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## Organized Crime in Chicago

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## COMMENTS

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### ORGANIZED CRIME IN CHICAGO

#### The Untapped Forces of Change

CLAUDE R. SOWLE\*

*[This comment is based upon a speech delivered by the author in November, 1963. Although the paper is devoted primarily to a critical evaluation of the efforts of Chicago law enforcement leaders to combat organized crime, it is believed that the analysis and proposals are relevant to the problems faced by all metropolitan areas in the fight against organized crime.]*

Few will question the statement that not only Chicago but also many other parts of the nation are today strongholds of organized crime.

Each of us, every day, is paying a bounty to these metropolitan purveyors of everything from dirty women to clean diapers. Some pay in terms of danger to life or bodily security. Others pay by foregoing the right to conduct their businesses under conditions of their own choosing. Nearly all pay in terms of the inflated cost of goods and services in fields where the mob enjoys a virtual monopoly. Most of us also pay in terms of the tax dollars which we contribute to wage a war against this enemy—a war, in the words of Chicago Police Superintendent O. W. Wilson, marked by “failure and impotence.”

Yes, the city of big shoulders, now surging forward in so many areas, has proved to be no match for the muscle of the mob.

Why do we find ourselves in this situation? Why, in a day of vastly improved police administration both here and elsewhere, are we still unable to make significant advances in our fight against organized crime?

Superintendent Wilson recently answered by charging that our lack of success is due basically to “a failure on the part of the general public to

provide the machinery within the total system for the administration of criminal justice to deal effectively with organized crime.” He spoke out strongly against the public’s “complete apathy,” its acceptance of organized crime “as one of the ingredients of life in a big city.”

I wholeheartedly agree with the Superintendent that there has been a failure in this country to give our police and prosecutors many of the weapons they need to fight organized crime.

There are today, for example, few laws on the statute books which go directly to the heart of the problem—which strike out at the overlords of crime, men now virtually insulated from the effective reach of the law.

Moreover, our legislatures generally have failed to give adequate attention to those vexing problems basic to the role of the police in a free society—the power to arrest, to search for and seize incriminating evidence, to conduct electronic surveillance, and to interrogate criminal suspects.

Nor have our courts dealt sympathetically with the problems of law enforcement. In the last fifty years, and particularly in the last decade, the judiciary, led by the United States Supreme Court, has painted our police and prosecutors into countless Constitutional corners.

Yes, the Superintendent is right; the country has failed “to provide the machinery . . . to deal effectively with organized crime.”

But when Superintendent Wilson lays the blame at the door of the general public, I must part company with him. Instead, I say that he is to blame. And so are most of the other leaders of law enforcement in this country.

Our police and prosecutors find themselves in their present predicament because they have failed to dedicate themselves to the difficult, time-consuming, and painstaking task of developing and selling to the leaders of community thought and action a comprehensive, sound, and effective

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program aimed at giving law enforcement the tools it needs.

Yes, the pendulum definitely has swung away from law enforcement, and every day it moves farther in the direction of the law violator. This has happened principally because our law enforcement leaders—disorganized, uncoordinated, unimaginative, and shockingly inarticulate—have failed to win, or indeed even fight for, the minds and hearts of the leadership establishment—that crucial reservoir of brains and guts which once harnessed in support of a just and urgent cause can bring to our legislatures and courts a message which cannot be ignored or turned away.

Into this leadership void has stepped a well-organized, highly articulate, and eternally vigilant assortment of evil-intentioned wrongdoers and well-intentioned do-gooders.

The success in the Illinois legislature of the organized crime sector of this power structure by now needs no documentation. Nor is the strength of the mob in court to be doubted. There the top legal brains available to the syndicate often are arrayed against lawyers for the state who are inexperienced, overworked, and hence dreadfully outclassed.

Moreover, an assist in both the legal and judicial arenas is frequently provided by the American Civil Liberties Union, a well-intentioned but sometimes painfully naive collection of civil rights purists whose stands on most law enforcement questions seem to proceed from the basic premise that every policeman is a potential Hitler or Castro.

Allow me, at this point, to give you an example of what I am talking about. It is a story about how the Chicago Police Department started and then lost, virtually by default, a crucial legislative battle here in Illinois.

Earlier this year, Superintendent Wilson sponsored in the legislature a bill to authorize court-approved law enforcement wiretapping. Things went poorly from the start. The bill, as originally introduced, was a shocking example of mushy thought and inept draftsmanship. Into this breach, however, stepped the State's Attorney of Cook County, Daniel Ward. He demanded, as the price of his support, substantial modifications in the bill. Although the amendments proposed by Mr. Ward did overcome some of the bill's inadequacies,

this shoring up of the legislation was accomplished at the price of dramatizing a significant philosophical schism between the State's Attorney and the Police Superintendent. In addition, it pointed up a frightful lack of communication between two law enforcement leaders who should be in continual contact on such vital issues.

Into the fray at this point jumped the American Civil Liberties Union as well as a number of editorial writers and news commentators; the legislation, they said, posed a grave threat to civil liberties. What more was needed by those legislators who already opposed the bill on less altruistic grounds? The outcome, of course, is now history; the wiretap bill never got to first base.

Why wasn't the original bill a workmanlike job based on painstaking research and thorough discussion? Why weren't all law enforcement leaders both in Chicago and downstate encouraged to participate in the formulation of the bill and its drafting? Why wasn't there an all-out campaign to win over the leadership establishment, including the press, to the view that the dangers of the bill were grossly exaggerated and that our law enforcement agencies should be given an opportunity, at least on a trial basis, to operate under such legislation?

To me, the answer is clear. This is just one of many examples which could be cited of too little law enforcement leadership and imagination too late. And how, to return to Superintendent Wilson's castigation of the general public, can the citizenry be held responsible for such a debacle?

What, then, can be done to recapture the initiative in the war against crime?

If we are to have any hope of success, we must take a leaf from the book of our opponents and organize. We must, in a way not presently done by any existing organization, mobilize those in the power structure of the community and then bring to bear upon these urgent problems their great imagination, intellectual power, and strength of purpose. From such organization would come, I believe, a comprehensive and saleable law enforcement program the net effect of which would be to grasp the legal pendulum and swing it back once more in the direction of those honest and law-abiding citizens who yearn for a better Chicago.

To this end, I urge Chicago Mayor Richard Daley to appoint at once a blue ribbon Committee To Fight Organized Crime. I urge him to make

available to this group every resource which may be needed to eliminate this disease which has so long afflicted this community.

Other community blights have responded to such treatment. Why not organized crime? Our professional crime fighters doubtless would be of great aid in such a movement. But the job is

simply too important to be entrusted solely to these professionals who thus far have displayed so little ability to come to grips with the challenge.

We must act now. Chicago will never achieve its true measure of greatness until we have turned back the forces of organized crime which now permeate our community.