

PS  
665  
1046

REMARKS BY  
ATTORNEY GENERAL RAMSEY CLARK  
to the  
DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM COMMITTEE

WASHINGTON, D.C.  
AUGUST 21, 1968

We have never been a people given to fear. Fear paralyzes. Action is America's strength. A nation of builders, of doers--none has equaled us in our capacity for action--for facing a task and performing it.

Always restless, on the move, these last few years we have lengthened our stride as the times demand. No period in history has witnessed greater progress toward economic and legal justice. In four years, seven million Americans have crossed the poverty line. Federal contributions to education--our most important enterprise--have tripled to 12 billion dollars. Seven million have received medicare benefits and 31 million children have been immunized from diptheria, polio, tetanus and whooping cough. The number of people participating annually in federal manpower development programs--offering jobs, self-support, independence, the chance to better his condition--rose nearly 20-fold to 1.3 million

Because our laws, our purpose as a people, intend equal justice for all, we created more new rights and remedies in four years than in the preceding four score: opening hotels, motels, restaurants, parks, libraries to all; prohibiting discrimination in employment on account of race; seeking conciliation and strong community ties to unite our nation: providing techniques to speed school desegregation; assuring the right to register and vote; requiring fair jury selection in federal courts; protecting citizens exercising federal rights from assault; assuring all Americans regardless of race the equal right to buy or rent a home to raise a family.

We have come far. We have far to go.

If the times are turbulent, should we hesitate? Would we turn back? Do we doubt we have chosen the right road?

Of course these are turbulent times. They are turbulent for the whole world. We are caught up in vast, sweeping, accelerating change. Population mushrooms; science and technology make

OVER

today's invention tomorrow's antique. We are city dwellers in a terribly bewildering time; often overpowered by the sheer numbers in our environment. Can complexity and anxiety cause us to doubt that fulfillment is the flower of freedom, borne of no other tree; that freedom is the child of courage?

Do we shrink in fear or say with President Kennedy:

"In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility-- I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it--and the glow from that fire can truly light the world."

Some preach fear, fear of ourselves, as twenty years ago they preached fear of alien communism. The threat they say is the criminal stranger among us: crime in the streets. They offer a simple solution--law and order. As well prescribe health to the sick. Law and order cannot be had by a slogan or a stick.

They divide with repressive inference instead of building with constructive purpose. Beneath the repeated phrase "law and order" many conceal their opposition to civil rights advance. They cry order, but flush at the mention of justice. They miss the clear lesson of history: neither order nor justice is possible without both.

President Truman answered an earlier appeal to fear, "I am determined that the United States shall be secure. I am equally determined that we shall keep our historic liberties..."

Protecting the lives and property of its citizens is the first purpose of government. The capacity of our governments to protect our citizens is unquestionable. ~~Neither~~ have a people so clearly possessed the capability if they have only the will. The need is not to cry horror--but to act.

Crime reflects the character of a people. There is no easy solution to America's crime problem. Its causes are as many and diverse as all the needs and aspirations of its people. Over-simplification or demagoguery can only lead to police state practices that destroy freedom and divide a people.

Our cities are ourselves. They must be built anew. Excellence in education, opportunity in employment, the elimination of poverty, quality in open housing, good health, equal justice--

these are the essentials. In the long run, this is the way we can create that reverence for life--that resolve to assure the rights of the least among us--which is the essence of the rule of law.

But social stability is essential to progress as progress is essential to survival. The next few years are critical. We must maintain order under law.

The way is clear. In four years of unequalled effort, 25 major Administration proposals to control crime have been enacted by the Congress culminating in the Omnibus Crime Control Act of 1968. Building on this foundation, we must now:

1. Provide adequate police manpower for every part of the country. We can no longer imperil life and property and risk division of our people by tolerating inadequate numbers of police;

2. Professionalize police through salaries raised to professional levels, standards set for professional quality, constant training to meet new and changing enforcement problems;

3. Apply the full potential of the 20th century's scientific revolution to develop the most effective equipment and techniques for the public safety;

4. Enact effective gun control laws, carefully regulating interstate commerce and registering and licensing all firearms to stop snipers, shooting of police, thousands of murders and tens of thousands of robberies and assaults;

5. Vitalize police-community relations by establishing clear direct communications between police and every element of the public it serves, building confidence and respect;

6. Make massive efforts in research, education and enforcement to protect the public from narcotics and dangerous drugs--a major element of any comprehensive anticrime effort;

7. Provide powerful federal action to eliminate organized crime which paralyzes local law enforcement. Robert F. Kennedy brought national awareness of the threat of organized crime. His leadership began a drive from a low point of 17 federal convictions in 1960 to a high of 668 in 1967; which saw 55 of 183 members of La Cosa Nostra

convicted since 1955, convicted in 1967;

8. Recognize, as does every man who has walked the beat, and kept the jail, the direct and major relationship of mental health, alcoholism and drug addiction to crime bringing massive medical relief to bear;

9. Assure quick, balanced, coordinated riot control forces, ample in manpower, thoroughly trained and properly equipped, ready in every metropolitan area, capable of immediate suppression of rioting or looting;

10. Control juvenile delinquency. The growth in crime tragically is among our youth. We know today where most of the kids who will fall into lives of crime come from. We must go to them now with all the resources and skills that we have to lead them into wholesome, constructive law-abiding lives--to give each the chance to fulfill his promise.

11. Improve corrections. Of all the disciplines of criminal justice, corrections is the most sadly neglected. Four of five serious crimes are committed by individuals who have been convicted before. We must move effectively as we know we can, to rehabilitate the more than half who can be returned to useful, decent lives and to better protect the public from the incorrigibles. Today, for lack of effort, we fail to move effectively through the correctional disciplines which offer an immense opportunity to protect the public and a humanitarian duty to help individuals;

12. Support our courts. Courts are an easy target for attack. Dignified, ethical, devoted to justice, they do not answer. To attack the courts unfairly is to undermine confidence in our system--in law itself. The need is to fully support the judiciary with adequate manpower and assistance to assure a fair and speedy trial to everyone accused of crime. If the criminal law is to be a deterrent quick apprehension, speedy trial and appropriate penalties are essential.

As President Johnson has said, "We can control crime if we will, but to do so, we must act boldly."

Criminal justice has been so long neglected that we come to doubt our principles when it is only their implementation that fails.

As we build the forces of government to firmly, but fairly enforce our laws. we must continue with greater diligence our pursuit of equal justice. Every act of justice makes order surer.

Nor can we ever be ashamed to speak of humaneness, of rehabilitation, of justice: these are essential to the spirit of mankind.

Let us race to meet the future: to assure a safe America as we build a new and just America. The road is always better than the inn. America must go forward.