

# **ANOTHER LOOK BACK AT THE HISTORY OF THE PROBATION OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO**

By Darlene Humeniuk

In the previous Monitor an article was published regarding history about POAO from 1952 to 1955. The following information encompasses the years from 1955 to 1976. The selections are based upon milestones reached and similar areas challenging the Association today. Overall it appears that in the early days the Association was very active, undergoing changes in name, stating positions, making submissions, educating members, fielding surveys, establishing a crest, refining the constitution. It was apparent that there was respect and open communication between the Association and the Provincial Director of Probation, Dan Coughlin.

## **SUMMARIES AND NEWSCLIPS FROM PAST NEWSLETTERS AND MEETINGS**

“The cost of keeping a person in an Ontario Reformatory for one year is \$1,200.00, whereas the cost of placing that same person on Probation would be \$50.00. Results of Reformatory treatment show a 70% failure whereas the results of probation show a 70% success rate.” – Reporting Day 1955, Number 2 Spring issue.

The Ontario Association of Probation Officers Annual Conference followed a format similar to the standard used presently including workshops, a banquet, luncheon and annual meeting. Workshop topics in 1956: Aspects of Probation, Social Casework on Interviewing, Legal Supervision and Family Court. The Address of the Director of Probation (Dan Coughlin) and the New President’s Address were published in the newsletter. One workshop identified the probation officer’s purpose as a social caseworker to establish a therapeutic relationship with the probationer.

“JUVENILE DELINQUENTS! WHY? – In one of our large Canadian cities, in five years, Juvenile Delinquency has increased by 60%. Here is a fairly accurate description of our youth in modern day:

“The world is passing through troubled times. The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents or old people. They are impatient of all restraint. They talk as if they alone know everything, and what passes for wisdom with us is foolishness with them. As for girls, they are forward, immodest and unwomanly in speech, behaviour and dress.”

Does this description fit the situation of today? But please wait a minute! The above was written by Peter the Hermit in 1274 A.D. a few years after the signing of the Magna Charta. This will help us face a certain balance as we face the problem. There is no one cause; there is no one cure for juvenile delinquency.” – Reporting Day - Spring, 1957

1956-57 The Legislation Committee made two submissions regarding changes suggested for the Deserted Wives and Children's Maintenance Act. A representative of the Attorney General's Department met with the Committee to discuss 23 recommendations and spoke positively about possible revisions to be included for the Revised Statutes of Ontario in 1963.

"A well known P.O. Frederick W. Caunt passed away, a great host of Fred's present and former probationers signed the visitor's book attesting their esteem for him". - Reporting Day – Association of the Probation Officers for the Province of Ontario - June 15, 1958.

In 1959 the Association drafted a Canada Probation Act to determine the purpose and role of the P.O. in the different Courts of the Province. Criminal Code amendments were submitted. The new location for the Toronto Juvenile and Family Court at 311 Jarvis Street was announced.

Reporting Day, July 1961. This issue was 44 pages long, on 11" by 14" paper, including the usual articles, regional reports, 6 papers and 2 book reviews. A highlight to note was the Association's plan to develop a full syllabus to be available in preparation for examinations (which established salary scales and standing). This was a tool supported by the Provincial Director. The Association formed a committee to establish a correspondence course as an aid to study. Ontario was the first province to develop probation services. At the 1960 convention, four emblems were submitted by a commercial artist. In 1961 the chosen emblem, which is still used today depicts the scale and hand symbolizing the helping hand of Probation as a part of the Administration of Justice. In 1962 the Association identified itself by the title known today, The Probation Officers Association of Ontario.

By 1964 work by various Association committees included the production of a syllabus of study for Departmental Examinations, which benefited many probation officers, a listing of extension courses in fields related to Probation offered by Ontario Universities, the production of a National Probation Act and a survey of Family Court Law by the Legislation Committee. A brief submitted to the Minister's committee on Juvenile Delinquency was later used extensively by the Canadian Department of Justice. The Association assisted in preparing an exhibit at the Toronto Canadian National Exhibition about "What is Probation?" The Peninsula Branch was asked by the Executive Board to draft a "Code of Ethics" for the Association, which were revised and the date they were finalized as we know them today could not be found.

In 1966 there were 8 branches. Reporting Day Spring Edition stated that the Report of a Committee of the Probation Officers Association Ontario on Qualitative and Quantitative aspects of Probation work in Ontario appeared in Volume 6 No.3 of the Canadian Journal of Corrections and was abstracted in the internationally famous periodical "*Excerpta Criminologica*". The annual conference registration fee was \$10.00, yearly dues were \$12.00 and a single room \$5.00

Similar problems experienced today are cited in newsletters year after year about the lack of submissions for newsletters and the need for more members. Early issues contained editorials, jokes, anecdotes and some articles had a humorous tone. By 1969 the Reporting Day Newsletter took on a more professional look being bound, containing an index and standardized format. The emphasis was to produce a magazine that reflected professionalism, pride and recognition as the authority on probation issues. Policy was outlined for accepting articles including letters to the editor tasteful jokes and cartoons. Annual meetings, usually held in September, were changed to June. A Mid-Western member cited his caseload total as 60, (juveniles and adults 54, parolees 6), earning a gross annual salary of \$650.00. Progression of a P.O. from Group 2 to Group 3 was debated with recommendations for qualifications including the following: 5 years minimum service, written evaluation by the officer's supervisor, a review of yearly assessment reports by a separate designated person, a random assessment of case files and pre-sentence reports, an interview with head office staff to avoid any existing conflicts with the supervisor. The Group 3 P.O. could also have a specialization with a small caseload of complex cases relating to his specialty, being available to provide consultation about the specialty. This position would only be opened up if there was a demonstrated need. Little detail about what exactly the Group 3 P.O. would have regarding specific responsibilities.

In 1970 the Association presented a brief to the LeDain Commission of Inquiry about the non-medicinal use of drugs. A brief on marriage counselling was sent to the Director for onward transmission to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Director Mr. Coughlin retired, 1972.

By 1974 major strides were made in liaison with the Judges from Provincial Family and Criminal and County Courts. Membership was opened up due to the amalgamation with Parole and Aftercare services. Consequently constitutional amendments included the addition of associate members. The Education Committee sought and gained Ministry financial support for a study on Pre-Sentence Reports. Membership was 254 out of potentially 600, dues were \$15.00 per year.

The Association contributed to provincial policy development in 1976 through a submission to the Solicitor General in Ottawa and other key Ministry officials through a brief entitled Young Persons in Conflict with the Law.

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