

Political ideology and an attitude to crime and punishment are allegedly associated. The right-wing outlook tends to be hard and to advocate an efficient and expensive police force: the left is soft, humanitarian, and wants to see a diminution of 'forces of oppression'. In practice this is not so. Socialist police-states abound, and in England recently the policy of the Labour Party in power is scarcely distinguishable from that of the Conservatives. How is it then that practice seldom corresponds to theory? This is one of many fascinating issues raised by Professor McDonald in her very commendable book on the sociology of criminal studies. With dexterity she comments on all the major theories of criminal causation under the two heads of consensus models (how law and sanctions affect behaviour) and conflict models (how behaviour affects the formulation of law). The first pay little attention to power: law is the starting point and notable advocates are Taine, Durkheim and Tarde. The second focus on power, particularly in terms of economic wealth and poverty: famous in this camp are Godwin, Owen, Marx, Engels and Bonger. As always the problem is to substantiate empirically the theories: proof and rejection nearly always seem to

hinge on the selection of the indicators chosen. What quantifiable variables does one select to indicate poverty—income? type of school? incidence of illness? In extensive case-studies from the nation-state, from England, and from Canada, Professor McDonald produces and cuts her way through a host of statistics to show that conflict models of criminal causation can be better substantiated than those based on consensus, which have always been the more popular models. In conclusion there is a useful chapter on the current debate of positivism and praxis, where it is clear that the study of criminal behaviour has to be set within a general theoretical approach to society. Strong support is given to C. Wright Mills and justifiably short shrift to radical opponents of positivism, who see it as a phony scientific exercise blindly supporting the *status quo*. Durkheim and Marx however have more in common than they have with their modern critics: both in their own way stand for a scientific approach. Hopefully we are told sociology as well as criminology have a future if they would consider more carefully their classical foundations and avoid the allurements of government-controlled research, which nowadays dominates the study of crime.

W. S. F. PICKERING