Beckett

Making Crime Pay

Law & Order in Contemporary American Politics

Most Americans are not aware that the US prison population has tripled over the past two decades, nor that the US has the highest rate of incarceration in the industrialized world. Despite these facts, politicians from across the ideological spectrum continue to campaign on "law and order" platforms and to propose "three strikes"--and even "two strikes"--sentencing laws. Why is this the case? How have crime, drugs, and delinquency come to be such salient political issues, and why have enhanced punishment and social control been defined as the most appropriate responses to these complex social problems? Making Crime Pay: Law and Order in Contemporary American Politics provides original, fascinating, and persuasive answers to these questions. According to conventional wisdom, the worsening of the crime and drug problems has led the public to become more punitive, and "tough" anti-crime policies are politicians' collective response to this popular sentiment. Katherine Beckett challenges this interpretation, arguing instead that the origins of the punitive shift in crime control policy lie in the political rather than the penal realm--particularly in the tumultuous period of the 1960s.

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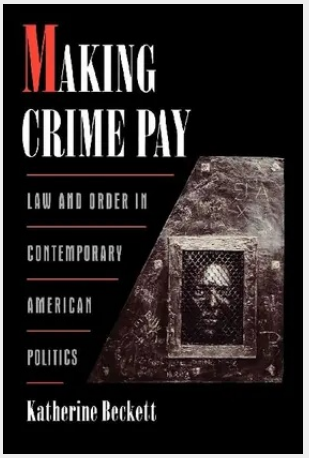

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