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PUBLIC AFFAIRS PAMPHLETS

WHAT MAKES CRIME?

BY WINTHROP D. LANE

TEST YOURSELF	Yes	No
Recent years have seen a great increase in crime.	.....	.....
Foreigners are responsible for most of this crime.	.....	.....
Crime can be stopped by adequate punishment.	.....	.....

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WHAT MAKES CRIME?

By WINTHROP D. LANE

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1942

WHY is there so much interest in crime? Why do so many people read stories about criminals in the newspapers and show their interest in other ways? Is it simply because crime is serious and we all agree that criminals ought to be caught and crime stopped?

That hardly explains the amount of newspaper space given to criminals or the way the stories are written. They are written as if they were interesting for their own sake—as if the editors knew that people wanted to read details of crimes, how criminals commit their acts, what happens to them and what happens to their victims.

Is it because we are fascinated by what we dislike? Is it because criminals get a lot of attention and even become public characters sometimes—and we all like attention?

Or is the reason that we really become interested in the way criminals plan their crimes and carry them out? Are we interested in the ingenuity shown by the criminal? Do we identify ourselves with him step by step, wondering whether we would have done as he did or better?

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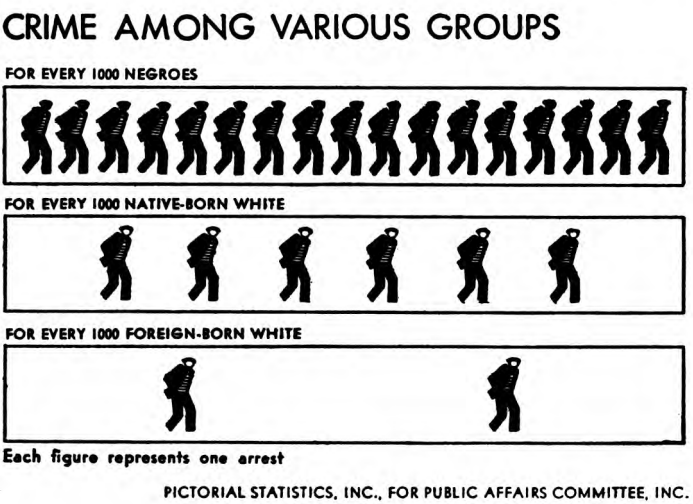
unanimous that Negroes are much more liable to arrest than whites since police officers . . . feel that there is little risk of trouble in arresting Negroes, while greater care must be exercised in arresting whites." Judges are likely to conclude that conditions in Negro homes are unsuitable for children, and so commit a greater percentage of Negro children to institutions than white children. The general prejudice against the



Negroes, coupled with the social and economic discrimination making their lives difficult in other respects, must be held accountable for at least a large part of this high rate of arrest and imprisonment. Not until Negroes have as good economic, educational and other opportunities as white persons can any fair comparison be made between their criminality and that of whites. Some years ago it was shown that none of the 800 graduates of Atlanta University and only one of about 3,500 graduates of Fisk University had been imprisoned. Few universities for whites could make a better showing.

Crime in City and Crime in Country

Is there more crime in the city than in the country? No conclusive statistical answer can be given. Reports of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, however, show in general that

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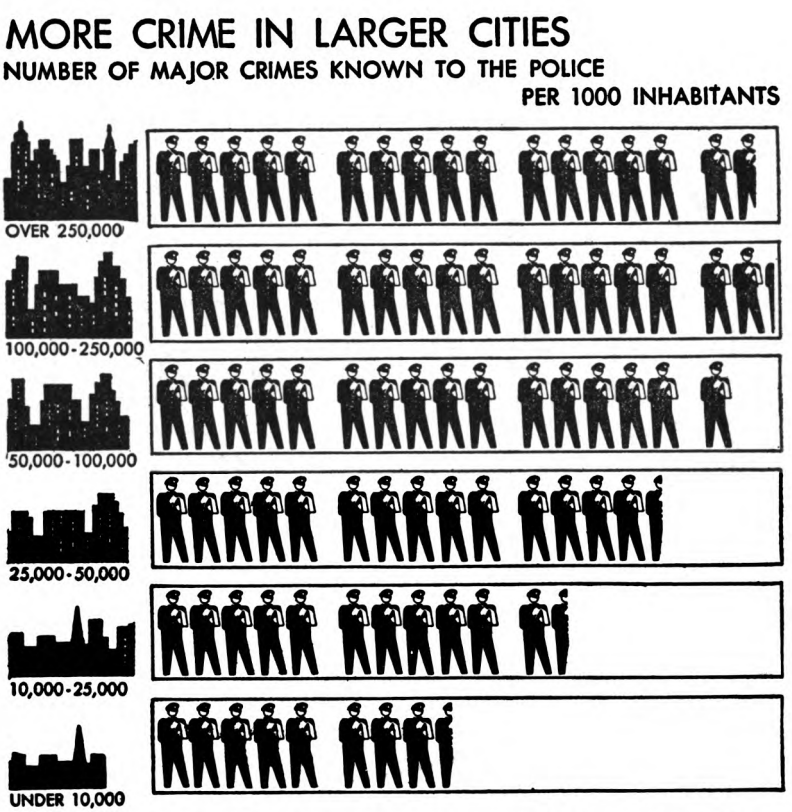
the larger the city, the more crime in proportion to the population. The chart below shows the number of major offenses known to the police, per 1,000 of the population, for cities grouped by size in 1938. It will be seen that the rate of offenses



drops steadily with size except for the somewhat surprising fact that the rate is highest for the second group—those between 100,000 and 250,000 population. Whether this is due to characteristics of these cities, or to the greater accuracy of police reports in cities not of the largest size, it is impossible to say. In general, however, the larger the city, the more crime. The rate

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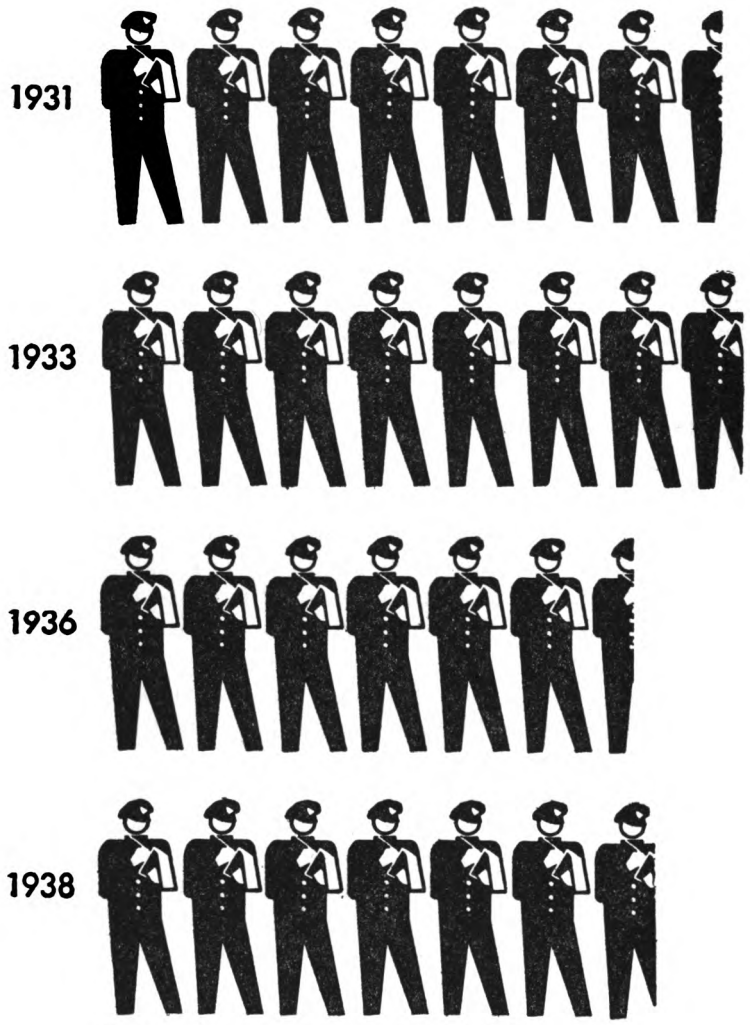
CRIME IS NOT INCREASING

NUMBER OF MAJOR CRIMES (IN 73 CITIES WITH 21 MILLION PEOPLE) KNOWN TO THE POLICE



Each policeman represents 50,000 crimes

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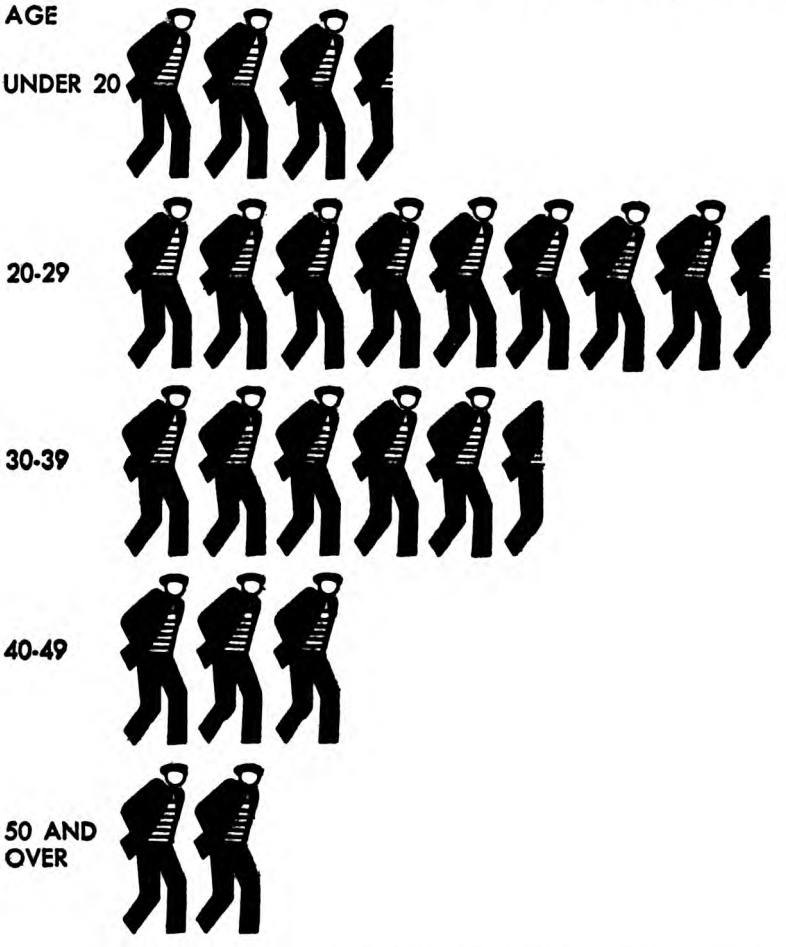
ARE CRIMINALS OLD OR YOUNG?

ARRESTED CRIMINALS (MALE AND FEMALE) IN 1938



Each person represents 25,000 criminals arrested

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