

1921

## Editorials

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/jclc>

 Part of the [Criminal Law Commons](#), [Criminology Commons](#), and the [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Editorials, 11 J. Am. Inst. Crim. L. & Criminology 485 (May 1920 to February 1921)

This Editorial is brought to you for free and open access by Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology by an authorized editor of Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons.

## ANNUAL MEETINGS

---

The next annual meeting of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology will be held in Baltimore within the month of October next. Announcement of exact date will be made later.

---

The American Prison Association will hold its next annual meeting in Jacksonville, Florida, some time in November, 1921.

---

## EDITORIALS

---

### PAROLE: MORE LIGHT WANTED

---

What is the system of parole worth? There is only one method by which to settle this perennial question and to settle it right. Take a complete list of all persons paroled in a given state during a period of several years and trace out each one's history in detail to the present. The group that is selected for such treatment should belong to a period several years past, so that their history may be found not only for the period during which they were on parole and consequently under the surveillance of parole agents, but for a considerable time—three to five years—immediately following the expiration of this period and their discharge from custody. Such an investigation as I propose would cost something in time and money, but there would certainly be compensating advantages arising from it. At least we would arrive at definitely positive or negative conclusions on the mooted question of the curative value of the current method of administration of parole. More than this, I believe such an intensive and extensive investigation as I have in mind would tell us all, positively, supporters and doubters alike, whether we want the parole system at all, and if so on what terms.

When the friends of the parole system say (as they all do) that in the neighborhood of 85 per cent of prisoners make good on parole, they are undoubtedly correct; and this in itself is a good record. There is no reliable information, however, as to what happens after parole has expired. The more permanent curative value of the system is undetermined, and this is what we want to get at.

Furthermore there can be no question whatsoever that, on the whole, at least in Indiana and Illinois, the average time per prisoner

spent in penal institutions has been considerably longer during the years since the adoption of the parole system than was the case prior to that time when the definite sentence system was in vogue.

Facts though these are, they do not satisfy the doubter because we are dealing with average which, he thinks, may *possibly* cover up some cases that it would be disagreeable to face. There is that possibility. The sort of investigation I propose will have to be undertaken and completed before these questions can be set at rest.

Incidentally there is no longer any excuse for the man who persists in talking about *parole* when he means *probation* by the court.

ROBERT H. GAULT.

---

### AMERICAN POLICE SYSTEMS

---

Mr. Raymond B. Fosdick, in "American Police Systems."<sup>1</sup> affords a picture of American police conditions in contrast with corresponding European affairs, which he described in his earlier volume, entitled "European Police Systems." The comparison is much to the disadvantage of our American police.

In the course of eleven chapters and seven charts, Mr. Fosdick discusses practically every phase of police work, and he does it all in a literary style that will go a long way toward commending his book to the reading public. Without this quality the book would lose a great advantage as an instrument for popular education in a field that has been all but wholly neglected by American students. Until this book came from the press we have had no comprehensive nor intimate view of the American police.

In his opening chapter on "The American Problem," the author sets us on our guard against a disposition to criticize our own forces unfairly when we contrast our unhappy state with the greatly more favorable conditions in Europe. Such a heterogeneous population as ours, e. g., is altogether unknown in England and on the continent. This is only one of several crucial differences. Taken all in all, Mr. Fosdick's judgment is that the Metropolitan Police of London, almost perfect though it is in its own place, would fail in New York or in Chicago.

New laws, systems, organizations alone will never lead our American cities out of their morass of police inefficiency. The interference of "politics" in its worst sense and the inertia of the system of

---

<sup>1</sup>Publications of the Bureau of Social Hygiene. The Century Co., N. Y., 1920, pp. 408.

civil service appointment can reach any police system, home-controlled or state-controlled, and under a government by commission or otherwise. The only solution of our police affairs is to be found in the right education of the public. Lack of it makes it possible for "politics" to contaminate any system. An alert, intelligent public that really cares about these things can bring pressure to bear that will assure improved police service almost regardless of the organization.

In his second chapter on the Development of American Police Control, Mr. Fosdick has given us a picture of police control growing by spasms, if at all, and paralyzed always by the possibility or by the realization of local political reverses. It is a vivid picture of a people trying to find themselves in one department of their national life and embarrassed all the while by a lack of tradition.

The author, after having personally studied police systems in seventy-two cities from Los Angeles to Boston, is encouraged by the conviction that, badly off as we are, we have made some progress all along the line in fifty years, and not only so, but in Boston under O'Mears, in New York under Wood (during a brief term each), and in Berkeley, Cal., under Vollmer, who continues in that city after more than fifteen years of service as chief of police, we have striking illustrations of efficient police work.

Put a strong, honest man into the chief's office and then let him alone. This is prescribed for every city that wishes to obtain a good police.

ROBERT H. GAULT.

---

#### STATE POLICE NEEDED

---

Every farmer's house and every cross-roads general store and postoffice in the state is today only about one-eighth as far from the great city as it was twenty or twenty-five years ago. That is, the rural postoffice, that so long ago was forty miles from Chicago or Springfield, is now only five miles from the same city. We are measuring distance in this case by the time required in traveling today as compared with a quarter of a century ago and less. A distance covered in four hours by Old Dobbin in that day can now be done in a half hour or less.

The automobile and paved roads have made the difference. It brings the dangers of the city to the very door of the remote farmer. The highwayman can dash out to the country, practice his profession there and lose himself again in his city stronghold as conveniently as a

raider can run out of a friendly harbor into the unprotected sea to pick up a fishing smack. All the metropolitan police may chase him out of their respective jurisdictions and keep him out. Then he is in clover, because we have no state police for rural districts. Such a force is eight times as needful now as it was a quarter of a century ago, and our legislators should study the situation with a view to supplying the need.

ROBERT H. GAULT.