

annually. During the first quarter of 1958 as many cases were received as would normally be expected in a full year. Obviously this cannot continue and steps have been taken to inform the public of the pitfalls into which they will probably fall if cheques are cashed for unknown persons who have a glib tongue and no proper identification. In this respect a booklet entitled "Crime in Your Community" was published and distributed last year.

Cheque passing has definitely reached the proportions of big business. In Canada there are numerous single as well as habitual cheque passers, but the tendency today appears to be toward highly organized syndicate crime. By this means only the master minds controlling operations are relatively safe from detection and subsequent prosecution. With all types of crime the central kingpin and the complete framework must be reduced to rubble before an effective control can endure. It is an enormous time-consuming task to break the heart of a criminal organization. But a preventive approach along the lines of an educational program, on a national basis, could conceivably foster in the minds of the business public a worth-while course of action to be conscientiously followed when he or she is requested to honor a cheque. Too, such a procedure would assist in discouraging many individuals from entering this field of endeavor in the first instance.

Our "cheque gangs", for the most part confine their activities to the central part of eastern Canada where access to the United States constitutes no major difficulty to those schooled in the ways of the underworld. Groups are also operating throughout western Canada and the west coast areas, but it seems that organization there is not on a par with that of the mid-eastern area. Then too, gang headquarters may shift from the eastern areas to west coast localities when forced to do so.

Although numerous convictions are registered for this type of offence, it

never fails to find new and willing participants. Of course, it is "easy money" and, perhaps as important to the individual involved in the actual passing or uttering of bogus cheques, it does not constitute one of the more serious types of offence for which long terms of imprisonment are meted out. Then too, in the case of penitentiary sentence, an inmate may select a trade which upon release would qualify him for a position in society where an honest living can be made. For the most part this is excellent, but a person who has made up his mind that an honest, hard-working life is not for him, finds a position in a trade where at the end of three years or less he can re-enter society with a working knowledge of printing, for example, and after establishing various contacts, he can then select readily obtainable printing paraphernalia and manufacture cheques and money orders made out to genuine or non-existent companies. This has happened and these men do a creditable job.

This field of endeavor is much more lucrative and considerably safer for the organizer who takes no part in either the theft of bank safety paper nor in writing any part of the printed forms when they are passed. Rather, he holds an "executive" position, selling stolen or printed cheques and money orders for a percentage, through "fences". Cheques may be partially completed by typewriter and checkwriter but money orders are completely handwritten, with the exception of the denominative order and travellers' cheques which only require signatures. The practice seems to be to make use of every type of mechanical device possible in order that the actual handwriting on the cheque will be kept at a minimum and a machined cheque seems to have a more genuine air about it. A limited quantity of handwriting will assist in thwarting identification should the passer be picked up and specimen handwriting obtained from him. An identification may, on the other hand, be effected