

There has been so much unsympathetic criticism of Chicago's difficulties with the criminal world that I welcome the opportunity to come before this audience, including so many of my friends and so many former Chicagoans, to put this matter before you in as clear a light as possible.

It might be said that little is known about detailed criminal activities in Chicago; this is true likewise in New York. If it had not been, you would not have been through the recent bad developments in your judicial system. We are not going to give you a road map for the Chicago crime situation, but we think that may fairly be said to be the case of other large American cities.

## THE BACKGROUNDS OF CRIME

### IN CHICAGO

An address by Colonel Robert R. McCormick

at a luncheon of advertising executives,

Ritz Carlton Hotel

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The history of this tie-up goes back to the Haymarket riots in the Eighties, when, as many of you remember, a bomb was thrown. Six anarchists were subsequently hanged. From that time on all labor troubles were accompanied by revolutionary movements or revolutionary movements were incidental to labor troubles. Certainly the rank and file case to

How far criminality has invaded every walk of life I hesitate to suggest. When you have an illegal industry with enormous cash resources and a citizenship that hasn't grasped the seriousness or even the very existence of that industry, you are going to find frequent surprises. The police forces in our principal cities are preponderantly venal. Even in the last presidential election in Chicago both parties catered, or wished to cater, to the criminal element. Prominent citizens came to me to ask me not to denounce one of the parties if it placed the conduct of its campaign in the hands of the most notorious gangster in the city.

I need not be too critical of others. The trail of corruption reached directly into my own office. A reporter, a man of no consequence to the newspaper, had apparently been able to give the impression in criminal circles that he was of consequence. An intimate acquaintance, or friend, of the chief of police and of one of the largest market speculators in Chicago, this man was reputed to have inherited a considerable fortune. I say reputed, because it turned out to be untrue. It was true that in the rise of the stock market he had made a good-sized paper fortune, and in the decline had lost it.

This man was shot and killed at noon one day last June, in the midst of a large crowd. At the time there was no suggestion in our office or out of it that this man was dishonest. I have yet to hear of any reputable man who suspected him before his death, but information gathered after his murder indicated an income aside from his stock speculations much in excess of his pay, and yet, from any standard that I can conceive, an income much too small to explain a public assassination; that income was in the neighborhood of \$20,000

a year, not \$60,000 as has been erroneously reported.

Realizing that no crime of the politically protected gangsters had been punished in Chicago in the past ten or fifteen years, that not one of these crimes had even been seriously pursued, I requested the state's attorney to appoint a lawyer of prominence, in whom I had confidence, to conduct this case. Some extraordinary developments were forthcoming.

The pistol with which the reporter was killed was identified by Col. Goddard, a ballistics expert, although its serial number had been erased. The Colt company, which made it, informed the state's attorney that it had been sold to a man who was in a strange business, that of furnishing weapons to people who wanted to commit murder. A man by the name of Von Frantzius was seized and before he had a chance to steel himself, told the name of the man to whom he had delivered this pistol, not in his place of business, but on an elevated railway station after dark.

Through an anonymous letter we learned that the buyer of the weapon left Chicago on a certain date and came to a definite address in New York. He was traced there. He had departed, but through a message he left, concerning the forwarding of his laundry, he was followed to California and there arrested. As is usual in such cases he had an alibi. The governor of California, over his protest, extradited him to Chicago. There his lawyer demanded that he be admitted to bail and when this was resisted by the state, his attorney called for a policeman who had been near the scene of the murder and had pursued a runaway a few seconds after the shots were heard.

To the surprise of the lawyer the policeman declared that the runaway and the man under

arrest were the same. With all the unfavorable conditions faced, this identification stood and the prisoner, Frank Foster, was held for trial. The matter is still dragging through the courts.

With other suspects, less dramatically presented cases have shown that judges on the bench are unfavorable to the state's contentions and even well-prepared prosecutions fail to hold men arrested. Suspects were turned out as fast as they were brought in. You could make a grimly humorous picture of it; a circus in which known criminals were released as soon as their identity was made plain.

All the usual processes of law seemed inadequate to reach this protected element. So we dug up an old statute on vagabondage, which had never been used in Chicago. It is a well-written law, providing that a man who has no visible means of support and is a suspicious character may be jailed. There was a great disinclination on the part of many jurists to exercise this law, or to be harsh with those accused under it. One well-known pander, who never did a stroke of honest work in his life, was released in a nominal bond and has never stood trial.

In the difficulties which we were experiencing, one young judge stood up—Judge John H. Lyle. Perhaps officials of his type are necessary in crises; competent but, from the traditional legal viewpoint, erratic and not of the true judicial temperament. He began holding out criminal vagabonds in bonds of \$10,000, \$50,000 and even \$100,000 each. The result was pretty much the same as putting them in jail without trial. Circumstances seemed to justify this: as one other jurist remarked: "That method is better than using the lamp posts for gallows."