

Notes on Recent Cases

ON THE morning of September 6th, 1938, a stenographer employed by the Secretary of Sarnia Municipality, Holdfast, Saskatchewan, arrived at the Municipal Office and found that during the week-end the office vault had been entered and a number of cheques and a small amount of money stolen.

Preliminary investigation by the Constable in charge Craik Detachment and, subsequently, a member of the Regina Sub-Division C.I.B., disclosed that the door of the vault had been blown by explosives, the shot having been set off in the dial, which was forced back. The "inside shot" method had been used by drilling the dial, and traces of common yellow soap were found adhering to the walls and ceiling of the office, and also on the outside steps of the building. It was quite apparent that this was the work of expert criminals, as was further evidenced by the fact that neither doors nor windows had been forced by the offenders, it being assumed that a "cheater" had been used to open a Yale lock to effect entrance.

It was further noted that a young dog, of the long-haired type, which had been locked in the office over the week-end, was also missing, and because of his known friendliness and readiness to accompany strangers it was suspected that the thieves had stolen him.

Early in the investigation it was learned from a youth employed at a local service station, that a Ford V8 auto, strange in the district, had been serviced during the period in question. A most detailed description of the car was secured from this young man, who also described the occupants and had further noted that the driver smoked a popular brand of Canadian cigarettes. The description of the auto was referred by telegraph to "D" Division, where a full "Modus Operandi" system is maintained, including a description of all cars operated by known or suspected criminals. On referring to their system, "D" Division was able to advise, the license number of the car, the name of the owner, James Alfonso, a known associate of safeblowers, and that he was out of the city of Winnipeg at that time. Had it not been for a well operated "Modus Operandi" system, this information could not have been obtained,—at all events, as quickly.

Description of the auto was widely circularized and on the night of September 8th, 1938, the car was observed by the Constable in charge of Craik Detachment, at Davidson, Saskatchewan. The car was stopped and the occupants found to be James Alfonso, of Winnipeg, Nick Grigorchuk, of Winnipeg, and George Petras, all ex-convicts with formidable criminal records. Alfonso was found to be in possession of two 6 oz. bottles containing nitro-glycerine and all three were taken into custody and subsequently charged under Section 114, C.C.C. and also Section 460, C.C.C.

Early the next day a search was made at the point where Alfonso's car had been stopped and two additional bottles of nitro-glycerine and a cigarette package containing detonators and fuse were found, these having apparently been thrown from the Alfonso car when it was stopped.

Examination, by Surgeon M. Powers, of the Scientific Laboratory, Regina, of clothing removed from the three accused, including suits of