

1963

Book Review

Davis B. Young

Follow this and additional works at: <https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/clevstlrev>



Part of the [Criminal Law Commons](#)

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Recommended Citation

Davis B. Young, Book Review, 12 Clev.-Marshall L. Rev. 191 (1963)

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at EngagedScholarship@CSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Cleveland State Law Review by an authorized editor of EngagedScholarship@CSU. For more information, please contact library.es@csuohio.edu.

*Reviewed by Davis B. Young**

ORGANIZED CRIME IN AMERICA, by Gus Tyler. Published by the University of Michigan Press. 421 pp. (1962).

Originally commissioned as a study on organized crime by the Fund for the Republic, this book merits attention both for its scope and style. Mr. Tyler has acted more in the role of editor than author, although he prefaces each of the seven sections of this work with his own thoughtful views.

The list of contributors is impressive: Walter Lippmann, Arthur Schlesinger, Estes Kefauver, Robert Kennedy, Sylvia Porter, Max Lerner and a host of other equally respected observers of the contemporary American scene. One of the obvious dangers which would confront the editor of such a study as this would be the temptation to become bogged down with a purely philosophical dissection of our society and why we have produced the criminal element we have. However, Mr. Tyler seems to have used his editing function with the skill of a surgeon and made a conscious effort to purge this book of such repetitious verbiage.

Indeed, this book might even be fairly termed spicy, at times. We draw no parallel between it and a paperback detective thriller, but, there is just the right portion of shoot-em-up liberally sprinkled throughout for seasoning to add an element of readability to what would otherwise be a somewhat dry report.

Just as Mr. Tyler has compiled an auspicious list of law abiding contributors, he has also collected the words and deeds of an equally star-studded lineup of hoodlums, con-artists, extortionists and vice lords: Lucky Luciano, Al Capone, Dutch Schultz, Louis Lepke.

The book dwells in particular on the efforts of organized crime to control and procure payment from business activities ranging from prostitution, gambling and illicit whiskey production to movie houses, entertainment and trade unions. To the extent that they have met success in such undertakings, the public has borne the burden through a degradation of accepted moral standards, higher prices to the consumer to make possible the payoff, corruption in some local police forces, the buying and selling of

* A.B., Univ. of North Carolina; Second-year student at Cleveland-Marshall Law School.

political influence and taxes levied to support such programs as federal hospitals for the rehabilitation of narcotics addicts. Mr. Tyler makes it pointedly clear that the underworld is not something which we can turn our back to; the activities of organized crime have a definite effect on the individual both from a moral standpoint and from a practical and financial one as well.

One of the apparent difficulties this country has had in curtailing the activities of crime has been the frequent disability of local governments to formulate an effective program of enforcement. If a numbers racket is flourishing it is only because the public knows of it and will place a daily wager of a dime or a dollar. If the public is aware of such an operation, the police are too. It has been estimated that in some situations of this nature, the numbers bank works twelve to fifteen days a month just to pay off the police protection, starting with the local patrolman and going up to the police chief in some instances.

Blame for local mishandling of these problems can also be traced to the politicians, many of whom are dependent on the votes and influence and campaign contributions of the underworld for their jobs. Finally, we must consider voter apathy and disregard for the law, a prevalent seed of destruction, which has been planted in every segment of the population. The very people who support prostitution and gambling aren't going to demand an end to them.

In review, the tremendous organization involved in the national crime syndicate should also be brought out. Each local underworld is tied into a national underworld in a loose but loyal federation. The country is divided into districts, and each district is divided into various areas of operation. One man may control the numbers racket in Chicago, another union activities in Pittsburgh, another prostitution in Miami, still another bar payoffs in Boston. It is neatly done so that nobody will cut in on another's territory. When the rules are broken, gang wars come out in the open, assassination is possible, or a truce may be reached and a new agreement worked out. If somebody gets out of line in New York, an organization "torpedo" from Denver may be brought in to dispose of him.

We must also consider the ethnic questions involved in organized crime. "In the past the finger has pointed at the Yankee, the Irish, the Jewish, the Reb. Today it points at the Italian. At whom will the accusing finger point tomorrow," is

what Mr. Tyler is asking? The historical pattern has been the same; each group which has dominated organized crime has been an emerging people. When they have won a respected position in society they have invariably turned to more decent undertakings.

Mr. Tyler may not have a best seller, but he has made a contribution worthy of note. It is not light reading; but neither is it heavy. It is a fair and scholarly presentation of a problem with an occasional touch of humor and humanity. Organized crime is an immense field to cover in one volume. Yet, Mr. Tyler has whet the appetite and leads you to the brink of discovery. As Walter Lippmann has said, "The underworld is what it is largely because Americans are too moral to tolerate human weakness, and because they are too great lovers of liberty to tolerate tyranny, which might make it possible to abolish what they prohibit."

This book is recommended reading for lawyers, some of whom may be tempted to accept fees from the underworld for pointing out loopholes in the law.