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Crime Fight Begins With the Public

THE term "organized crime" often is used to refer to some sinister unidentified element, but for some reason the term "organized law enforcement" is seldom heard.

Both of them exist, and they are continually at war on a moving front. Big operators are hard to catch and harder to convict. But it is "unorganized crime" that bothers most people.

This kind of crime is increasing because the word is out that if caught, violators can exhaust a lot of technicalities and protests about their rights before being convicted and, if convicted, they have a number of pleas to make for gaining early release.

Police blame public apathy for part of the crime increase, and it is true that citizens have sometimes looked away from crime or declined to testify because they don't want to become involved.

People did get involved back in the days before there was organized law enforcement. The vigilante system worked pretty well on occasion in frontier days, but let's hope that we don't have to return to anything like that.

An interesting and effective example of this kind of justice occurred at Ada in 1909. Before statehood, Ada was in Indian Territory, which prohibited liquor. Just a few miles away, across the South Canadian River in Oklahoma Territory, where liquor flowed freely, was an outlaw hangout known as the Corner Saloon.

When Oklahoma became a state, liquor was out and bootleggers were in. Some outlaws who had headquar-

tered at the Corner Saloon moved to a joint in Ada referred to locally as "bucket of blood."

Most Ada citizens didn't like it and wanted to clean up the town. Officers would arrest outlaws but prosecution was weak and courts were poor, so many outlaws went free. Continued pressure angered the outlaws, however, and they imported a famous hired gun from Texas. He killed the deputy U.S. marshal from an ambush and that lit the fuse.

Leading citizens decided that the law had to be laid on the town.

The killer and three conspirators were arrested, but the citizens didn't trust the courts. They decided it was time to act, and they did. They marched from the lodge hall to the jail, took the four men and marched them to the livery stable, where they

had a "necktie party."

This sensational and final dispensation of justice closed down the outlaw hangouts and changed the character of the rough frontier town. Details of this story are given in a newly published book by Welborn Hope, son of Ada's first banker and a resident of the town at the time. It is called "Four Men Hanging, End of the Old West."

That kind of justice won't do today, and there are not enough policemen, not enough rope and not enough guns to wipe out the organized and unorganized crime in this country until the public decides that it wants outlawry ended and means business.

This one sensational execution convinced both courts and outlaws that Ada wanted law enforcement. Courts could do so again.

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