

1953

Book Reviews

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

Book Reviews, 44 J. Crim. L. Criminology & Police Sci. 225 (1953-1954)

This Book Review 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.

BOOK REVIEWS

BARBARIANS IN OUR MIDST. By *Virgil W. Peterson*. Little Brown, 1952. Pp. 395. \$4.50.

A book entitled "Communists in Our Midst" would undoubtedly have much more popular appeal in this day of un-American activities, atomic spies, loyalty-security programs, congressional investigations and international tension. The story of the twin evils, crime and political corruption in Mr. Peterson's "Barbarians in Our Midst," however, has much greater potential for the destruction of our grass roots democracy than Communism. Our large municipalities are in more immediate danger from the conspiracy of the gangster and the corrupt politician than the Communist. This is amply demonstrated by the author.

"Barbarians in Our Midst" is a shockingly sordid story of the growth, spread, and ramifications of crime and political corruption in the city of Chicago from its early beginning to the present. Except for degree and extent it might well be the story of other large municipalities which have failed to come to grips with these diseases.

In putting together this devastating indictment of enforcement of law and order in Chicago, or better the lack of it, the author obviously did not want for material. The book is replete with instances of official dereliction of duty and gangster control at various periods in all three branches of municipal government. Most of the criticism is heaped upon the executive, but with ample justification. Down through the years the office of Mayor has failed to produce the type of courageous leadership necessary to cope and deal with the gambler, the brothel keeper, the felon and the political crooks. Chicago has not, however, failed to produce the criminal and the politicians who have controlled not only the Mayor, but also the police and the courts.

The author's selection and analysis of facts developed by exhaustive research are excellent. To many Chicagoans inured to everyday newspaper accounts of crimes of violence, political chicanery, graft and corruption, acts so closely associated with the name, Chicago, this story may not seem unusual, although it is inconceivable that any Chicagoan could read the book without experiencing a sense of personal shame and guilt. Some readers may believe that the author has selected isolated facts to sensationalize his book. These are the ones who, no matter what, will always believe that "Capone" and "The Syndicate" are myths,—figments of some news reporters fertile imagination designed to provide good copy.

Mr. Peterson has done little moralizing. On the contrary, he has let the facts speak for themselves. An alarming implication is the fact that over the course of the years the nefarious alliances between the racketeer and the politician has not diminished. Their activities have become better organized and more monopolistic. The methods are still marked with the ruthlessness of the barbarian. The objective remains the same—greater power, more money. The source of the latter today lies primarily in the control of illegal gambling. Formerly illegal trafficking in liquor and prostitution constituted an important source of revenue. Desire for respectability has led to the infiltration of the criminal element into legitimate business and union activities. Business and labor are slowly awakening to this threat.

The warnings in the book are to those who believe the strength of our democratic institutions lies in our local governments. Belief alone in democracy is, however, not enough. Mr. Peterson indicates clearly that action by an aroused and courageous citizenry with intelligent political leadership

is required. There are some sporadic instances of the result of public indignation, but hardly enough. Other things it can point to with pride, but Chicago and gangsterism will never become antonymous by the simple expedient of sweeping dirt under the rug. What the author has done in this book has been not just to turn back a corner of the rug. He has pulled back the entire rug and exposed more than century's accumulation of filth,—a disgusting example of bad municipal housekeeping.

Barbarians in Our Midst, with its excellent index and notes, is a book well worth the reading by all who are concerned with preserving the strength which lies in our local democratic institutions. Truly the Barbarians, more than the Communists, are entrenched in our midst.

Vienna, Va.

GEORGE S. ROBINSON

CRIME IN MODERN SOCIETY. By *Mabel A. Elliott*. New York, Harper and Brothers, 1952. Pp. 874. \$6.00.

This volume is announced as a text-book for a college course in criminology and as a reference work for probation and parole officers, for police and for the administrative personnel of penal institutions. It must therefore be evaluated in relation to existing texts, and on the completeness, exactness, and up-to-dateness of the materials offered for reference use.

Dr. Elliott is head of the department of Sociology at Pennsylvania College for Women, author of a number of criminological studies, an experienced researcher and teacher. Her book is well organized for class room use, more readable than many. It covers the nature of crime, its extent, types of criminals, treatment of criminals, and crime prevention. Specifically excluded is the field of juvenile criminality since in many institutions this is presented as a separate subject—a highly questionable practice. If one were to cavil, it would be easy to raise a question or two as to the order in which the various components are covered. For example, the inclusion of the discussion of the American police system under "The Treatment of Criminals," if "treatment" is synonymous with "therapy," strikes me as somewhat illogical, but each instructor is free to rearrange the material for his classes in accordance with his own fancies or prejudices. Dr. Elliott must be congratulated on her courageous and objective presentation of Michael and Wechsler's legal-logical attack on socio-psychologically oriented studies of crime and its peripheral phenomena and for her dispassionate but effective confutation of their too general conclusion while accepting certain of their criticisms as valid. The short selected bibliographies which follow each chapter are helpful to both instructor and student—especially in introducing the latter to a number of the professional journals; but if the 22 illustrations are intended to present an accurate general view of American prison life, I am afraid the selection is too antiseptic and atypical.

It is difficult if not impossible to write a book which will meet the needs of the beginning student in criminology and at the same time serve as a valuable reference for practitioners. Dr. Elliott's chapters on prisons would be good required reading for the police, her general materials on criminological theory are valuable to all whose work brings them in contact with this group; but, confining my remarks to the area of my special competence, I should not like her chapter on police to serve as a reference for either police administrators or for students with more than casual interest in police organization, methods, and problems. In this chapter, there are minor errors of fact (eg: the minimum pay of New York City patrolmen is \$3750. per

annum not \$5200. as listed in Table 17 on p. 465); a *non sequitur* which will astound students of municipal government who have long condemned the "weak mayor" system ("In cities where police are deeply enmeshed in corrupt politics the police may be directly responsible to the mayor instead of operating under a police board . . .", p. 458); there are dogmatic statements in areas which to say the least are highly controversial, eg: "Foot patrol is obviously the best means of detecting danger to property and discovering crimes . . ." (p. 466); and invidious comparisons among police agencies not substantiated by any known criteria, eg: ". . . Milwaukee, which we have already indicated has one of the best police departments in the country . . ." (p. 466). Dr. Elliott's comments on prolonged interrogations, the arming of police, and the utilization of information furnished by "informers" indicate a most unrealistic approach to the problems of apprehending and convicting criminals. Criminals, except in "Iron Curtain" countries do not readily admit "chopping down the cherry tree;" they do not submit graciously when confronted by a man in blue; nor do they commit their crimes before reputable witnesses. Sherlock Holmes and Ellery Queen may have some success in extracting confessions from offenders dazed by the irrefutable logic of the sleuth's deductions but I'm much afraid that our more prosaic police detective unaided by a facile fiction-writer who controls the plot situation, would enjoy no such success.

There is much of interest and value in *Crime and Modern Society*. The student, or the crime-conscious citizen, who reads it with care will benefit exceedingly from Professor Elliott's labors, and will be able to play a much more effective role in ridding his community of criminality-inducing factors, in supporting modern, progressive penological legislation, and in calming his more hysterical and less well-informed fellow citizens when some particularly abhorrent crime or some temporary crime condition induces them to demand undesirable new laws or unnecessarily harsh punishments.

New York University

DONALD E. J. MAC NAMARA

FORENSIC PSYCHIATRY. By *Henry A. Davidson, M.D.* N. Y. 1952: Ronald Press. Pp. 398. \$8.00.

It is fully a quarter-century since a book of this sort appeared; an up-to-date medico-legal guide to the psychiatrist is therefore welcome. The author has had a long psychiatric experience, and has testified often in court. He writes fluently and clearly, and obviously from a long familiarity with his subject.

Doctor Davidson has divided his book into two parts, viz., The Content of Forensic Psychiatry (criminal responsibility, personal injury evaluation, malingering, commitment procedures, etc.) and The Tactics of Testimony (nature of medical testimony, records, examination of the medical witness, the hypothetical question, etc.). There is also an appendix, containing a "legal lexicon for doctors," a "psychiatric glossary for lawyers," examination guides, and the Draft Act for the Hospitalization of the Mentally Ill (referred to in the text of the Model Act).

The author takes the law and practice as he finds them, not discussing the whys and wherefores or possible improvements in fundamentals or viewpoints, or indulging in overwhelming citations (the total of cases cited is under 80). The volume thus presents a handy and sound statement of what the psychiatrist may expect and look for in any situation which may have legal repercussions. The book is a useful addition to the psychiatrist's or lawyer's library.

Saint Elizabeths Hospital

WINFRED OVERHOLSER, M.D.