

Basic Income From a New (Old) Perspective: Uncovering Forgotten Science Fiction from the 1960s

PRESENTER:

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BACKGROUND:

- In the 1960s, economists such as Robert Theobald and John Kenneth Galbraith began to discuss the possibility of a guaranteed income to address concerns about automation and the limitations of traditional welfare
- But it wasn't only economist and planners who speculated about a guaranteed income: in pulp magazines, science fiction writers imagined what a society would look like if income were not strongly linked to work
- The science fiction stories and novels of Mack Reynolds in particular offer an arresting—yet forgotten—perspective on the the 1960s guaranteed income debates. Today, this literature provides a way for people to visualize what a world with a universal basic income could look like.

QUESTIONS:

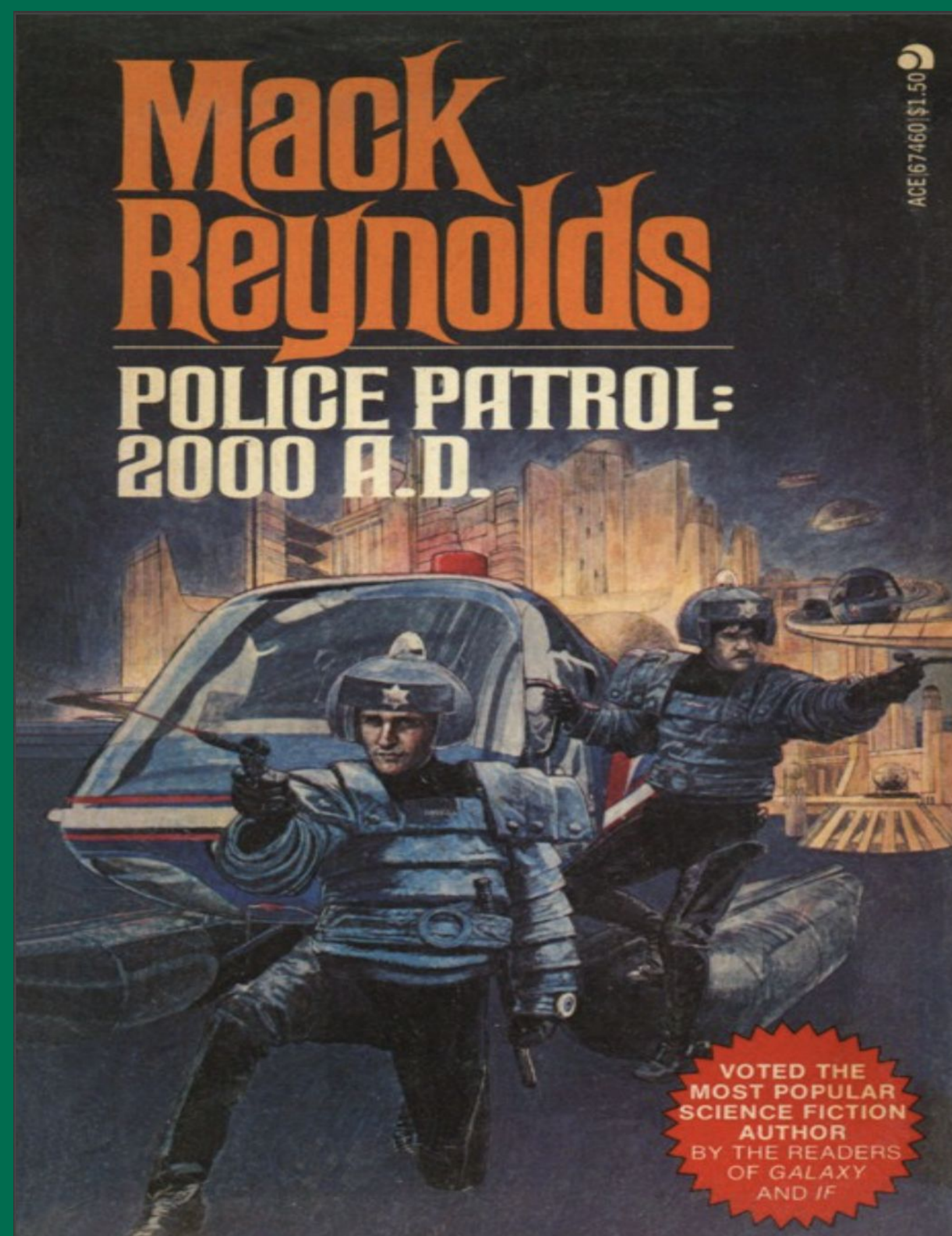
1. How did popular science fiction complicate or deepen social scientists' writings about guaranteed income in the 1960s?
2. Were Reynolds' speculations about guaranteed income in his sci-fi texts static, or did they evolve throughout his career?

METHODS

1. Analyze multiple sci-fi stories from Reynolds in which the consequences of a basic income are prevalent.
2. Interpret how Reynolds' implications of basic income changed over time.
3. Compare these interpretations of a UBI's social impacts with social scientists' views from the same time period

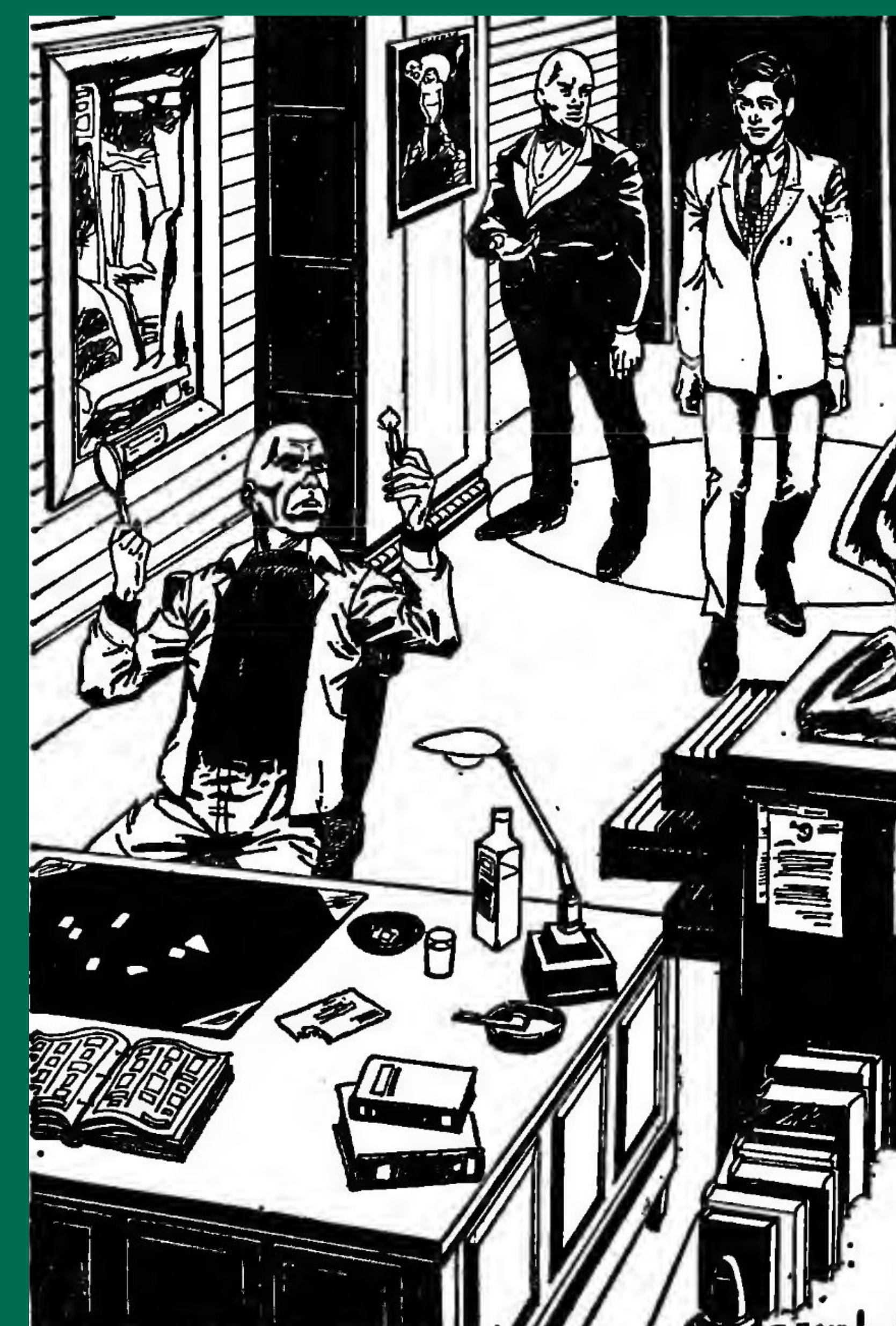
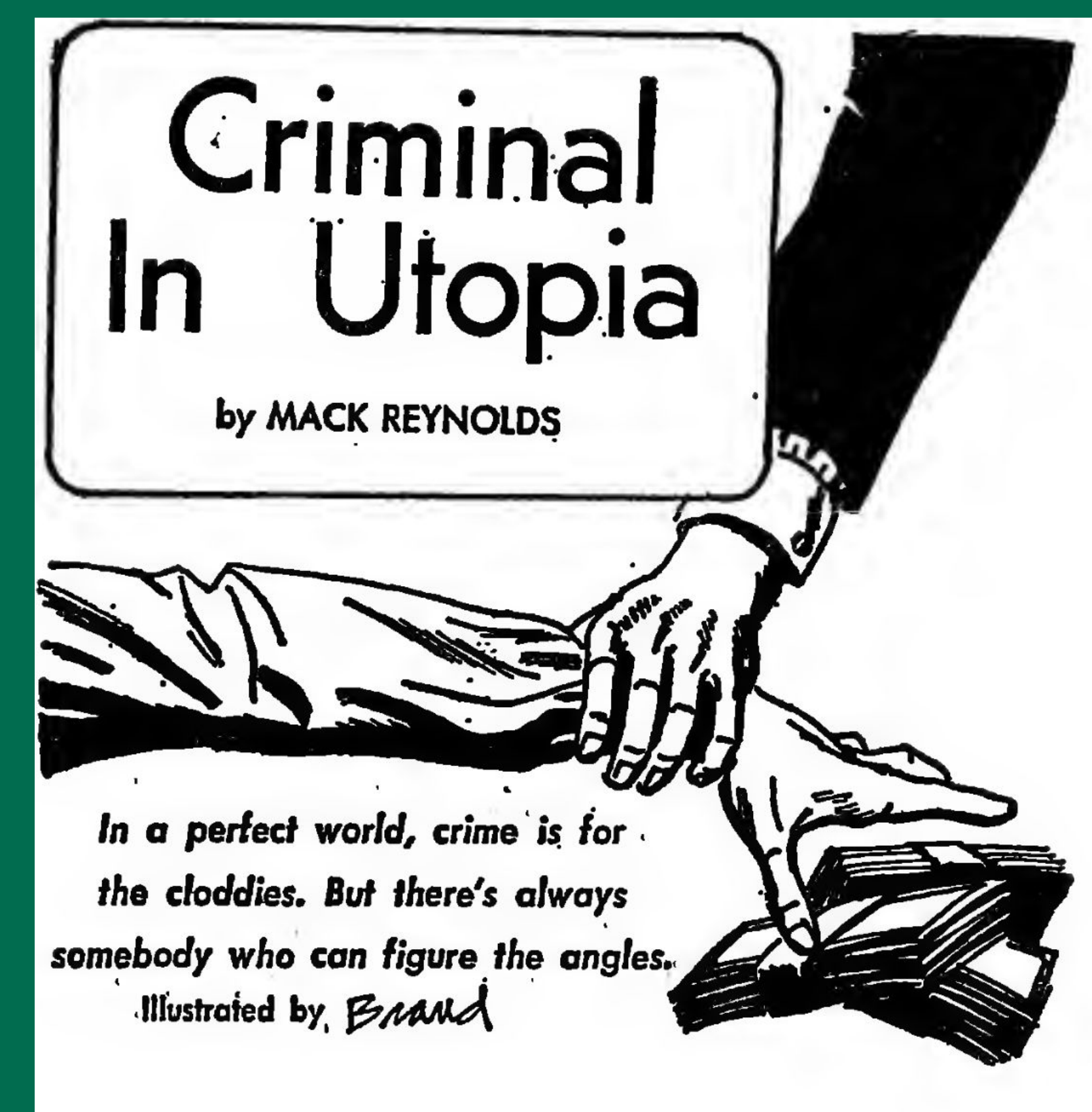
“Man was not meant to possess unlimited leisure time. Give it to him and he can fall apart.”

– Mack Reynolds, *Commune 2000 AD* (1974)



In "Police Patrol: 2000 A.D.", two Police officers, Jim Kelly and Tadeusz "Tad" Boleslaw attempt to subdue any criminal activity that remains in a post-work world. The patrolmen deal with several storylines involving criminals committing fraud, suspicions of murder, illegal gambling and blackmail.

- Along with crime, the novel as a whole explores this world's societal structure and how conflicts from the past impact individuals in this advanced future.



This picture is a page from the short story, "Criminal in Utopia" by Mack Reynolds

WHO WAS MACK REYNOLDS?

Mack Reynolds was a science fiction writer born in Corcoran, California, on November 12, 1917. While working for multiple newspapers, he was also the National Organizer for the Socialist Labor Party from 1946 to 1952. He passed on January 29, 1983.

FEATURES OF REYNOLDS'S IMAGINED WORLDS:

- **Basic Income Eligibility:**
 - In Reynolds's stories, everyone is entitled to **Inalienable Basic Dividends/Universal Guaranteed Income** from the government except: foreigners, felons, military deserters, and those without the proper identification to do so. (Police Patrol AD 2000)
- **Government Surveillance:**
 - Through the **Universal Credit Card** system, the police can track the location of wherever the card is being used. (Criminal in Utopia)
 - Information about anyone in this universe is stored on a individual's record called **dossier** which is monitored by the government. (Police Patrol AD 2000)
- **UBI Impact on Work Incentives:**
 - People may be less inclined to work traditional jobs and rather **pursue personal interests**. (Commune 2000 AD)
 - Increased automation paired with a UBI may lead people to "**beat the rap**" or find ways to increase funds in non-conventional ways (Police Patrol AD 2000)
 - People may work traditional jobs temporarily and **forego employment** once personal needs are met.

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