

## Apathy Blamed In Order Decline

Apathy and a change in the character of the community were suggested last week as contributing reasons for the decline of law.

The suggestions were advanced at an educational panel discussion on "Law Enforcement and the Public" sponsored by the Farm and Home Foundation

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Lancaster Police Chief David M. Rineer, one of the panelists advanced the "apathy" idea.

"I don't think there is total disrespect of law on the part of the people," he said in answer to a question from the audience.

Rineer added the attitude seems to be, "If it is not my child that has been molested, I don't want to know about it." He added that there are people who know the details concerning a criminal offense, who "fail to come forward with information."

#### Sign of Times

He revealed that the Lancaster Police receive telephone calls concerning offenses but that the people who call want to remain anonymous.

"I suppose it is a sign of the times," he said in reply to another question on why the public does not want to get involved.

Other panelists were District Attorney Clarence C. Newcomer and John W. Beyer, criminal defense lawyer.

Beyer suggested that the apathy of the people was not so much a change in the people as a change in the character of the community in this modern age. "We know less of our neighbors than we formerly did and our attitude toward crime, or

fire and any other community problems, has changed."

#### No Reprisals

A member of the audience suggested that perhaps fear was a factor that kept people from becoming involved in crime prevention.

Chief Rineer replied "I have known of no case where reprisals were taken."

The question of trial delays and long appeal procedures before a defendant is finally convicted also came in for examination when a spectator mentioned the time that elapsed before Sirhan Sirhan went on trial for the slaying of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

Newcomer said there are delays, "more than we like to have."

He referred to a case in the Lancaster County Court where a defendant was convicted by a jury in 1966. That case, he noted, is still being reviewed by appellate courts.

"It may be necessary to define in a more restrictive manner how these appeals shall be made."

#### Emotional Whack

Beyer commented that he did not think there was too much delay in bringing Sirhan to trial. "The big problem is that a lot

of people take an emotional whack at someone who broke the law. Just because he shot Kennedy doesn't make him guilty of first degree murder."

The District Attorney announced that there is no backlog of criminal trials in Lancaster County.

Amos H. Funk, chairman of the foundation's education committee, served as moderator.

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