

Crime Situation Reviewed by Noted Criminologists

Scientists engaged in study of social and economic problems who came from all over the country to meet with the American Association for the Advancement of Science devoted three entire days to discussion of the American crime situation and law enforcement.

The spirit of lawlessness which seems to be growing in America, and which leads otherwise respectable citizens to break the prohibition laws, traffic laws, and taxation laws, was deplored by Dr. Hastings H. Hart, of the Russell Sage Foundation. Dr. Hart urged that Americans begin deliberately to cultivate a different attitude toward the law, especially among young people of the country.

Tax Laws Impossible

The subject of enforcing the tax laws was discussed in detail by Dr. Fred R. Fairchild, professor of political economy at Yale University. Dr. Fairchild showed how property and income tax laws are not being generally enforced.

"The reason," he said "is that as they are now constituted these laws are incapable of enforcement. The first step in the correction of this situation must be to frame laws capable of enforcement."

Dishonesty in business costs the United States somewhere between two and ten billion dollars a year, Dr. Joseph Mayer, of Tufts College, told the scientists. Methods of protection against dishonesty in business have simply not kept pace with our industrial expansion, he declared.

The crime of arson was particularly mentioned by Dr. Mayer, because it threatens not only property, but life itself.

Arson a Profession

"It has been estimated that nearly 50 per cent. of the loss by fire is due to arson-burning property to defraud," he said. "During 1924 the fire loss given by the National Board of Fire Underwriters of New York was approximately \$549,000,000, of which \$220,000,000 was due to incendiarism. Arson has become a profession. It is closely allied to fraudulent bankruptcies and other forms of commercial crime."

Dr. Mayer stated that in the women's clothing industry, where profits depend on getting rid of stock before styles change, there are so many fires wiping out old, unsalable stocks, that some fire insurance companies in New York refuse insurance to clothing manufacturers.

Other commercial criminals de-

scribed by Dr. Mayer included the fake stock salesman, the embezzler, forger, and the crooked promoter of real estate.

In conclusion, he said that the time has come for the Federal Government to take drastic action against commercial dishonesty. "The Federal Trade Commission's powers should be extended or another agency created to ferret out what has already been labeled as criminal in commercial dealings," he said. "Such a federal bureau, in cooperation with the states, private agencies and the courts, should go far to bring the commercial crime situation under control."

Pistols Plentiful

"The pistol is the curse of America and pistols are almost as plentiful as lead pencils in this country, good citizens and bad citizens possessing them," declared William McAdoo, chief city magistrate of New York. Mr. McAdoo refuted the argument that criminals in this country go armed, while honest citizens cannot protect themselves because of the laws against carrying weapons.

"The pistol as a defensive weapon is utterly useless in the hands of a law-abiding, orderly citizen because of the element of surprise on the part of the burglar," he stated. "Time and again bank messengers loaded with pistols have been shot down by robbers who carefully planned the attack."

People who want pistols get them easily, he said, showing that the number of pistols made and imported into America would indicate that from 50 to 75 per cent. of the population in the United States is armed.

"Numerous fortunes are made by the mail order agencies and houses selling pistols. One man in New York confessed to the police that he had made \$400,000 in two years sending pistols through the mails," said Mr. McAdoo.

Take Profit From Crime

The crime business in this country offers dishonest and weak individuals greater financial returns and less chance of failure than legitimate business. This angle on the crime situation was stressed by James M. Hepbrun, managing director of the Baltimore Criminal Justice Commission.

It has been proved that criminals are slightly superior in intelligence

to the average citizen, and they consider chances of success and failure of an undertaking just as the average man does, Mr. Hepbrun declared.

"When apprehension becomes more certain," he continued, "trial more prompt, conviction of the guilty swift and sure and punishment adequate, professional criminals are brought to realize that the game isn't worth the candle. Crime as a business is like any other business. When you take the profit out of it, it collapses."

The work of Baltimore's crime commission was explained by the speaker, who told of the improvements it has brought about in the local administration of justice.

"Whereas several years ago only one reported crime in every five or six was followed by arrest, now arrests take place in one of every two reported crimes," he said. "Cases are tried with a degree of promptness unparalleled in the United States as far as any known records show, as 92 per cent. of the cases tried are tried within three weeks of the date of arrest."

Ten citizens' associations combating crime are now in existence in the United States, Mr. Hepbrun reported.

Stealing Learned at Home

A dozen ways in which a child may learn to steal in its own home were cited by Dr. Thomas V. Moore, psychiatrist of Washington, D. C., in a discussion of juvenile delinquency.

Dr. Moore said:

"The parent who, perhaps from a false idea of economy, never gives a child spending money; the parent who talks openly before the children of debts that are unpaid; the parent who continually talks before the children of the good things of this life and holds up money, place, position, station, pleasures, as the only object of human ambition; the parent who has no religion and gives the children no moral principles; the parent who, perhaps through poverty, sends the child to steal coal from a neighboring car on a side-track; the parent who sends the little boy or girl to steal money from a drunken father's pockets; the parent who steals himself and brings home the product of stealing, the parent who does not become the

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companion and guide of the child as the child grows to maturity—all of these are factors in the background of the child who grows up to have no respect for the property rights of others, and who therefore steals."

The psychopathic individual who plays so important a part in juvenile crime records is the result of a defect transmitted directly by heredity, Dr. Moore believes. The dominant roots of the disorder, he said, are probably alcoholism and syphilis, and whatever is done to control these social evils is an indirect but radical treatment of juvenile delinquency. Moral training should be given boys and girls at school, and good examples set before them at home, he said.

Insanity Problem Solved?

The practice of calling psychiatrists into a criminal court to testify that a defendant was not responsible for his misdeeds was deplored by Dr. Sheldon Glueck, instructor in criminology at Harvard University.

"It is no more fitting that a purely scientific psychiatric examination be made in open court and under rules of evidence than that a patient with possible diphtheria or some other bodily ill be brought into court on a stretcher and examined subject to the eagle eye of judge or jury and the non-medical majesty of the law. The heat of a forensic battle is bound to interfere with any scientific, objective examination of the defendant."

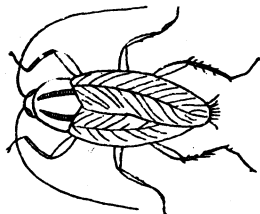
How Massachusetts has taken the lead of the states in providing for unbiased psychiatric examination for certain prisoners, and how the system works was described by Dr. Glueck. Psychiatric experts from the state's department of mental diseases have the task of examining certain types of prisoners when reported to them by the clerk of the court. These are prisoners indicted for capital offenses, those known to have been indicted for any other offense more than once, or to have been previously convicted of a felony. The experts in mental and emotional disorders report whether or not it would be a waste of time and expense to try the accused person and whether or not it would be inhumane to bring him into a public court for trial.

During the five years that the law has been in force, 295 accused per-

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NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE



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Two Unwanted Guests

Man has, with infinite labor, made domesticates of a number of his lower brother animals, to serve him; and he has admitted a lesser few into the privileged position of housemates. There are others that have domesticated themselves and become man's housemates whether he will or not, but they never serve him, and they take no thought at all of pleasing him. They stick to him more faithfully than do his dog and cat, and try as he will he can not get rid of them.

Of such is the clan of the cockroach. Let a man build his house never so tight and dry, let his wife keep it never so clean, sooner or later this sleek dark mephistophelean insect will come scuttling up the plumbing, and establish its numerous progeny in almost undislodgable possession. It is like the rat; always with man and always hated by him.

But it was on this planet long before either man or his works, and in sooth most cockroaches even now never trouble human dwellings. The original cockroaches were, as their less known and therefore less offensive descendants still are, dwellers in the forest, making their homes among fallen leaves and under the loosened bark of dead logs. And they had strange leaves and logs to dwell in, too, for they were in the Coal Age, some twenty millions of years ago.

The odd thing about it is that though almost all the other animals and plants of the earth have passed through the most astonishing changes in evolution since then, these original cockroaches were so much like the n-th degree great-grandchildren that if one of them were to appear in a modern kitchen the least scientific of housewives would reach for her broom without an instant's hesitation. Cockroaches are very conservative—they neither believe in evolution nor practise it.

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Corn Borer's Appetite

Results of breeding experiments in which European corn borers were reared, in Ohio, on plants other than corn, are reported by C. R. Neiswander and L. I. Huber of the Ohio agricultural experiment station. It was found in the breeding experiments that the borers fed as readily on smartweed, ragweed and dahlia as on corn, while but few larvae were able to reach the full grown stage on sorghum or celery, and not a single borer reached this stage on pigweed, potato and velvet leaf, they stated. The borer is quite commonly found in pigweed, smartweed, and cocklebur in heavily infested cornfields but, so far as is known, occurs there only by migration from corn where the eggs were deposited and the young larvae fed.

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sons have been examined, Dr. Glueck said. Of the 295, 26 were declared insane, 25 were mentally deficient, and 11 were psychopathic cases, which belong on the borderline of mental disorder, and are considered partly responsible for their acts. In 226 cases no evidence of mental abnormality sufficient to call for treatment or other special disposition was discovered.

A large percentage of those found to be mentally deficient were committed by the courts for an indeterminate period to the special institution for defective delinquents. Others were put through the usual court trial and given brief definite sentences, although Dr. Glueck stated, "for the benefit of themselves and society they should have been disposed of as the former group were."

As matters stand throughout the country, persons who are dangerous to general security because of some mental defect or disorder are frequently not detected until after they have committed some shocking crime, the criminologist said. The Massachusetts law, he declared, makes it possible to discover such individuals early in their delinquent careers and to protect the public against them.

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Soil problems of the southern sand hill belt are to be studied by the U. S. Department of Agriculture at a new southern test farm.

Weevil Waves Start Small

Despite the remarkable way insects learn to adapt themselves to environment, the cotton boll weevil is still a little non-plussed about how to deal with the alternate freezes and thaws of a winter in the more northern cotton states.

F. A. Fenton of the United States Bureau of Entomology states that less than one per cent of weevils in northern South Carolina survive long enough to produce the summer generations that infest cotton. A larger proportion actually survive the winter but die in the spring before their cotton food is at hand.

Yet this region is heavily infested with the weevil each year. This is because even the few surviving are sufficient to produce thousands of weevils. The weevils breed rapidly, each surviving female laying about 600 eggs before she dies.

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Tree Efficiencies Measured

How to make our forests more efficient is the aim of investigations carried on in the Rocky Mountain Forest Experiment Station at Colorado Springs by C. G. Bates and J. Roesser. By growing seedlings of various kinds of evergreen trees on a table under the light of tungsten-filament blue-glass lamp for ten hours a day for nine months they determined the limit of light essential for the development of each kind of tree. They found that some species were five times more efficient than others at trapping the roving rays and utilizing their energy for construction purposes. The California redwood ranked first in efficiency as light-catcher, for it could keep alive with less than four-fifths of one per cent. full noon sunshine. Engelmann spruce and Douglass fir ranked next with one and a quarter per cent. Most of the pines require two to three per cent. while the scrubby pinon of the Colorado foothills, failed to flourish with even thirteen per cent. of sunlight intensity. This accounts for the phenomenal ability of the redwood and spruce to make rapid growth in shade of deep timberland and shows why they have outstripped many other trees in evolutionary development. Mr. Bates concludes: "Broadly speaking, we can not afford to give space in the forest to a species which is relatively inefficient in photosynthesis, unless it is producing a wood of exceptional technical value."

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