

Task Force Spotlights Judicial System

By BARBARAMOYNEHAN

"Confusion," "a hurry up and wait game," "the judicial system is really in the horse and buggy stage." These are just a few of the reactions the latest Task Force on Courts volunteers voiced after a morning in criminal court.

Those being trained this time, the 11th session since the task force began in September 1970, was the usual mixed group. Eight students, boys and girls, from School Without Walls, and nine women ranging from about 30-year-old homemakers to retirees.

The training consists of two morning sessions. The first is divided between watching arraignments in city criminal court and asking questions of veteran court observers about the proceedings.

At the second session, besides hearing Task Force purpose and accomplishments, the novices meet the specialist. This time it was attorney Richard H. Holtzberg.

Holtzberg admitted there are problems in the court system. The prime one being, confus-

ion, "not knowing what is going on." Over crowded dockets allow no time for individual care or concern from attorneys he said. "It's what you can prove that's important, not whether your client is guilty or not."

Task Force chairman, Lois Davis, feels it has been a very educational program for a lot of people.

"There is the tendency," she says, "when you haven't been in court to expect the experts to know what they are doing, and you trust them. We hope through publicity that we can spread the word to all that have been complacent. Citizens are paying for the judicial system so they should be concerned."

What do the court observers see? In a report published after a year of court watching, they noted the following: inequities in justice against non-whites and youths; a justice that has failed the poor; a court system so cumbersome that it is involved in "justice by negotiation," rather than defense to establish the guilt or innocence of an individual.

One of the approximately 50 regulars, who has been lending

her presence to the court room since the Task Force began, Mrs. Esther Cable of 2047 Ridge Road West, noted that "too often public defenders are too meek and won't stand up to the judge for his client's rights or his own."

From such new awareness experienced since observing in court, the doctor's wife and mother of four grown children, realizes, "the court system is ponderous, people don't get justice, you take that for granted. I can understand people getting mad and taking over by a revolution like in the movie on the Russian revolution, Nicholas and Alexandra."

Carolyn Micklem, of Faraday

Street a younger woman, watches the courts also, but for different reasons. She is chairman of the Rochester Ball Fund.

The most critical part of the courts, to Mrs. Micklem, is the quality of the public defenders.

"Public defenders have been weak in asking for preliminary hearings, but are now getting more aggressive. That is important," she continued, "because if you do not have this chance to get your case dismissed, it will go to grand jury."



Ken Sarkis, teacher at St. Michael's parish school, cringes at the thought of the soaking he's going to get Saturday, Nov. 18 during the parish's festival, when he's the target in a sponge-throwing booth. Practicing for the big day are Anna Marie Cruz and Joseph Cirincione, both students in Mr. Sarkis' class.

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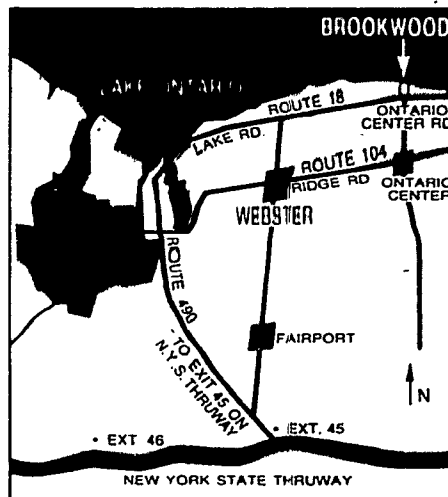
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