

affairs throughout the whole period of his Chairmanship of the Commissioners (1942-1960) and must be well aware of the way in which, despite quite unprecedented difficulties, he pursued a policy of experiment and development.

Of course, differential estimates of individuals are permissible, to be expected and indeed welcome, but that is not what is at issue. What we have here is a consistent line of interpretation which ignores a decisive and distinctive feature of English penal history. By treating the Prison Commissioners and in particular their Chairman primarily as "most important objects of pressure", Dr. Rose obscures the fact that they have over the years used the large amount of autonomy granted to them in a remarkable fashion to initiate and pursue progressive policies well ahead of popular and even informed opinion. And but for this the history of English prisons might have taken a very different shape. It is, for example, of great significance that, when in the 'thirties there was a wave of reaction both inside and outside the prison service against attempts to humanize the system, Sir Harold Scott as Chairman took the view that "pressure for sterner measures and accusations of pampering criminals are well-known accompaniments of the life of any prison administrator" and should not be taken too seriously. Yet the only reference to Scott to be found in Dr. Rose's book is a passage listing the members of the 1932 Departmental Committee on the employment of Prisoners which, we are told, included "H. R. Scott, then in the Home Office, but later the same year Chairman of the Prison Commissioners".

In brief, it is submitted that it might have been better if this book had been called by its subtitle "The Howard League and its Predecessors" without any pretension that a full historical record of the process of penal development over the past century was being provided. As it is, an unfortunate impression is conveyed. No one, least of all this reviewer, would wish to minimize the importance or value of the activities of such organisations as the Howard League for Penal Reform, or to depreciate the work of such able and imaginative reformers as Margery Fry and Hugh Klare. But then neither would they wish (or, in the former case, have wished) to have their achievements inflated at the expense of those who devoted their minds and energies, and in some cases their lives, to work in a field in which the problems are amongst the most intractable that beset mankind, success is most difficult to obtain and the recognition accorded slight and too often posthumous.

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Robbery in London, by F. H. McClintock and Evelyn Gibson. London, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1961. xix and 147pp. (£2/9/9 in Australia.)

Despite the fact that in the field of criminology research is as essential as in the fields of science and technology, few centres of research exist and little financial support has been made available. The current annual budget of £60,000 in the United Kingdom, which was until recently only £5,000, is well above that of every other European country. Moreover, whilst France is spending £15,000 and Belgium £10,000 per year, the Government fund for research in Austria amounts to only about £100 annually, and Germany and Italy too spend practically nothing. This neglect is one of the reasons why little useful work has been done and results so far have been relatively meagre and unenlightening. Other reasons include not only various methodological deficiencies but also a

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strangely persistent tendency amongst investigators to regard crime as a unitary phenomenon and criminals as members of a homogeneous class or group. It is scarcely surprising that many early projects designed to uncover "the causes of crime" met with little success. One has only to consider what results might be expected from an investigation aimed at establishing "the causes of disease" to understand why this should have been so. Current research, however, is both more modest and yet at the same time more wide-ranging in its aims. A variety of projects are under way in various parts of the world directed to discovering the nature and extent of crime; the causes of, or rather the causal influences or factors associated with crime; and the effectiveness of various forms of penal or correctional treatment. But it has been realized that research is most likely to be fruitful when it is concentrated on particular areas and particular types of offences and offenders rather than conducted in terms of amorphous categories like "crime" and "criminals".

An interesting and enlightening example of some research which is the product of just such concentration is an investigation recently completed at the Cambridge Institute of Criminology, some of the major findings of which were described briefly in *The Economist* in November 1960 and attracted considerable attention at the time. The full report under the title *Robbery in London* is now available with an admirable preface by Professor Leon Radzinowicz, who is Wolfson Professor of Criminology at Cambridge and Director of the Institute. This study is part of a larger one covering crimes of violence as a whole, of which class of offences robbery constitutes but a small part; and a further report dealing with "Offences of Violence Against the Person" which will review all other major sectors over the same period is to follow shortly. The present work is a detailed analysis of all crimes of robbery ("the element which distinguishes robbery from larceny from the person is the use or threat of violence, however small") recorded by the Metropolitan Police in 1950, 1957 and the first half of 1960. This is of more than local interest and significance, for the general increase in crime after the Second World War has not been confined to England alone, as was made abundantly clear by delegates and experts from all parts of the world at the United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders in 1960. Moreover, as robbery is predominantly an urban crime, the metropolitan area, where thirty-five per cent of all such offences in the U.K. are committed, provides a peculiarly suitable focus for research into the nature and significance of such changes as have been taking place. It should be added that in London, at any rate, crimes of robbery have increased over the last twenty years at a much greater rate than indictable offences generally. As a result they have received much publicity and given rise to considerable public alarm and indignation together with widespread discussion frequently couched in highly emotional terms. It is therefore appropriate and extremely salutary that they should be made the subject of detached scientific study.

The picture which emerges differs in significant respects from that which has been presented in the popular press. Despite the fact that there were six times as many robberies in London in 1959 as in 1939, these offences still comprise only 0.4 per cent of all indictable offences in the Metropolis, and their annual rate of occurrence represents, by way of example, a chance of anyone being robbed in the open of less than three for every hundred thousand of the population. In the case of women this figure drops to less than one. In fact, as Professor Radzinowicz points out, London is still one of the most law-abiding cities in the world; and, in relation to the size of the Metropolitan Police District, which covers nearly half a million acres and has a dense and mixed population of eight and a quarter million, the incidence of robbery is low.

Certainly the popular belief that there has been a sharp increase in sudden attacks on and robberies of ordinary citizens is not borne out by the inquiry.

Nearly 52 out of every 100 robberies in the metropolitan area are robberies of persons who, as part of their employment, are in charge of money or goods; and the greatest increases since 1957 have occurred against those who were carrying money to or from banks and also against those who were in charge of money in offices and other business premises. The fact that the biggest absolute increase was in the class of robbery which includes premeditated and carefully planned raids on banks, post offices and large stores and the seizure of money in transit from banks or business premises appears to indicate the development of more organized professional criminal activity. In this context the report draws attention to three factors which clearly have some bearing on this increase.

In the first place, whereas in 1950 the loss of property involved in robberies entailed a loss of £100 or more in only 11% of cases, by 1960 this proportion had risen to 25%. Further, whilst the twenty-two robberies which netted over £1,000 each in 1957 accounted for money and goods amounting to sixty-one thousand pounds, the twenty-two which had already been committed in the first six months of 1960 involved over a hundred and seventy thousand pounds. It is unlikely that this trend will have escaped the notice of those engaged in this type of criminal activity. In the second place, an examination of the behaviour of offenders and victims makes it plain that many offences would have been prevented if certain elementary and obvious precautions had been taken. For example, despite the fact that the police frequently advise those responsible for transporting valuables to avoid conspicuously making the same journey at the same time each week, a considerable number of robberies are planned and successfully carried out precisely because offenders have been able to watch and note the regular movements of the victims.

Thirdly, and perhaps even more significant, is the fact that the proportion of robberies which remain undetected is not only very considerable, but also has risen in recent years and appears to be still rising. Thus it was 45 per cent in 1950, 52 per cent in 1957 and 67 per cent in the first half of 1960. Furthermore in the case of robberies of persons in charge of money or goods, seven out of every ten offenders escape detection; and this rises to eight out of ten in cases where the property or money is stolen in transit.

In view of the fact that it has long been accepted as virtually axiomatic by penologists and criminologists that the best deterrent to crime is to make detection as certain and apprehension as swift as possible, it is not surprising that Professor Radzinowicz remarks that impunity on this scale must be regarded as "itself a cause of crime"; for there can be little doubt that such a large-scale failure to enforce the law must make this type of crime more attractive to potential offenders. When, however, he goes on to comment critically on the leniency of the courts in relation to this particular class of crime ("sentencing practice still falls far short of the stringent powers which the courts could employ if they wished.") and suggests that this "cannot be expected to provide adequate protection of society or deterrence of potential offenders" he is on more questionable ground. For it is somewhat sanguine to expect those engaged in this most profitable type of crime (including many professional safebreakers and bank robbers) to be much influenced by the sentencing policy of courts in which, if this report is to be believed and present trends continue, they are less and less likely to appear. Any substantial increase in crime invariably, and not surprisingly, gives rise to a popular demand for more drastic punishment of offenders, but there is no evidence that it has any appreciable effect on the state of crime; and in this case the adoption of such a policy would be not unlike raising customs duties in order to deter smuggling. As a matter of fact "the major increase . . . in the lucrative and carefully planned operations of a relatively small group of seasoned professional criminals who have been particularly successful in escaping the grip of the criminal law", to which this

report draws attention has, as it happens, coincided with a trend towards increased severity in the courts; a fact which emerges clearly in the last chapter of the book on recent significant changes. (See, in particular, Table 106 — Penalties). This, however, is not the place to enter into a full discussion of the wide and complex subject of sentencing policy and practice in general.

Another illuminating feature of this inquiry, which sets out to reassess the seriousness and respective incidence of the various kinds of crimes included in this class, is the way in which it provides a more balanced assessment of the degree and quality of violence actually employed. For it should be remembered that, although violence or the threat of it is the distinctive feature of robbery, this group of offences is a very heterogeneous one. At one extreme the victim may be battered into unconsciousness; at the other the offence may consist of one small boy pushing another boy and stealing his fountain-pen. On examination it appears that in more than 30 per cent of all cases of robbery recorded in each of the three years within the last decade no injury whatever was inflicted on the victim; whilst of the victims who were injured the vast majority sustained bruises and abrasions that required no more than first-aid treatment. Again, of the 12 per cent who sustained more serious injuries such as fractures or cuts requiring stitches, only a small proportion had to be detained in hospital for treatment. Firearms were hardly ever used; there was only one instance in 1950, two in 1957 and none at all in the first half of 1960. Threats with firearms or imitation firearms increased latterly, but at their height represented no more than 9 per cent. in the total of robberies. In two-thirds of all cases no weapon whatever was used either to threaten or inflict an injury. In fact, as Professor Radzinowicz points out, "the term 'violent criminal class' cannot be applied to our robbers without distorting the factual data to fit preconceived ideas". Professional robbers and safe-breakers in particular "would rather avoid the necessity for violence"; and there is no evidence of the existence among the convicted offenders of a large class of robbers with long records of violence. Less than twenty-five per cent of those convicted of robbery had previously been found guilty of violence and in a large proportion of those cases the assaults were not connected with a property offence. In this connection reference may be made to the two chapters devoted to follow-up studies in respect of robbers caught and convicted in 1950, in an effort to trace and define patterns of criminal behaviour. It appears that although nearly half were re-convicted of an offence within five years of release, only one-sixth seem to have become habitual robbers, which suggests that the main problem is one of general persistence in crime rather than specialisation in robbery with violence.

Clearly, the publication of the results of inquiries of this nature and others which are to follow (on such subjects as the cost of crime, the social consequences of crime for the offender, interludes of honesty in the careers of persistent thieves, etc.) will not enable us to abolish crime or even substantially reduce its incidence in the immediate future. But the establishment of the facts, the abolition of misconceptions and the reduction of prejudice will produce a better understanding of the nature of the problem; and this is a long neglected but basic and essential preliminary to any rational attempt to deal with it.

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