

# Rip-offs, tip-offs and let-offs

Alexander Baron describes the proliferating opportunities for the modern criminal and how the police are trying to get their share of the action

## SCAM

How Con Men use the telephone to steal your money

by Harold Coyne

Duckworth £14.95 hardback

ISBN: 0 7156 2367 2

## THE INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE HANDBOOK

by Hugo Cornwall

Century £9.99 paperback

ISBN: 0 712 63634 X

If dice were invented in the year dot, then it is a near certainty that loaded dice were invented in the year dot plus one. Given time, every innovation, technological advance or gimmick will, sooner or later, be used for some crooked purpose or other. What is surprising is that the telephone, which has been around since 1876, did not catch on in a big way with crooks until the 1950s.

It was, predictably, in America that the first 'boiler room' operations opened for business, as detailed by Harold Coyne, a Cambridge graduate and former telemarketer.

There are several widely held misconceptions about the victims of this practice, in particular that it is only the stupid or the greedy who are likely to fall foul of it. In fact, if the author is to be believed, the likelihood of the reader shelling out five grand for a worthless tranche of penny shares is directly proportional to his I.Q.

The most sophisticated scams prey only on sophisticates: doctors, scientists, businessmen, even well-known politicians, not to mention bankers, lawyers, and investment advisors – all easy prey. Lawyers and investment advisors are seen as easy marks because they can't complain; who would go to a lawyer who had been conned, or an investment advisor who had been swindled?

One such 'sophisticate' was Jeffrey Archer, whose "run-in with some boiler-room boys cost him his future, his seat in Parlia-

ment and ... a promising career". Archer bounced back, but many are not so elastic.

The author draws on his own experience, interviews with several extant operators, and official sources to produce a highly readable account, including detailed spiels, of how telemarketers are trained in basic psychology, what wares they peddle, and how they peddle them.

The days of the Florida swamp racket may be gone for ever, but 'timeshare' has filled the vacuum. Other rackets include gems, futures and precious metals. Potential victims are contacted through highly specialised mailing lists or by simply trawling the *Yellow Pages*. And all sorts of techniques are used to part the suckers from their money, preferably by credit card: "Of course, if you can't afford it ...", "Smart guys don't need to think twice about this sort of deal ..." and, "This is a limited offer, available only today", etc.

The problem of bringing successful prosecutions against such operations, closing them down or even curtailing their activities are enormous, particularly in the States, where the legal telemarketing business is a multi-billion dollar commercial concern. (So too, incidentally, is the illegal telemarketing business). For example, an attempt to restrict cold calling to private residences after 9 o'clock at night was fought off as unconstitutional under the First Amendment.

In Britain, fortunately, there is a great deal more regulation of the industry; the Department of Trade and Industry and the Office of Fair Trading in particular have teeth. And they bite. Recently they have been turning their attentions to the timeshare industry.

Unfortunately, with 1992 imminent, such operations are likely to mushroom and it will be increasingly difficult to control them. How do the authorities proceed against an organisation which phones its British victims from Holland, collects its mail in Spain and is registered in the Cayman Islands?

If the illegal telemarketing business is a despicable scam, some *legal* ones are just as bad. Coyne interviewed one *legitimate* operator who runs a charity fund-raising outfit. This firm recently sold \$103,600 worth of tickets for an event organised by

the Montgomery County Deputy Sheriffs' Association. This organisation received \$10,000; the rest went into the pockets of its fund raiser, all quite legally.

This is a book which should be read by anyone who owns a telephone and finds his or her way onto a mailing list, which means just about everyone. It tells you how people are taken in and why. It explains how even if you make an investment or purchase from a legitimate company, with a seemingly watertight guarantee, you can quite legally be taken to the cleaners and may have no redress whatsoever. The following small print from a brochure mailed out by the Chicago Board of Trade is typical. "Unlike futures contracts, purchasing options does not involve unlimited risk. The maximum risk is the cost of the option." In other words, the maximum you can lose is your entire investment!

The book includes an index, and an appendix of useful addresses (regulatory authorities) in both the USA and UK.

Another, not totally unrelated book is *The Industrial Espionage Handbook* by Hugo Cornwall, author of the seminal *Hacker's Handbook*. Described as having "no ethical standpoint" it tackles all aspects of corporate one-upmanship from the innocent (reading the trade press) to the devious (posing as a freelance journalist to inspect your rival's plant) to the downright illegal (bugging phones and worse).

Cornwall concludes that industrial espionage is a dirty business, particularly specially where 'garbology' is involved (going through people's garbage trying to discover their income, expenditure, who they've been dealing with, etc). The author describes how to build up a picture of your rivals, legally and otherwise, how to check credit ratings, find out who owns that Mercedes parked outside the factory gate and how to avoid all sorts of nasties, including being bugged, ripped off and libelled. With 5,000 on-line data-bases available from your own desktop PC, researching business or other subjects has never been so easy, provided you can afford the connect time.

The big question hanging over industrial espionage is this: for the time, effort and money expended on it, is it worth it? *The Industrial Espionage Handbook* certainly is.

## A QUESTION OF EVIDENCE

Who killed the Babes in the Wood?

by Christopher Berry-Dee  
& Robin Odell

W.H. Allen £14.99 hardback  
ISBN: 1 85227 292 9

## SCOTLAND YARD'S COCAINE CONNECTION

by Andrew Jennings, Paul Lashmar  
& Vyv Simson

Arrow £4.99 paperback  
ISBN: 0 09 987880 5

In 1987, a Sussex man, Russell Bishop, stood trial for the murders of two young girls, Karen Hadaway and Nicola Fellows, in what became known as the 'Babes in the Wood' case. Bishop was sensationally acquitted when the forensic evidence against him was discredited, and, when the police refused to reopen the case, another furore ensued, the implication being of course that 'He did it and we know he did it, even though we couldn't prove it.'

Throughout, Bishop maintained his innocence, and does so to this day, even though he was subsequently jailed for life for the abduction and attempted murder of a seven-year-old girl in similar circumstances.

In spite both of Bishop's protestations of innocence and the lack of any real evidence against him, the 'Russell Bishop was innocent the first time club' has a very small membership. Two of these members are the authors of this book, who claim to have found the real murderer of the 'Babes in the Wood'. This individual, who for legal reasons cannot be named, may have acted in concert with Bishop.

However, the real importance of this book lies not in the controversy surrounding the identity of the girls' killer, but in the question of how forensic evidence is handled. Up until the Birmingham Six and related cases, it was generally assumed that forensic evidence was unchallengeable.

This idea is now untenable, and, with the 'Babes in the Wood' case, an entirely new issue is raised, one which, incredibly, appears never to have been thought of before. Who has the custody of and access to forensic evidence? Exclusively the police, it seems. Yet there exists and has always existed the possibility that such evidence can be tampered with or contaminated. For example, in a murder case, an article of cloth-

ing worn by the alleged murderer may come into contact with an article of clothing worn by the victim, leaving the equally frightening scenarios of convicting the innocent in the case of such an irregularity going unnoticed, or acquitting the guilty should it come to light.

The main thrust of this book is that just as there is now an independent Crown Prosecution Service, so there should also be an independent body to regulate the control of forensic evidence, including permitting adequate access to it by both prosecution and defence experts under hermetically controlled conditions.

Although this book has not stirred up the controversy its pre-publication publicity promised, this is undoubtedly one of the most important legal works of the last decade, and possibly of the next. Hopefully we will not have to wait for another 'Babes in the Wood' or Birmingham Six case before this simple fact penetrates the skulls of our tardigrade judiciary.

Stories about police corruption have become so topical of late that they hardly raise an eyebrow. But in spite of Operation Countryman, stories of detectives on the take and three well-publicised (and quite appalling) miscarriages of justice related to IRA terror campaigns, the British public still seem to feel that their police force is a deal

less corrupt than most others. We might revise our opinions if everyone were to read this book. In *Scotland Yard's Cocaine Connection* three television journalists tell perhaps the most extraordinary story of the proverbial bad apple ever made public.

If the authors are to be believed, supercrook Roy Garner and (now retired) Detective Superintendent Tony Lundy worked hand-in-glove for more than two decades. Garner was jailed in March 1989 for 22 years; Lundy was allowed to retire to Spain on a police pension. Ostensibly, Garner was a supergrass and Lundy was his controller; in reality, however, information usually went from Lundy to Garner. Garner had expensive tastes in both property and mistresses. Lundy too appears to have lived remarkably well on his salary, as well as basking in the title of Scotland Yard's most successful thief-taker of all time.

In spite of overwhelming evidence that, rather than being a supercop, Lundy was as bent as the proverbial nine bob note, he was not only never prosecuted, but was actually promoted. Lundy has always claimed that it was his reputation as the most hated and feared detective at New Scotland Yard that was responsible for his being branded corrupt, rather than his habit of drinking with the wrong people, and applying for planning permission to build a quarter-of-a-million pound swimming-pool complex in his back garden. It certainly does seem strange that Lundy was allowed to retire on grounds of ill-health, and even stranger that while 'terminally ill' he could complete the London marathon.

This book is not thoroughly referenced, and it is possible that the authors have an axe to grind, but it is not written in sensationalist style and the truth about institutionalised corruption is often stranger than fiction.

Apart from being a thoroughly good read, this book is also a perceptive study in motivation. However much money Lundy may have filched from their partnership, Garner could have retired many times over. Instead, he put all his money on the line, went into the cocaine business, and ended up getting sent down for 22 years - which does tend to suggest that apart from greed (some people can never get enough), master criminals, like captains of industry, are often motivated by less prosaic considerations than making a fast buck. Or even several million of them.

On a more serious note, it is to be hoped that the system of paying rewards to informers will now, like the supergrass system, fall rapidly into disrepute.



"Not while I'm on duty, sir"

## 30 YEARS OF PRIVATE EYE CARTOONS

Edited by Ian Hislop

Private Eye/Corgi £4.99 paperback ISBN: 0 552 13859 2

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And there is the famous picture of The Man Who Admitted He Had Not Been to Bed with Lady Antonia Fraser. And another one in which a man in a toga and thonged sandals is saying to his secretary, "Take a letter to the Thessalonians, Miss Jones." And so on. Lots of great cartoons.