

*Criminal Code*

emotions of committing murder, except pulling the trigger. And toy guns—advertised in the back pages of the comics—have supplied that.

There are many other statements which could be given and I hope the house will forgive me if I rely upon the statements of experts in the matter, rather than upon my own observations.

I should like at this stage to refer to a lecture given by Mr. Arthur J. Freund, chairman of the American Bar Association committee on motion pictures, radio broadcasting and comics in relation to the administration of justice. The American Bar Association has had this matter under study for over two years, having been disturbed by the vast number of these publications which are reaching the newsstands every month, their effect in turn being multiplied by the movies, radio and, at present, television.

My appeal is directed exclusively to crime comics, the pulp type of magazine publication which is usually known by that name. The committee to which I have referred has made an extensive study of the matter as it is portrayed in what they describe as the various media. When they use the word "media" they mean crime comics, the radio and motion pictures.

The address delivered by Mr. Freund at the meeting of the special committee of the American Bar Association held in November of 1948 contains this very interesting passage:

After a consuming and intensive attention to this subject for two years as chairman of this committee on behalf of the American Bar Association; with the great volume of correspondence which has poured upon my desk decrying the evils of crime portrayals by the media, and as the result of many conferences and much correspondence with members of my profession, publicists, psychologists, psychiatrists, educators, social scientists, and other professional and interested lay persons, I am of the personal conviction, to paraphrase the findings of the National Broadcasting Corporation, that the vivid, living portrayal of crime by the media has a profound impact upon the mind of the juvenile, adolescent and impressionable and that grave harm has already resulted thereby to uncounted and, perhaps, uncountable numbers of our society.

Mr. Freund continues by dealing with the representation one hears from time to time that, after all, crime comics are only the up-to-date form of the old stories of violence which are found, it is said, even in the Bible, or in classical fairy tales such as Robin Hood. Then, there are other stories which are not necessarily fairy tales, in which category would come Treasure Island. The point is made that it is ridiculous to suggest that these crime comics, which are only up-to-date versions of these other tales, in fact contribute to juvenile delinquency.

Mr. Freund deals with that suggestion as follows:

During the past two years I have repeatedly heard representatives of the media say that the

crime portrayals in their respective fields are a stimulus required by our changing society and that they are, after all, no worse than the crime episodes told in the Bible, portrayed in fairy stories and in some of the classics which are the foundation of much of our great literature. I cannot accept this thesis. On the contrary, I believe it is one thing for an adolescent to live in a world of fantasy stimulated by stories in the Bible, by fairy tales and by great works of classical literature unrelated to his immediate environment or to the realistic possibilities of his every-day life. But it is my view that it is a wholly different experience for the impressionable mind to be stimulated into a world of apparent reality where criminal and morbid activities in which he can actually participate in his day-to-day living are delineated repetitiously for him with blueprint accuracy.

Those are the words of people who have made an intensive study of the problem. Thus far however it must be admitted that my remarks have been in the realm of theory. I should now like to relate them to the realm of actuality by pointing out to the house a number of cases in this country and in the United States where the commission of crime by juveniles has been directly attributed to crime comics. Before giving the actual illustrations let me remind the house that this type of comic publication is turned out in such a way as to impress most vividly on juvenile minds the subject matters with which they are dealing.

It is well recognized by teachers that the easiest way to impress a lesson upon a juvenile mind is by illustration. That is exactly what these crime comics do. They present in coloured pictures the commission of crimes of violence, showing every possible detail. Secondly, it should be borne in mind that children are natural imitators, and that they frequently copy what they have seen others do without any thought of the moral aspect involved, whether it is right or wrong. They just copy it as a natural sequence, having seen it done before. When they see it repeated in pictures hundreds upon hundreds of times they are more apt to copy it, and to do exactly what they have seen the criminal doing, without any thought as to whether it is right or wrong—until they are suddenly brought to court to face charges of having committed crimes.

Then, these crime comics almost invariably portray the law and the administration of justice and decency as a slow, stumbling and stupid process; whereas the gangster, the man of violence, is portrayed as acting directly, quickly and forcefully. In this way the sympathies of children are directed toward the wrong side.

I now come to the actual evidence of crimes having been committed or contributed to by crime comics. First I would refer to a statement made by Mr. J. V. Bennet,