could draw an advance from a federal fund to pay his tuition, plus up to $1,000 for room and board or other expenses, for a total advance of $5,000 in any one academic year and $15,000 over three years.

Following graduation, the student would repay his advance (the full amount, plus a 50 percent surcharge) at the rate of 2 percent of his gross annual income per year. According to Silber's calculations, a person of average earning power could probably pay off his obligation ($22,500, if he borrowed the $15,000 maximum and owed a $7,500 surcharge) within 30–35 years.

Unlike current student loans, the TAF obligation could not be defaulted through bankruptcy. Whenever the recipient had any income over $5,000 a year (the minimum for which TAF repayment is required), 2 percent of that income would be liable for collection as a special tax owed to the U.S. Treasury.

In the unlikely event that all of the 4.7 million eligible students in higher education participated to the fullest extent possible, the maximum annual cost would be $9.2 billion, offset by a $1 billion reduction in the use of federally insured student loan funds. A more realistic estimate, based on the assumption that TAF would be three times as popular as conventional loan programs, is $4.5 billion, less the $1 billion in current use of federal funds. Silber estimates that the fund would be self-perpetuating within 20 years on the strength of annual repayments and the interest earned on those repayments put aside in a trust fund. TAF would aid the financing of all higher education, public and private, he argues, and help assure "that the benefits of education are, as much as possible, paid for by those who receive them."

Bearing Down on Serious Crime

"The Major Offense Bureau: Concentrated Justice" by Holcomb B. Noble, in *Police Magazine* (Sept. 1978), 801 Second Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Since 1973, more than 24 cities and counties in the United States have set up major offense bureaus (MOBs) aimed at protecting society from the career criminal. They are credited with clearing clogged court calendars, winning high conviction rates, reducing serious crime, and ending the "revolving-door" procedures that released newly-arrested criminals on bail to prey on the public while awaiting trial for major offenses.

The Bronx MOB system, launched five years ago with federal money, has been the model for others in Boston and Indianapolis and for a $63 million statewide program in California, writes Noble, a *New York Times Magazine* editor. Certain police, prosecutors, and judges concentrate exclusively on serious crimes—armed robbery, burglary, kidnapping—by violent chronic offenders where there is a strong likelihood of winning a quick conviction. (In the past, such cases would be handled by an overworked prosecutor with as many as 100 major and minor crimes pending simultaneously.)

Of the more than 6,500 MOB cases tried nationwide, 94.7 percent led

to convictions (compared to 73 percent of serious cases handled in the traditional manner), plea bargaining was substantially reduced, the average prison sentence was 15.4 years, and the average elapsed time between arrest and disposition was 106 days. Two years ago, the Bronx Supreme Court had 105 long-term detainees jailed and awaiting trial for more than a year. As of July 1, 1978, it had none.

Defense lawyers view the MOB concept with suspicion, Noble notes. Conviction figures are high, they say, because MOB units only take sure cases. They say the system relies on "hanging" judges, often involves excessive haste that precludes a fair trial, and is unfair to the first-time offender who becomes involved with hardened criminals.

Nevertheless, Noble concludes, the MOB concept can have significant crime-reducing effect, if only by letting potential felons know what to expect. Setting priorities and concentrating on cases of widest social benefit is common sense, he says; "what is surprising is that it took [police and prosecutors] so long to realize this."

PRESS & TELEVISION

Gloomy Portents

"Without a Champion" by Lyle Denniston, in *The Quill* (Sept. 1978), 35 E. Wacker Dr., Chicago, Ill. 60601.

The Supreme Court term which ended on July 3, 1978, was a near disaster for the nation's news media. In seven major rulings and most of the two-dozen brief orders rejecting appeals in press-related cases, the Court ruled against First Amendment claims and displayed deep skepticism about fundamental press rights, argues Denniston, Supreme Court reporter for the *Washington Star.*

While the press did not lose every test, it registered few gains. In *Zurcher v. Stanford Daily,* the Court refused to read the First Amendment as a special check on government authority and granted police permission to search newsrooms. In *Houchins v. KQED* (testing the right of TV newsmen to get inside a California jail to report on conditions), the Court flatly rejected the claim that there is a public "right to know" about all government actions and policies. The Court also placed further restrictions on the media's "right to gather news" by denying broadcasters access to the Nixon tapes played at the 1975 Watergate cover-up trial (*Nixon v. Warner Communications*).

Other negative signals appeared in the Supreme Court's refusal to interfere with orders of judges barring media access to some court sessions, sealing records, and issuing "gag" orders to lawyers, witnesses, and others in criminal cases.

There was one victory for the news media: an endorsement of the press's right to publish, without fear of prosecution, the facts about