

CRIME AND KEFAUVER...

WHEN Senator Estes Kefauver (pronounced Estess Key-fawver) commenced his chairmanship of the American Senate Crime Investigating Committee last year, television caused the hearings to become a nation-wide spectacle. Movie houses emptied, housewives left their dishes unwashed, and business men complained that everyone was at the TV set instead of at work. In the main the committee confined itself to law violations arising out of gambling, and exposed to the public the billion dollar scope and ramifications of illegal gambling rackets, leading to large

sums of money getting into the hands of less reputable citizens.

These characters used their resources to influence votes or appointments and to nominate members of the legislature, the judiciary, mayoralities and the police. When they quarrelled among themselves they had recourse to the method of a shotgun used at close range, loaded with heavy slugs. Sometimes the disciplining was less severe. In Los Angeles two gangsters named Cohen and Sica, trying to gain control of a gambling communications network, beat up its operator. One of them used a telephone torn off the wall of the office. When all this was reviewed by the committee through Prosecuting Counsel Halley each gangster admitted his own share but declined to accuse the other. Finally:

Halley: The Court apparently did think you both hit him; you were fined \$100 and Sica was fined \$200.

Cohen: Then I must have hit him less.

It was, however, exceptional for the gangsters to answer back. They shuffled and mumbled before Kefauver and his colleagues and 20,000,000 TV sets. (Frank Costello, alias Castiglia, pleaded his features out of TV but had his hands televised.) They were compelled in many cases to give damaging information. This resulted in many of them receiving prison terms which they would otherwise have escaped. Others have had claims filed against them by the revenue authorities for fantastically large sums. The powers of the Committee to subpoena witnesses were very fully used and were much reinforced by exceptional powers to demand from revenue authorities the income tax files of the witness. In the chairman's words, "We became a national crusade, a great debating forum, an arouser of public

... by F. J. FOOT

opinion on the state of the nation's morals."

For entertainment value the examination of Virginia Hill probably took first place. As a pretty young girl of 17 she ran away from her Alabama home town to Chicago and became the associate of gangsters. It was at her house that "Bugsy" Siegel met his death from a shotgun blast. Kefauver protests that he called her, not for a spectacle, but to get information about interstate racketeers with whom she consorted. She appeared before the committee in silver grey mink. The chairman put aside his Southern gallantry to describe her as follows:

Now 35 she is no longer the captivating figure who once charmed such gangsters as Siegel, Adonis and Frank Costello. The fading underworld queen now is a ravaged looking woman with a mottled complexion and loose flesh that is beginning to wrinkle around the neck.

Some viewers, with an opportunity to observe her equal to that of Kefauver, dispute this assessment. However, her evidence was largely without the result advanced as an excuse for its production. Kefauver comments how ill luck followed her in spite of her 50,000 dollar Florida home and her mink and sable coats. Five thousand dollars mailed to her in Mexico was stolen. A car Siegel lent her to drive in Hollywood was stolen. Then her protector was killed. On arrival from Paris after Siegel's death an air crash occurred at the airport, and when she ran outside to look, someone stole a ring from her bags. Worse was to follow. Since Kefauver's book has been published the revenue

*Crime in America, by Senator Kefauver; Victor Gollancz. English price, 16/-.



KEFAUVER

Movie houses emptied...

officers have launched proceedings for income tax and, being unsatisfied, have sold up her house and personal effects at an auction attended by 4000 people. Included with the Dresden figurines, 150 pairs of shoes, Renoir, El Greco and Van Gogh prints and editions of Thackeray and Dumas, and, of course, the furs, was the ring with which she was to have wed Siegel. The Department has since said the ring was sold by mistake.

Some Americans are critical of the hearings, and this is what they say. In the case of big gangsters it sometimes takes years to prepare a case which will serve to put them permanently (as in Capone's case) behind the bars. Prosecutor Halley made public far too much by walking heavy-footed among the Revenue files and forcing the Government. All that resulted was to warn gangsters and put them on their guard. Some it is true have received sentences of a year or two, but all that has happened to most of them is a citation for contempt of court—a misdemeanour. And the gambling parlours are as busy as ever.

Kefauver had set his cap—it was a coonskin one he campaigned in for the Senate in Tennessee—for the Vice-Presidency before the hearings started. Since then President Truman has retired from the contest and he is running for the Presidency. It is claimed that he turned on a public spectacle to get himself votes. His committee colleague, Senator Tobey, a former lay preacher and real estate salesman, comes from New Hampshire, a State which, in spite of its Puritan origins, is well known for its gambling rings, which do not exclude politics from their operations. Gambling rings are also very active in Maryland, from which comes Senator O'Connor, another colleague and Kefauver's successor as chairman.

Senator Tobey in particular was loud in his moral homilies and acted, again to quote critics, as if he were meeting the evils arising from organised gambling for the first time. Neither Maryland nor New Hampshire was investigated. Nor was Tennessee. And critics have commented that, while gambling is not particularly serious in Tennessee, lynching is. And Kefauver voted in the House of Representatives against the anti-lynching Bill. Whether or not these criticisms have any weight** it was probably

(continued on next page)

**Magazine readers are recommended to adopt a viewpoint about midway between the Readers' Digest and the American Mercury.

N.Z. LISTENER, MAY 16, 1952.



VIRGINIA HILL

The Senator put aside gallantry

"THE LISTENER" CROSSWORD

(Solution to No. 596)

C	A	P	S	T	A	N		V	O	D	K	A
A	A	O	O	A	E	M						
B	R	I	A	N	T	E	N	S	I	L	E	
I	N	E	R	A	I	F	N					
N	O	T	E	R	E	S	C	I	N	D		
E		A	Y	H	E							
T	W	E	N	T	Y	S	E	L	D	O	M	
	S	T	B	D	I							
R	E	P	R	O	V	E		T	H	I	N	
I	A	R	A	D	O	E	A					
S	T	R	I	N	G	S		M	A	N	O	R
K	T	E	T	A	N	E						
S	T	O	R	Y		S	E	R	V	A	N	T

Clues Across

- A fireside game?
- Polish up the image? The result is a river, the crossing of which was fateful to Caesar.
- Fruit of transgressions following a broken air.
- Regal in a big way.
- Necessity in one edition.
- "Make mad the guilty, and appal the free; Confound the ——" ("Hamlet," Act 2).
- Tangled thread.
- ... the grandest moral attribute of a Scotsman, Maggie, that he'll do nothing which might damage his ——" (Barrie in "What Every Woman Knows").

- Soon sour, but resonant if properly mixed.
- This great opera singer is greedy in retrospect.
- "It was as I have seen it in his life, A — silvered" ("Hamlet," Act 1).
- "I am privileged to be very impertinent, being an —"
- (George Farquhar).
- Famous for its buns, porcelain and Arts Ball.
- "She — in thought And, with a green and yellow melancholy, She sat like Patience on a monument, Smiling at grief" ("Twelfth Night," Act 2).

Clues Down

- He is found in brackets, as it were, between his mother or father and his half-sister.
- If Ken would give you one.
- Found in an Oamaru Institution.
- If out of order, a singer might do this.
- Roam with ball into a famous castle.

No. 597 (Constructed by R.W.C.)

1		2		3		4		5		6		
7								8				9
10						11						
						12						
13		14						15				
								16				
17										18	19	
21								22				
23											24	