

Brown, Anna S.L. Excerpts from “Reform Department Report, May 1920.” Chicago History Museum. Chicago Woman’s Club Records. Box 26, Folder 2.

“...Much has been learned by a number of members by first hand observation – of how the mills of the courts grind the human grist. Much time, study, consultation and endeavor has been put forth in behalf of the young people who as delinquents and dependents are found in the hoppers of the mills of the courts. Getting more hearts turned that way, develops a better understanding and appreciation both of good results, and the causes that hinder desired results.

Not much of hope or aspiration was achieved, nothing commensurate with what our vision of possibilities promised, but we did what we could, and some bits were well done.

For months last year and this, we labored to bring about a central agency to handle the problem of paroled boys. Conferences with state and county officials and fourteen different agencies working for boys, were held a number of times. Hope ran high. We had all kinds of promises, from county and from state. We and the fourteen agencies developed a perfectly good plan. Everybody – state and county and agencies – said it was good. But, it wouldn’t work. In the last analysis county and state will not cooperate – in spirit or funds – even to save boys.

If all the members of this club would use their vote and speak out on the simple humanity of things, (our legitimate field) county and state welfare boards would have good women on them, and sure cooperation in some lines would come.

This agency, this piece of work, was the fondest hope of the outgoing regime. We did not achieve it. We made paths that can be retraced, - we blocked some paths that needed closing. We connected the fourteen agencies a wee bit closer. We failed to realize – but though disappointment we have not despaired, for to quote again the strong Browning, we hope we belong with his – “one who never turned his back but marched breast forward; never doubted clouds would break; never dreamed though right were worsted, wrong would triumph; Held, we fall to rise; are baffled to fight better; Sleep to wake.”

*Emphasis original