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Review of “Here's to Crime,” By Courtney Ryley Cooper

Arnold J. Lien

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BOOK REVIEWS

HERE'S TO CRIME. By Courtney Ryley Cooper. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937. Pp. XI, 454.

For the reader whose technic of reading involves the actual repeating of the words as they occur on the page and not merely seeing them and getting their meanings by sight, this book has horrifying embarrassments in store. Americans who are engaged in the businesses of crime and vice talk in terms of the life of which they are a part. If they were gardeners they would talk about spades and rakes and azaleas and plant lice and blights and droughts and blue ribbons without any attempt to call these by other names. They are not gardeners and what they talk about is not gardening; but they talk just as plainly about their business as the gardeners do about theirs. And Courtney Cooper lets them do a lot of talking in their own natural way. The pity is not that these people talk about the business they know best and in the manner which best fits that business. The tragic pity is rather that there should be in the United States of America the sort of business in which these Americans are engaged.

The business of crime is the largest single business in the country. On the moral, "crime does not pay," the author makes the comment that "It seems rather strange, if crime does not pay, that more than three million, five hundred thousand persons should be engaged in it." The chance which the average American has of entirely escaping any serious contact with these "business" men is about one in four. The minor and indirect contacts practically no one escapes.

To the author apparently the principles, the methods, the staples, and the specialists of the practitioners of crime are intimately known as a result of study and observation and far-flung direct contacts. He is in a position, consequently, to reveal with telling effect the appalling magnitude and the intricate permeations of the whole criminal traffic. An abundance of illustrative material has been collected from the lives and records of famous criminals of recent years. The author makes clear that the commercialization, blackmail, racketeering, and other crimes which have been built upon the irrationally over-dominant sex factor in men and women have assumed such large proportions as to be seriously alarming. In spite of the unsavory language of the chapters dealing with these phases of crime, a wide reading by legal, social, moral, educational, civic, and spiritual leaders is urgent. For the first essential to a solution of the problem is a fuller knowledge of its existence and its seriousness.

Unfortunately, among the officers most immediately charged with the solution of the problem are found a considerable number who are themselves direct participants in the criminal business. The author cites instances where the fingerprints required of all applicants for positions on police departments revealed that over sixteen percent of the applicants had records in the criminal files. Presumably where no fingerprints were required, some of those accepted were men in direct alliance with active criminals. Numer-

ous instances are reported of active criminals in legislative, executive, and police offices. Without these co-workers in public office, the crime-business would be doomed.

The criminal is aided greatly also by ready sympathizers in private life who offer shelter and other forms of assistance. Indispensable to the thieves are the numerous "respectable" distributors who help in the marketing of the loot. Furthermore, "The legal profession, wittingly or unwittingly, has done more to clog the courts, to delay prosecution, to open prison doors, to surround criminals with legal and statutory safeguards, and to stultify justice, than any other single medium in our criminal history." It might be commented here that if these results have come "unwittingly" there is something wrong with our legal system which calls for constructive action and if the results have come "wittingly" the purging of the legal profession which is now under way calls for a brisk acceleration in tempo.

Courtney Cooper sees much that is admirable and promising in the agencies of the national government and their recent activities and achievements. But for a solution of the problem of the business of crime he regards it as indispensable that law enforcement be completely divorced from politics and from criminals. For this, a crystallized and vigorous public opinion is needed. "There is no weapon on earth so powerful as the ballot when properly and consistently used as a means of reward or reprisal. This weapon has been unflinching over a period of many years. It is yours in the interest of a crime-free America—If you will use it."

A sensational volume? Rather a sober volume of sensational facts by an eminent journalist who has an effective way of mustering an amazing collection of data; a good bit of ugly realism for both the active and the prospective lawyer to contemplate; scholarly in its own way—which is, of course, not the academic way.

St. Louis, Missouri.

ARNOLD J. LIEN.†

LABOR TREATIES AND LABOR COMPACTS. By Abraham C. Weinfeld. Bloomington, Indiana: The Principia Press, Inc., 1937. Pp. VI, 136.

In view of the entrance of the United States into the International Labor Organization in 1935, the World Textile Conference in Washington in 1937, and the recent steps towards regional state compacts within the United States involving aspects of the labor problem, the appearance of this volume seems peculiarly timely. In part the book consists of articles previously published in the Law Reviews of the universities of California and Chicago, and of George Washington University. The author, a member of the New York Bar, writes with clarity and extensive documentation; but the study is not an exhaustive one and the reasoning and conclusions on controversial and unadjudicated questions are not always convincing.

The core of the volume is the treaty-making power; its extent and its limitations. The author expounds at length his thesis that agreements and

† Professor of Political Science, Washington University.