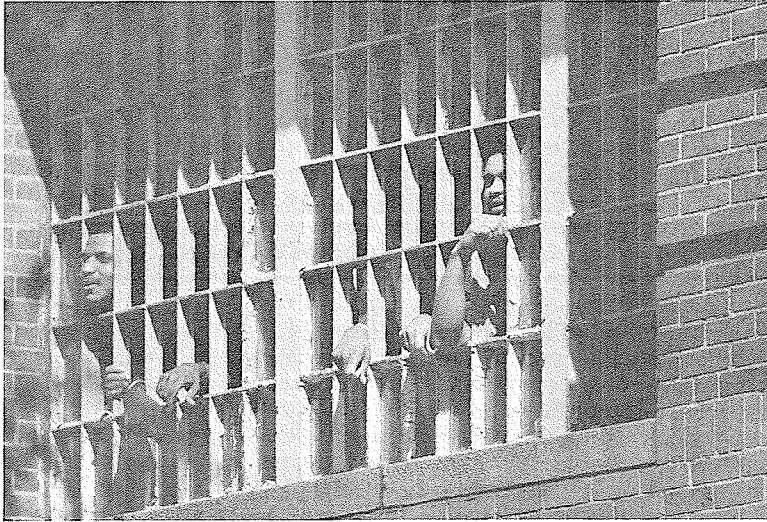


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Paul Hosefros/New York Times Pictures.

Longer jail terms yield slim returns: By one estimate, a mandatory five-year sentence for felonies would reduce such crimes by only four percent.

dramatically reduced rearrests of youthful offenders—most of whom come from broken homes—by placing them in closely supervised group homes and providing jobs and education. The federal Child and Family Resources program produced similar results during the 1970s by providing counseling, tutoring, and meals for children at a cost of only \$3,000 per family.

The way to make America's streets safe, argues Currie, is to rebuild families, not to build jails.

Who Will Support the Children?

"Child Support Enforcement" by Philip K. Robins and Katherine P. Dickinson, in *Journal of the Institute for Socioeconomic Studies* (Summer 1982), Airport Rd., White Plains, N.Y. 10604.

Washington has long tried to pare Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) costs by prodding welfare mothers to work. Results have been mixed. Today, the most promising cost-cutting course may be a program designed to force absent fathers to support their children.

Enacted into law in 1935, AFDC was originally intended to aid children whose fathers had died. But by 1977, note Robins and Dickinson,

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economists at SRI International, only three percent of 7.8 million AFDC children fell into this category. The parents of 85 percent of the children were divorced, separated, or not married.

In 1975, Congress established the Child Support Enforcement program, requiring each state to develop measures to establish paternity, locate missing fathers, and collect court-ordered support payments. The plan also required mothers to help locate missing fathers—or else lose benefits. In 1976, the program collected \$200 million, a sum equal to two percent of all AFDC benefits. By 1980, collections were up to \$600 million, five percent of benefits. Success varies from state to state. In New York, administrative costs exceeded collections in 1980, while Michigan rounded up \$3 for every \$1 spent. Nationwide, the program recouped \$1.34 for each \$1 of expenses.

One-third of all AFDC families with an absent parent should now be receiving child support, but only one in seven of those families does so. If collections could be improved and new awards won from other missing parents, the authors believe the program could recover 25 to 30 percent of all AFDC costs. Congress has already authorized withholding from federal tax refunds and unemployment benefits to increase collections. An even more effective (albeit radical) step, Robins and Dickinson argue, would be to have the Internal Revenue Service withhold child support much as it withholds taxes.

Improving child support enforcement might also yield one important fringe benefit. Some critics contend that AFDC encourages fathers to desert their families to enable them to collect welfare. If the charge is correct, an effective child-support program could reduce that incentive and keep more families together.

PRESS & TELEVISION

Rush to Judgment

"Lebanon Eyewitness" by Martin Peretz, in *The New Republic* (August 2, 1982), 1220 19th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Israel may have won impressive military victories in its June invasion of Lebanon, but it did not fare as well with American public opinion. Peretz, editor of the *New Republic*, blames distorted and superficial U.S. press coverage of the operation.

Early in the war, the media reported that the fighting had left 10,000 civilians dead, another 600,000 homeless. Government leaders such as Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, who cited the figures as he criticized Israel, believed that the source was the International Red Cross or UNICEF. Actually, says Peretz, the estimate came from the Palestinian Red Crescent, headed by the brother of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) chairman Yasser Arafat. Body counts by Israeli and