

The People v. Clarence Darrow: The Bribery Trial of America's Greatest Lawyer

Geoffrey Cowan

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Geoffrey Cowan : The People v. Clarence Darrow: The Bribery Trial of America's Greatest Lawyer before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The People v. Clarence Darrow: The Bribery Trial of America's Greatest Lawyer:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy patrick a trudellGood book on Darrow's own defense.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Glad I read it.By Ken BuowskiWell written. Interesting. Kept my attention. Would have appreciated a bit more on his life and cases after the bribery trial. Otherwise, a good read.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Thomas B. WilnerAn absolutely fabulous book about a little known event. A lawyer's dream book.

The dramatic story of the defense attorney's 1912 bribery trial and the spectacular events leading up to it. A revisionist biography and a rich courtroom drama, here is a fascinating look at L.A. law at the turn of the century and the corruption of justice by the wealthy and powerful. 8 pages of photos.

From Publishers WeeklyClaiming that Darrow's autobiography and other accounts have "sugarcoated" the legendary attorney's "most dramatic and traumatic case," Cowan (See No Evil) reconstructs the 1912 trial in which Darrow (1857-1938) stood accused of bribery in a highly political murder case. In a brief, effective biographical sketch,

Cowan argues that the once-idealistic Darrow had grown cynical by 1911, when labor unions called on him to represent the defendants in the "Crime of the Century." That case involved a labor leader and his brother, James and John McNamara, who were accused of bombing the offices of the Los Angeles Times, killing 20 men; labor leaders, radicals and the public assumed the brothers' innocence, so it astonished and embittered many when Darrow entered a guilty plea. Darrow was later charged with having attempted to buy a juror before the plea; he hired the notorious Earl Rogers, offered a stirring defense and was exonerated. Cowan concludes that Darrow was probably guilty but suggests that, given the tenor of the vicious battles between industry and labor, Darrow may have been motivated by a revolutionary streak. Although the author's use of brief scenes sometimes makes the narrative choppy, he moves his story briskly and forcefully. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal America's greatest lawyer! The record might justify granting that title to Clarence Darrow. He defended the unpopular in dramatic criminal trials: labor leaders after the Haymarket Riot; coal miners in Pennsylvania; and war protesters charged with violations of state sedition laws. But Darrow is best remembered for his defense of John Scopes, charged with violations of state law for the teaching of Darwinian evolution. Darrow is not so well remembered, however, for perhaps his most important criminal defense: that of his own trial for allegedly bribing jurors in the trial of two labor leaders charged in the dynamiting of the Los Angeles Times building. The two books that principally defined Darrow's popular image--his own autobiography, *The Story of My Life* (1932) and Irving Stone's *Clarence Darrow for the Defense* (1941)--glossed over this matter. Cowan, an attorney practicing law in Los Angeles, attempts to fill this void with a highly readable account of the trial. Highly recommended to a wide range of general readers.- Jerry Stephens, U.S. Court of Appeals Lib., Oklahoma City Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus a revisionist study of Clarence Darrow in which Cowan, an attorney and historian (See *No Evil*, 1979; UCLA), concludes that the legendary lawyer--despite being acquitted in 1912 of the charge--did indeed try to bribe a jury in a criminal case. Darrow is generally remembered as an almost saintly figure who used his matchless eloquence and intellect to serve the cause of the poor and working classes, with brilliant success and often for no pay. But the truth, Cowan suggests, was more complex and interesting: Darrow was a gifted, idealistic man, devoted to the causes of underdogs but cynically disdainful of traditional concepts of truth and justice. In 1911, the attorney, already nationally famous for his defense of labor cases, was comfortably engaged in a lucrative corporate practice when he assumed the defense of J.J. McNamara, a popular leader of the Structural Iron Workers Union, and of McNamara's brother Jim: The two were indicted for murder in the fatal bombing of the Los Angeles Times building. Cowan tells how Darrow, desperate to save his clients from almost certain hanging, urged his agents to plant spies among the detectives and prosecutors and to attempt to bribe key prosecution witnesses and jurors. After one of Darrow's friends was arrested in the act of passing money to a juror, the McNamara case was settled quickly, with Jim McNamara receiving a life sentence and J.J. getting 15 years. Prosecutors then indicted Darrow for jury tampering, but, after a long and spirited defense--much of which Darrow handled himself--the jury was won over by the lawyer's eloquence and acquitted him despite considerable evidence of guilt. Cowan suggests that Darrow emerged from the experience chastened and wiser, going on to argue his greatest cases. A tense and riveting account that neatly balances courtroom drama with fascinating glimpses into Darrow's enigmatic conscience. (Eight pages of bw photographs--not seen) -- Copyright 1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.