

A History of British Criminology

(ed. Paul Rock, Oxford University Press, 1988). £9.95

This book is a major review of the history of criminology and first appeared as a special issue of *ISTD's British Journal of Criminology* (Volume 28 No.1). Writers combine personal reflections on their own experience of criminology with clear accounts of the subject's present standing in the world as they endeavour to locate the new character of British Criminology. It's an interesting, occasionally intimate, view of the past and a fascinating read.

David Garland begins by recounting criminology's proud links with social reform and the tendency for both research and debate to be 'organised by engaged professionals rather than by maverick intellectuals'. The historical relevance of the *ISTD*, Howard League and other, similar organisations is sketched out in articles by Terence Morris and JS Martin. More recent developments in sociology and radical criminology are ably dealt with by David Downes and Jock Young while criminological amnesia about women and crime is tackled by Allison Morris and Loraine Gelsthorpe. Other noteworthy contributions come from Donald West, Robert Reiner, Andrew Ashworth, Ken Pease and J A Sharpe.

Alison Liebling, *Institute of Criminology, Cambridge*

Crime and Punishment: Interpreting the Data

AK Bottomley & K Pease, Open University Press 1986. £9.95

'There are lies, damned lies, statistics and criminal statistics'. Clearly, and with a refreshing touch of humour, Bottomley and Pease explore the realm of criminal statistics; examining the validity and usefulness of figures. All the salient aspects are discussed, from trends in sentencing and imprisonment to public fear of crime and data on victims. By critically reviewing the statistics and by reference to many other surveys and

pieces of data, Bottomley and Pease explode the myths surrounding crime in England and Wales. This analytical treatment of the subject allows useful and productive conclusions to rise from the ashes of the 'damned lies'.

Suzy Abbott, *Jesus College, Cambridge*

Buster

Colin Shindler, Sphere Books 1988. £2.99

There have been a number of books written on crime and criminals that provide an insight into the criminal psyche and contribute to an understanding of the criminal milieu. Witness the autobiographies of John McVicar and Jimmy Boyle; read Brian Masters' compelling 'Killing for Company' about mass murderer Dennis Nielson. And then there is Colin Shindler's 'Buster'.

In case you missed the hype, 'Buster' is the book of the film of the crime (of the century, etc.). The eponymous hero pulls off the great train robbery (though he 'never hurts nobody' in the process), absconds to Acapulco to be surrounded by foreigners who have problems speaking the 'Queen's English', longs for steak and chips and finally returns to England and his loving wife's embrace. She had given up the joys of Acapulco somewhat earlier because she missed London, the smog and all those lovable Cockney caricatures. Buster's return to Blighty is well blighted when he gets nicked by the 'Old Bill', does nine years 'bird' and becomes a flower seller outside Waterloo Station on his release. An everyday fable for criminal folk.

The rehabilitation of '60s criminals, of which 'Buster' is an example, has much to say about contemporary Britain under Thatcher. There are myths about the '60s: that streets were safe to walk in; that there was a community spirit allowing doors to be left open without fear; that racial and sexual tensions didn't exist. There is something genuinely sad about these retro-images of a mythical past. This is nostalgia for the simplicity of times when criminals were lovable rogues, women and the ethnic population

knew their place and a working class hero was something to be.

Francis Charlton

Our Country's Good

Wertenbaker, Royal Court Theatre, Autumn 1988

Imagine an Australian penal colony in the time of red coats and powdered wigs. A lieutenant wants to produce a play using convicts as actors. In this he is abetted by some fellow officers and a liberally minded governor, but in the wings are other officers convinced that the whole idea is ridiculous, out of place and likely to undermine discipline. The convicts are a disparate crew, including one who has seen Garrick acting in London and makes disastrous attempts to imitate his style, few can read and all take time to get used to the idea of acting. The 'anti' officers do their best to wreck the enterprise: the would-be thespians are kept working late, flogged, manacled and even put on sentence of death for petty theft. Despite this, or because of it, the convicts develop tremendous loyalty to the production.

This award winning play by Timberlake Wertenbaker is very funny in parts and is a vindication of penal reformer John Howard's remark that there is 'a way of managing some of the most desperate, with ease to yourself, and advantage to them.' Winston Churchill, when Liberal Home Secretary, was converted to the cause of penal reform by John Galsworthy's play 'Justice'; it would do no harm for present-day Home Office Ministers to see 'Our Country's Good'.

Ernest Martin

The Magistrate

Journal of the Magistrates' Association Published monthly. For details contact 'The Magistrate', 28 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 6DD. Tel 01 387 2353.

As the official organ of the Magistrates' Association to which the majority of JPs belong, The Magistrate reflects its membership well. But on a single reading the journal is dry, somewhat reactionary

and, judging by the letters page, contentious in the extreme. One letter calls for immediate custody, not only for dealers, but also for persons found in possession of the drug 'crack'. Although a discourse on crack is important, the tone of the letter is hard line. If it reflects the opinion of the magistracy, then what hope is there for government initiatives into alternatives to custody or penal reform?

It is a strength of the journal that over a number of months it builds up a perspective on issues (vide the discourse on television licence offenders) and that it gives its readers

a forum for a balanced view of a subject and for its debate. Its other strong point is its educative function in the continuing training of magistrates.

Justice of the Peace

The Journal for the Practitioner in the Magistrates' Court. Published weekly. For details contact: Justice of the Peace Ltd., Little London, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1PG.

Established in 1837, the 'Justice of the Peace' is the oldest legal journal in the world. It is read by Justices' Clerks and others in criminal justice.

'Justice of the Peace' is a journal for practitioners. It deals with procedural matters, articles from barristers and academics, case notes, parliamentary issues, practise questions and answers, has healthy letters and recruitment sections and, as a weekly publication, is up to date in matters that affect lawyers in court. The coming months, following the publication of the Green Papers concerning the legal professions, will no doubt be difficult for the profession as a whole. It will be through the pages of 'Justice of the Peace' that a debate can be aired.

Francis Charlton.

Not the Last Word

The National Membership Scheme

It has rarely if ever been possible to eradicate a whole category of crime. Yet the Government seems to believe that football hooliganism can be wiped out by a small piece of plastic. The plan for a compulsory National Membership Scheme for football is an extraordinary intervention into the organisation of popular culture. While not as dramatic as the prohibition of alcohol in the USA in the '20s, it is just as ill conceived and has as little chance of succeeding.

The scheme requires everyone who wishes to attend a football match to become a member and carry an identity card complete with photograph. Without this card, which can be withdrawn from fans who misbehave, it will not be possible to attend a Football League match.

Own Goals

There are so many problems with this scheme that its opponents hardly know from which direction to attack it. It won't help prevent hooliganism — most trouble now happens outside the grounds. Inside the grounds, video surveillance has been highly successful and all football league grounds are now equipped with cameras. Segregation of fans, well organised policing, escorting away fans and drink bans have also helped to diminish the extent of violence.

Fans bent on hooliganism will get in anyway, by using false names, stolen cards, bribing gatekeepers, etc. Even if violent fans are outlawed, there is always a fresh flow of hooligans into the game and those bent on violence may simply find other outlets where they will be less easy to control — witness the regular incidents in small town centres on weekend nights.

The most highly publicised incidents in recent years have involved England's away games but the scheme won't prevent fans travelling overseas.

While the scheme won't be any real use in tackling hooliganism, it will provide the sport with additional problems. Attendances will drop as casual fans and foreign visitors will be less likely to attend spontaneously. It will be a costly and cumbersome scheme to operate, inevitably leading to irritation and possible trouble. If identification depends on gatekeepers challenging a resemblance to a photograph, the entry process could be further delayed by argument. The scheme is also open to abuse by those who have the power to order the withdrawal of cards.

The powers are out of all proportion to the reality of the problem. There is violence at football

matches but considering the large crowds, the number of serious injuries are tiny — it's much more dangerous on the streets and on the roads than in a football stadium.

The Scheme infringes civil liberties, and could presage universal compulsory identity cards.

So why has it been introduced? In major part, it is a product of the power of the tabloid press to produce moral panics around some social problems (football hooliganism, AIDS, Acid House) while ignoring others — homelessness, unemployment, racist attacks, etc. Football hooliganism is a high profile problem about which Something Must Be Done.

There must be more sober reflection on the complexities of football hooliganism, which in the end can only be solved from within the terrace culture itself. There are signs, in the massive growth of alternative football magazines and in the establishment of the Football Supporters' Association that such internal reform may already be underway.

Gary Whannel is a freelance writer and researcher, specialising in television sport. He is the author of 'Blowing the Whistle: The Politics of Sport' (Pluto 1983).