

Topics

Costumes and Curtain Calls

Crimes, Punishment

As director of New York State's Division for Youth, Peter Edelman has been an easy target for cheap criticism. Violent crimes by juveniles have, in fact, been diminishing. But as individual, brutal crimes are committed by ever younger perpetrators, public concern has been growing.

What to do about this concern? The answer of Perry Duryea and others, especially in the gubernatorial campaign, was to attack Mr. Edelman for being soft on crime. Now, as he is about to leave office after four years, Mr. Edelman is entitled to be measured according to his own answer.

During his tenure, the Division for Youth moved steadily toward tougher penalties for youthful offenders convicted of violent crimes — while seeking to free petty offenders from costly detention in state institutions. It established a network of community facilities to which they could be assigned instead. And new youth planning offices in almost every county now work to insure that crime prevention receives as much attention as punishment. This is not the record of a criminal-coddler but of an inventive and humane administrator. Governor Carey would do

well to find a successor of similar ability and similar persuasion.

Drab Decision

The Army's decision to ban distinctive headgear for soldiers, other than Green Berets and a few Ranger units, marches backward toward a drab past. "Modern Army green" is assuredly better than the truly drab olive drab that prevailed before 1958, but it's nothing to brag about. It is glamorous only when decorated with, say, four rows of decorations, a colonel's eagles, the insignia of the Joint Chiefs, and perhaps a swirl of gold braid at the epaulets. But what about the poor specialist fourth class whose service barely extends beyond Kansas and who has earned no decorations more distinguished than brass buttons?

Times were when a smartly polished Sam Browne belt and high riding boots told the world: Cavalry. A light grey jacket with blue hat and trousers signified a medical doctor. A splash of red and gold said Artillery. In this day of computers, all distinctiveness seems gone. Every a to from Detroit seems indistinguishable. Why must every soldier follow suit?

Homegrown Talent

Julius Rudel's resignation as director of the New York City Opera ends a remarkable 20-year period in which that institution has had a unique place in New York's cultural life. Under Mr. Rudel, the City Opera went far beyond its purely local role to establish a first-rate American company, with American singers. Homegrown talents no longer had to barnstorm abroad in hopes that they might in time be invited back by the Metropolitan. At the City Opera, American voices came into their own. Not every production was a success, but many first-rate offerings were made available to a large audience at low prices.

In Mr. Rudel's time, one man could mold a company and a creative ideal and be fairly certain that he would have enough artistic freedom to do it. Today, arts organizations are more and more dependent on efficient business leadership, and the course between creativity and solvency becomes increasingly hard to navigate. The talented people who are taking over the City Opera are faced with a new and difficult kind of management. It is appropriate that one of them is the homegrown Beverly Sills.