot be said. Tramps who indulge maintain that "they all do it," while many others feel satisfied that perversion is rare. At least one need not be in the class long before he learns of the existence of the practice, and any boy who has been on the road long without having been approached many times is an exception.

Officer M. F. Kelly, Police Probation Officer with the Juvenile Court, has been especially diligent in apprehending perverts in his district, which includes the South State Street section of Hobohemia. During 1921 he brought before the courts 186 adults on charges of contributing to juvenile delinquency. Out of this number there were 164 convictions and more than fifty per cent of these were cases of perversion. This is the record of one man working in one of the homeless man areas. There is, perhaps, an equal amount of homosexuality in the West Madison Street district.

In addition to the comradeship relations and the sex contacts between boys and tramps there are many cases where they associate for economic reasons. That is, a man of the road may exploit a boy

or several boys. A "road kid" who has not been away from home very long will find himself being taken advantage of in many ways. Men, on the pretense of being sick, will have boys beg food or money for them. Until they learn to stand alone they will find many persons at hand to share anything they might accumulate. One old man on West Madison Street seldom begs anyone but boys and young men. Another man got money from two boys for a week on the strength of a promise to pilot them west when the weather got warm. They were Chicago boys and planning on going to California. He knew the way. He could get them there "without a scratch." When the spring came and the boys were ready he was missing.

#### THE BOY AND THE PERVERT

Homosexuality is a subject as much talked of and joked about among the tramp population as among men in jails and prisons or the men of the sea. It was in existence centuries before there was a tramp class in this country. Whenever men have been segregated apart from the association of women, whether as soldiers, sailors, or as inmates of penal institutions, there has been sex perversion. The tramp body is such a womanless group, closed out from most ideal associations with women and without the funds to patronize the prostitute.

Given the idea that men must have sex expression in order to be healthy, and this is not more generally believed among the tramps than some other strata of society, and add to this the fact of the absence of women and we have a partial explanation of the practice.<sup>5</sup> The professional prostitutes who do cater to the small purse of the tramp are generally women who have not been able to compete in better paying circles. They are women who have seen their best days and are not even attractive to the average tramp. Thus isolated he must seek elsewhere for his sex expression, which is substantially what all womanless groups have done. He substitutes the boy for the woman.

Says one pervert, who is known among his friends as "Mother" Jones: "I never saw a boy I couldn't get next to." Jones is a man in his fifties. He makes his living by catering to the wants of homosexuals who are willing to pay for it. He plays either the female or the male role. He always dresses well and looks attractive. He spends his time in Grant Park in summer and in the hotel lobbies in winter.

<sup>5</sup>We are aware that perversion frequently exists in well-to-do and intellectual circles where there is no sex isolation.

He used to be a tramp and while on the road was initiated to the practice. He saw in it a means of livelihood and he left the tramp class.

Many perverts will corroborate "Mother's" statement, but in spite of that it seems to be an exxaggeration. Many boys may be potential perverts, but not all boys may be approached with such a proposition. Many boys fear the practice and for that reason resent any such advances. Many boys will not travel in company with men because of their fear of being suspected of having improper relations with them. Boys sometimes travel alone to avoid men, as the following cases illustrate:

James F. (taken from his narrative). He was loafing in the jungles in Aurora. Some men were cooking food and asked him to join them. He desired to but said that he had to catch a train. He missed the train and came back to the jungles. Dinner was over. One of the men asked him, "Why didn't you stay and eat? You can catch a train here as well as in the yards. Are you hungry? Here take this lunch I put up. I had all I wanted." He gave him three egg sandwiches. "They were still warm."

They loafed around the fire for a while and when the train came going towards Chicago, they all got aboard. The lad and the man who gave him the egg sandwiches got into the same car. There was plenty of straw in the car and when they got in Chicago they decided to remain there for the night.

"Sometimes during the night I woke up and he was trying to roll me over. So that's what you gave me that feed for. You — — —, I'm sorry I took it now." The man coaxed him to sleep, but he said he would not sleep any more that night. "I got a club and went over to the other end of the car and lay down."

M. Guy came to Chicago on his way to Texas where his brother lived. He had not tramped much, but was sufficiently familiar with the road to catch trains and ride in a safe place. When asked why he traveled alone he said he "tried to get another kid to go along," but no one was going to Texas. Investigator followed him about the streets and saw two men approach him. One gave him money to get something to eat and watched for him when he came out of the lunch room. Both men tried to get him to go with them, but he went his way. Both advances were made on West Madison Street.

Later when the investigator talked with the boy he admitted that the men wanted him to go to a room. He said that he got rid of one of them by promising to meet him at five o'clock. He said that he had been approached by several men during the two or three weeks that he was away from home, but he kept out of their way. He was a small, handsome lad of sixteen.

But not all boys take this opposing attitude. Many resent such approaches at first but later yield to them. A case in point is that of Doug.

(Taken from case record.) He had a fellow tramp arrested in Sacramento, Cal. "He was a wolf and tried to get fresh with me." Later it was found that he was living with two men in a room here in the city. He was serving both of them and one of them was "going 50-50" with him. That is, they would take turns playing the female role. His story was verified by the day clerk of the blank hotel to which the men with whom he had these relations had been forbidden to come. He also talked with boy.

W. B. is a man, about 21, who is now prostituting himself among the well-to-do perverts. In his teens he ran away from home and fell in with a group of tramps who virtually raped him in a box car. Since then he has become reconciled to the practice and at one time even enticed another boy to leave home. This boy became so attached to him and behaved in such a manner that W. B. was afraid that the police might suspect them so he ran away from the boy. W. B.'s rendezvous is in Grant Park in summer.

#### GETTING INTO THE GAME

Granting the pervert his contention that every boy is a potential homosexual, he still faces the problem of getting the boy into a mood and a position where it is safe to make such advances. There are many ways of doing this. If he is a talkative boy it may be done by listening to him and agreeing with him, which is indeed flattering. Many men put themselves into the position of a protector, or they may win favor by making presents. Anything serves their purpose that puts the boy under obligation to them. The boy who is away from home without money and who has not the courage to beg is easiest approached and won over.

Corrig. This man worked on a boat plying between Chicago and Michigan ports. He met a boy in Michigan who had run away from home and wanted to come to Chicago. He took an interest in the boy and promised to bring him here and help him to get a job. He took him to a hotel on South State Street where he used him for immoral purposes for three days. When he got tired of the boy he turned him over to a Frenchman for the same purposes. The boy and Corr. were arrested but the Frenchman got away.

G-SKI. He and a boy chum played a great deal in the South State Street area. They met an Italian there who took them to shows and bought candy for them. He took them behind State Street under the "L" tracks, where he had improper relations with them. This was not the first experience for either boy, but it was the charge under which they were arrested. The Italian was convicted.

In neither of the above cases were the boys forced to submit. They were persuaded after receiving favors. Their yielding was perhaps as much of their own choosing as to please the men.



It must be borne in mind that the pervert is not a popular person even among the tramps. He is not popular in the penal institutions where so much perversion exists. Perverts speak disparagingly of the "wolves" and "jockers" who indulge in these practices, and the boy who is known as a "punk" or a "lamb" or "fairy" has no better status among even the perverts than has a prostitute. This indignation and opposition is more apparent than real. It is the individual's defense. It is probably safe to put this interpretation to most of the claims of perverts who say that their initiation into the practice was a forced one.

One man claims that he was sleeping with a number of tramps in a jungle camp and that he was forced to submit to the group. He is a "wolf" now and whenever he is in town with money to spend he stands on the street corner watching for approachable lads. Before he became a "wolf" and while he was yet a boy tramping about the country he used to put himself in the way of men if he thought it would get him a meal and a bed. It was his way of getting along. Another case in point:

The investigator spent several days getting acquainted with "Shorty," who is a pervert living on West Madison Street. He claims that he has lived on that street for thirty-nine years. He did leave the street long enough to marry and live with his wife for several years, but for eight years he and his wife have been separated. He is often found in company with some boy. Sometimes he has two or three boys with him. Generally they are boys who have just drifted into town and are loafing about Madison Street. He claims that he has never forced a boy nor has he been brutal to one. He usually wins their esteem by doing favors. He claims there are plenty of boys and it doesn't pay to take a chance. He succeeds best with a boy who is without money and who has not the courage to beg. He is an excellent beggar and he will work hard at odd jobs for a few days until his interest or the interest of the boy wears out.

He tells of being arrested on this account twice, though he has been arrested many times for drunkenness. He was caught with a boy in Sherman Park. They were locked in the same cell and he had relations with him there. Again he was in an alley while submitting to another man. Both were drunk. Each time he was released. He has had many fights over boys.

There are many cases on record of boys having been forced. There would probably be many more, but this is such a delicate subject that boys do not care to appear before a court. The contention is that fewer boys are initiated to the practice by force than is commonly supposed. It cannot be said that a boy was altogether a victim of force if he reconciles himself to the practice and indulges in other clandestine

intimacies with men. The truth seems to be that the boy is brought to a position where he yields partly through persuasion, partly to his own desires and partly through fear.

One boy who was arrested in company with a man known as "Blackey" X charged that he went with "Blackey" to the dumps behind the Field Museum and that his hands were tied and he was threatened with a razor. The same man had been accused of having forced other boys after getting them in such a place where they could not and dared not call for help. He was sentenced.

Robert P., a colored man who came to Chicago in 1921 with a circus that stopped at Grant Park. He remained in the city and was arrested in March, 1922. He had a group of thirty-six boys that he was using and exploiting. He was running a sort of house of prostitution. Some of these boys were brought into the game by force and with the aid of other boys, but later became reconciled to the practice. R. P. was sentenced to Joliet for twenty years.

#### ATTACHMENTS BETWEEN PERVERTS

One of the defenses that is sometimes advanced for perversion is that it does not entangle one in the complications that usually result from intimacies between men and women. Men, they claim, can indulge and pass on without feeling that they have any claim upon each other. Much of the homosexuality between tramps is of this nature. Neither man knows or cares anything about the other.

But there are attachments between men and between men and boys "that surpass the love of woman." Many of these are not more than a few days' duration, but while they last they are very intense and sentimental. Men thus interested will bestow upon a boy every attention that they would give a woman. In speaking to him they will use various endearing terms, they consider his comfort, they want to see him looking attractive and clean. Sometimes they will give to their "fairies" girls' names as "Mabel," "Dollie," "Susan," etc. They may be referred to as "Sweetie," "my sweetie," "my wife," "the old lady," and they may even attach the prefix "Miss" to their names. "Auntie" and "Mother" are not uncommon designations for older men who serve in this manner.

The tramp does not always have the money to spend on a boy, but while he is in his confidence he spares no pains to serve and please him. He will deny himself things for the sake of the boy. "Shorty," who was referred to above, inconvenienced himself to get clothes for a boy. He spoke of one boy as being a "wise little devil" because the boy had left him after receiving several favors at his hands. Another

man who was arrested as a pervert was picked up while he was in the act of buying a pair of knickers for the boy. He thought knickers would become the boy, though he had very little money.

There are a great many boys who make it a business to exploit these passing attachments. They get all they can from a man and move on. Once they have become tolerant toward the practice they have little trouble in reaching a decision to indulge promiscuously for profit. Although the following case was not met in Chicago, it illustrates the attitude of the boy who is in the game for profit.

Case was met in jungles of Ogden, Utah, summer 1921. Several men loafing in jungles, playing cards, etc. One of the group was a boy in his teens who was rather talkative, indeed, around him most of the conversation revolved for he was witty and the older men gave him more than his share of attention. Some leading remark that one of the men made brought the joking response from the boy that he would "do business" with anyone in the crowd for fifty cents. One of the men told him in an equally joking manner that he would see him later. He did see him later. Boy was met next day and joked about his method of "getting by." He gave his philosophy of life which was unique and interesting.

He was fourteen years old and had been on the road four months. He had run away from an eastern reformatory. He was strong, active and mentally alert. He had a pleasant disposition but seemed opposed to convention and restraint. In brief this was his philosophy: It was an easy way to get by. He didn't hurt anyone. He minded his own business and paid his way. He didn't steal or beg. It wasn't any worse than many other things people did. No, he didn't work; he didn't have to. He never traveled with a man.

The investigator tried on two occasions to step between men and boys. Once in Grant Park he tried to engage a boy in conversation. The boy was in the company of a man who constantly hovered over him. He reminded the boy when a drunken man tried to entice him away that he would stand for "no kid monkeying around like that" while he was paying his way. The drunk lay on the grass beside the boy and kissed his hand. The man resented the advances of the drunk, but he had no patience with the investigator when he offered to take the lad to dinner. Another time the investigator aroused the ire of a man on West Madison Street when he tried to step between him and a boy. He could have provoked the man to fight with little effort. The boy seemed to be timid in the first case, but in the second he seemed to enjoy "flirting" a little.

It might be of interest to note that friendships formed along homosexual lines are generally more short-lived in the city than in the country. Men and boys who travel together may remain in each other's

company for months. This is especially true where the boys have reached their late teens and their being together is less liable to arouse suspicion. It is the young boy that the tramp fears to travel with. Once in town these attachments tend to break up and any other that are formed are passing. The fear of being conspicuous is greater in the city and men and boys who are interested in each other will keep apart on the street.

#### DANGERS OF PERVERSION

The greatest danger the pervert faces is that of being ostracized. So long as one is in the tramp class this danger does not worry him. The tramp is not identified with any community or any social group. He is ever surrounded with the cloak of anonymity. Not even arrest reveals his identity. It is not easy to get this class of men into a position where they fear any stigma, for they only need to pass on and start anew elsewhere without reference to their past. Each lives in his own world, and this promise of security is often taken advantage of.

It has been believed that there is less danger of venereal infection from perverted than normal sex practices. This is probably true, but even for the pervert there is no guarantee from infection if he exposes himself. There are many cases on record in our hospitals and dispensaries which assure us that there is no security in perversion. It is not easy for one infected thus to apply for treatment. It is much easier to seek treatment if he can trace his infection to a woman.

#### THE WELFARE AGENCIES

The chief agency that comes into contact with the boy on the road is the police department. The private police come into more frequent contact with boys on the road than do the civil authorities. The special police on the railroad say that the boy tramp is the most difficult problem they have because of his versatility and daring. But the private police seldom bring the boy to the courts. Their jurisdiction ends with the right-of-way; their efforts cease when they have driven these trespassers off the railroad property. Only when they find that a boy or man has stolen or destroyed some property do they venture to arraign him. Where the tramp is only guilty of trespassing their only weapon is to frighten him and at times they even manhandle him. After he has learned to avoid them, the boy on the road does not take the "dicks" seriously. They furnish just enough opposition to make train riding interesting.

The civil police do not make a practice of picking up juveniles unless they are told to look for a certain boy. In such cases many boys are taken in on suspicion. Runaway boys when they come before the authorities are generally brought in by the city police, but a boy tramp may come to Chicago many times without ever being molested unless he disturbs the peace or loafs in a forbidden place. The unusually young boy, because he is conspicuous, is most apt to be taken into custody.

The welfare agencies have many opportunities to come into contact with boys. Often boys who are stranded are referred to these agencies by the police or the citizens. Often boys go to the agencies of their own accord. Some boys make a practice of going from city to city "working" the welfare agencies. Some of these boys are so familiar with the workings of such organizations that they usually know beforehand what questions they will be asked and how best to answer. They have ways and means of learning the kind of treatment each place will give and what is best to ask for.

The missions have more frequent contact with boy tramps than any other type of organization. This may be because in the mission no questions are asked. No record is taken. The audience comes and goes at will. Missions that feed give the food out indiscriminately to whomsoever may be present. In winter the men go to the missions for shelter from the cold as much as to get the food. When they are in need boys will sometimes even become converted, but in this they only imitate the older tramps.

Labor agencies are not supposed to bid for the patronage of boys, but many boys who are able to pass as men buy jobs with long rides thrown in. To go from Chicago to South or North Dakota or Kansas for a fee of two dollars, or to St. Louis or Omaha for the same price is a great temptation. Another temptation is to ship south in the winter time. When the days shorten and the nights get cold the old-timers begin to scan the boards for a job in a warmer clime, and the boy who has never traveled is no less attracted by these offers.

But the man on the street comes closer to the homeless boy than any institution. Among the tramps it is far more honorable to "pan-handle," or beg on the "stem," than to go to the welfare agencies, unless the agencies can be "worked." Seldom does the man of the road like to talk about receiving bread in the missions. The mission beggar or "mission stiff" is a very unpopular person in hoboland, and the boy does not care to do anything that will bring him into disrepute. He only goes to the missions when, in dire need or when he does not

know the stigma attached to such begging. The most creditable kind of begging he can do is "stemming," and he can usually do this better than a man. There is no red tape to "panhandling"; there is when one approaches a welfare agency.

In winter when he cannot sleep outdoors the boy becomes a regular patron of the cheap hotels and rooming houses. In these places he makes many acquaintances and has many opportunities to indulge in the intimacies which we have described. The price of a room in many of these places ranges from twenty to thirty-five cents a night. In some of them the beds are arranged in large rooms in dormitory style and may be had for as low as fifteen cents a night. Also, there are places where the patrons are permitted to sleep on the floor or on bare bunks for ten cents a night. These are called "flop" houses or "scratch" houses and boys frequently find their way into them.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The organizations and institutions described above are a few of those that touch the life of the boy on the road. They should be considered in any program to deal with the problem presented by the boy tramp. Since he is such an elusive and mobile individual it would seem futile for any community to adopt any measures to apply to a problem that is interstate in its dimensions. But there are things that the community can do for its own protection and convenience in handling local boys and boys who drift into town. There are many things that such a center as Chicago, located as it is on so many railroads and highways, can do to halt juvenile tramping.

A single community can take the stand, if it seems advisable, that the contacts boys have with tramps are not desirable and should be prevented as far as practicable. A local community can initiate a movement on the part of the agencies and organizations to prevent such contacts. It may even start an educational campaign that would reach other places.

As the problem has presented itself from this brief study it would seem that the following recommendations are feasible. They are recommendations that are made in the light of the problem as it looms up in Chicago and in terms of the institutional facilities of Chicago, but the problem is not essentially different here than in other large cities. These recommendations fall into three groups: 1. Recommendations to prevent boys coming in contact with tramps and becoming tramps; 2. Recommendations for handling vagrant and runaway boys, and, 3. Recommendations for dealing with boys who have become

tramps. These recommendations represent in part the findings of the Committee on Homeless Men of the Chicago Council of Social Agencies.

I. Recommendations to prevent boys coming in contact with tramps and becoming tramps.

- (a) An educational campaign should be carried on in all the boys' organizations in Chicago showing the danger of flipping trains and playing in railroad yards. This program should be organized through the Mid-West Boys' Club Federation. The National Defense Council has a good deal of material which could be used in such a campaign.
- (b) An effort should be made to secure the co-operation of such organizations as the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, the special police organizations of the railroads, the Lake Carriers' Association and automobile clubs in a program to prevent boys wandering away from home. Pamphlets should be prepared for distribution asking for co-operation and the enforcement of working certificates regulations in this and other states, child labor laws juvenile court laws, etc.
- (c) The enlistment officers of the army, navy and marine corps should demand the presentation of a birth certificate in all cases in which they doubt the age of the applicant.
- (d) The co-operation of the managers of the hotels and lodging houses should be sought in an effort to keep boys under seventeen out of the hotels in the Hobohemian areas. At least they should be prevailed upon to use their influence to prevent boys and men from rooming together.
- (e) An effort should be made to prevent boys from working or playing in the areas most frequented by the tramp population, namely, West Madison Street, South State Street, North Clark Street and adjacent territory, and some of the parks. The dangers of frequenting these areas should be made known to the parents.
- (f) Special plain-clothes men should be assigned to the parks and other public places in which the tramps congregate, especially Grant Park. These men should be experienced in dealing with vagrants and should be instructed to pick up and hold in the Detention Home any boy found in company with a tramp, where their behavior is suspicious.
- (g) More strenuous effort should be made to occupy the leisure time of boys inclined to visit the districts frequented by tramps. Supervised recreation should be carried on to an extent that these boys will be attracted to other places. When school is not in session a more extensive program of summer camps might help.

II. Recommendations for handling vagrant and runaway boys in Chicago.

(a) The Juvenile Court of Cook County is equipped to investigate the cases of vagrant boys under seventeen and return them to their homes. It is, therefore, recommended that all vagrant boys apprehended by anyone in the day time should be reported to the Chief Probation Officer.

(b) Vagrant boys apprehended after five o'clock should be turned over to the police who will take them to the Detention Home from where they will be taken to the office of the Chief Probation Officer the following morning.

III. Recommendations for handling vagrant and runaway boys who have already entered the tramp group.

(a) Whenever a boy under seventeen is taken in custody by the police, because of his contact with tramps, or whenever a boy is held as a complaining witness against a tramp he should be reported to the Juvenile Court. It is the responsibility of the court to see that he is put in touch with some proper individual or agency, so that he will be adequately supervised and befriended in the future.