

Effect of Broken Homes

Early Maturity of Children. Said Not Necessarily Good

By OLIVE DICKASON

Broken homes . . . just what is the extent of the damage they do to children? Do children from such homes have greater difficulty in adjusting to life when they grow up?

"The difference isn't as great as might be expected," a report recently published in the United States said. According to its findings, children may even mature faster, developing an early understanding of adult problems.

Rev. Patrick Ambrose, director of the Federation of Catholic Charities, had another view of the matter. "Economic maturity might be achieved earlier among a greater number of teen-agers from broken homes than from stable homes, but it is not an economic maturity which can be considered as good and wholesome," he said.

Early Aggressiveness

Such maturity, he added, is usually the result of an early aggressiveness which the child develops in his search for security. "This early development of aggressiveness very often leads to a rebellion against society," Father Ambrose added.

George Clarke, general secretary of the Family Welfare Association, inclined towards the belief that the child's attitude towards life depends largely on that of the remaining parent. An atmosphere of constant bickering in a home can produce problem children as well as broken homes, he said. Quarrelling parents, particularly those who seek to hurt each other through their children, can do more harm than an actual broken home, he felt.

Miss Eileen Griffin, assistant

executive director of the Children's Service Centre, said there was no question that children of broken homes become more resourceful, as they have to depend on themselves rather than on their parents. She pointed out that children from broken homes are usually placed in foster homes these days, so that they do receive substitute parental care. Even with the best of such care, however, the result is bound to be divided loyalties on the part of the children, between the foster parents and the natural parents.

A child's own home, said Miss Griffin, can be disorganized to the point of physical neglect, yet the child will still be provided with a certain amount of emotional nourishment.

Father Ambrose felt that broken homes often result in children maturing faster in the wrong way and therefore losing a good deal in growing up.

"We hear so often today that there are no more 'children,'"

he remarked. "This means simply that our young people are growing up too fast. They are adults before they are finished being children." In the case of a broken home, they share the problems of the remaining parents emotionally but not intellectually and the result is very often detrimental to the teen-ager.