

# The Lance



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Dear President Perkinson,

We cordially invite you to dine with us in the St. Andrews cafeteria, at any time, to sample the fine cuisine. We hope your meal will be as delightful as Wednesday's lunch. Identification of the food is at times rather difficult. Let us give you a guide you may choose your favorite dish without deliberation.

Chicken pot pie. . . Resembles: Tuesday's lunch Tastes: like pea soup with chicken bones. Hamburgers. . . Resembles: little round things Tastes: ? But think how many soybeans had to die for one of these. Pork Dressing . . . Resembles: cow piles Tastes: We were afraid to find out. Coffee is also at your disposal. If you can find a place to dispose of it, feel free.

During your visit please take note of the improvements made by ARA. They purchased a new soup pot but that didn't improve the soup. The new tea machine is very nice but does not make the tea better. Pay special attention to the new menu board. It helps to identify the foods being served but did nothing to make it taste better.

This is just a sample of the delicious entrees we must face day in and day out. Realizing you are a busy man we will be happy to bring you an example of ARA's unusual talents. We must close now as we are weak from malnutrition.

BYOPB\*

Respectfully, (but losing it fast)  
 Carrie Rowell Jan West

\*Bring Your Own Pepto Bismol

## Organized Crime: How and Why?

FRANCIS A.J. IANNI

Fear of having one's home burglarized or of being mugged or held at gunpoint for one's wallet has left few persons indifferent to the "crime problem" in America.

But how many of us who waited in line to see "Godfather Part II" lost any sleep that night worrying about organized criminal activity in American cities?

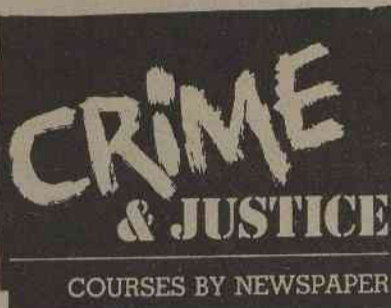
Organized crime has become such an integral part of the politics and economics of urban life that most Americans do not consider it personal problem.

Although a number of illegal activities are defined by law enforcement officials as products of organized crime — drug peddling, gambling, prostitution, extortion, and loan-sharking — large segments of the public regard some of these crimes as minor "vices" that hurt no one except, perhaps, the tax collector. Over the years, organized crime — viewed by many as the special domain of Italian immigrants — has thrived on public demands for its services and on widespread corruption. It has virtually become an "American way of life."

### AN ITALIAN CONSPIRACY?

As early as the last decade of the 19th Century, when 11 reputed "Mafiosi" accused of assassinating the city's police chief were lynched by a New Orleans mob, it was alleged that Italians brought organized crime with them to America. Eighty years after the New Orleans lynchings, a Harris Poll indicated that a majority of Americans — a decisive 78 to 17 percent of the sample — believed that "there is a secret organization engaged in organized crime in this country which is called the Mafia."

A number of governmental investigatory bodies have held similar views. In 1951 Sen. Estes KeFauver's Senate Crime Committee concluded "there is a nationwide crime syndicate known as the Mafia (whose) leaders are usually found in control of the most legitimate businesses and labor unions and had made liaisons that gave them power over officials at all levels of government.



### AN INDIGENOUS SYSTEM

A small but growing number of law enforcement officials, journalist, and social scientist who have been studying organized crime interpret these same facts quite differently. They see organized crime as an integral part of the American social and economic system involving (1) segments of the American public who demands goods and services which are defined as illegal, (2) organized groups of criminals who are willing to take the risks involved in supplying them, and (3) the corrupt public officials who protect such individuals for their own profit or gain.

The history of organized crime in America dates back to the days when the lawless bands of the James Brothers, the Youngers, and the Daltons terrorized the western frontier. Then, in the late 19th Century, the "robber barons" — the Eastern industrial giant — transformed that frontier into financial empires. It was not, however, until the 20th Century and the growth of the modern city that organized crime, as we know it today, developed.

The organized crime that now thrives in American cities is rooted in the social and economic history of urban life. Urban history documents how the growth of the American city resulted in complex but demonstrable relationships among minorities, politicians, and organized crime. It is this network of relationships that reveals organized crime in America to be a home-grown variety, indigenous to American soil, rather than a foreign transplant.

We have long known that organized crime and the corrupt political structures of many major American cities enjoy a relationship in which success in one is heavily dependent on the right connections in the other. In this crucial relationship, the criminal is permitted to produce and provide those

illicit goods and services which our morals publicly condemn but which our mores privately demand — gambling, stolen but cheap goods, illegal, alcohol, sex, and drugs.

In return, the criminal must pay tribute to the political establishment. Social history testifies to how gangsters and racketeers paid heavily into the coffers of political machines in exchange for immunity from prosecution.

### GHETTO ESCAPE ROUTE

The persons most willing to take the risks involved in organized criminal activity are, and have traditionally been, those who feel blocked from legitimate access to wealth and respectability. More often than not, these persons have been members of minority groups who settle in the slums of our cities.

Ghetto dwellers and their children have found organized crime an open route to escaping poverty and powerlessness. The successful gangster, like the successful politician, has become a neighborhood model, in addition, proving it is possible to achieve rapid and dramatic success in spite of the police and a variety of oppressors.

At the turn of the century, the Irish were one such minority group. They were quick to band together to form street gangs with colorful names like "The Bowery Boys" and "O'Connell's Guards," and they soon came to dominate organized crime and bit city politics. Once they achieved political power (due at least partly to connections and pay-offs surrounding illicit activities), their access to legitimate opportunities increased. Eventually the Irish won respectability in construction, trucking, public utilities, and on the waterfront and no longer needed to become involved in organized crime.

The aftermath of World War I ushered in the era of Prohibition and speculation in the money markets and real estate — arenas for power and profit over which Jewish and eventually Italian gangs fought for control.

From the 1930s on, Italians moved into positions of power in both organized crime and politics. More have since gained access to legitimate means of acquiring riches and

respectability, but the cycle continues as blacks and Hispanics seek to rise like the phoenix, out of the ashes of inner-city ghettos.

### PERVASIVE CORRUPTION

Corruption in both government and private business also contributes to the livelihood of organized crime. There is considerable evidence of police indifference and even collusion in organized criminal activities. The police are usually the only visible representatives of the power structure at the street level where graft and corruption are most obvious. However, price-gouging by merchants, profits from dilapidated housing for absentee landlords, kickbacks to contractors, bribes to inspectors, and the ever-increasing evidence of corruption in the judiciary, city hall, and the federal government are equally obvious to the people on the street of the inner city.

If organized crime is indeed an integral part of American economic, social, and political life, it becomes easier to understand why law enforcement agencies have met with little apparent success in their efforts to control organized crime. The principal and direct responsibility for its prevention rests with the "total" community — private as well as governmental sectors. Both sectors must make a concerted effort to provide viable alternatives to criminal behavior by offering better economic opportunities, decriminalizing some "vices," and eliminating corrupt practices in both the private and official sectors.

The task is monumental; it requires providing models for public trust and ethical concern at every level of public and private enterprise. If, however, we hope to curb organized criminal activity in America, we must begin to deal with the reality of this situation.

Certainly we should continue to seek out and prosecute the organized criminals. But this is not enough. Organized crime would not survive were it not for corruption in government and industry; nor would it thrive without public support.

The views expressed in



ROBESON TECH artist John Greene performed Monday night in the Vardell "Monday Night with the Arts" series. (Photo by David Swanson)

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