

Release for Newspapers
Not appearing on the
Street before 10:00 P.M.
Saturday, September 22, 1934.

"LESSONS OF THE LINDBERGH CASE"

Radio address

delivered by

HONORABLE HOMER CUMMINGS

Attorney General of the United States

Over the Networks
of the

American Broadcasting Company
Columbia Broadcasting Company
and the
National Broadcasting Company

10:00 P. M.

I am going tonight to address a few words to the American Radio audience on certain aspects of the Lindbergh case. Because of the prominence of the child's parents, the manner in which the crime was perpetrated and its tragic outcome, this crime presented a challenge to the forces of law and order that attracted world-wide attention. When it became apparent that no immediate solution was possible, the American people were disheartened, and the criminal classes, whether gangs or individuals, were encouraged to further acts of violence. Following the Lindbergh kidnaping, and without doubt in part as a consequence of it, there were 29 kidnapings that came within the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice. I am glad to be able to state that with one possible exception all of these cases have been solved. The result obtained in the Lindbergh case is due to no master detective of fiction working on intuition or sporadic inspiration, but to a practical arrangement for cooperation, in which trained experts, methodical, patient, attentive to the smallest details whether these appeared important or not, hung on to the trail until the end came in sight.

Several months ago an agreement was reached among the various agencies working on this case that there should henceforth be complete coordination in an unceasing attempt to solve this crime. These agencies were the Division of Investigation of the Department of Justice, the New Jersey State Police and Police Department of New York City. It happened that in this case the three factors involved

presented what I might term a classic set-up in the forces which, under our American form of Government, are called upon to deal with the detection, and apprehension of criminals.

First, there was the Federal Government, which at the time that the crime was committed on March 1, 1932, had no primary jurisdiction, but which through the subsequent enactment of two pieces of legislation was given broad jurisdiction in the interstate features of crimes of this character.

Second, there was the State Police Department of New Jersey, within whose jurisdiction the kidnaping was committed.

Third, there was the Police force of the metropolis of New York, within whose jurisdiction the ransom was paid, and whose bills from that ransom bundle appeared in circulation from time to time.

Each of these agencies had its own personnel, each its own technique, each its own sources of information, each its own ideas of the crime, each its own accumulation of evidence. Each carried on its own activities, but amongst the three there was the fullest exchange of information and frequent consultation. It was agreed that if one of the three secured what is known as a "break" the other two would be notified. Here is how it worked:

On September 18, 1934, at 1:20 P. M., the Assistant Manager of the Corn Exchange Bank Trust Company at 125th Street and Park Avenue, New York City, telephoned the New York office of the Division of Investigation of the Department of Justice, on the 14th floor of the building located at 370 Lexington Avenue, advising that a

\$10.00 gold certificate bearing serial number A75976634A, had been discovered a few minutes earlier by one of the tellers in that bank. Special Agent in Charge, T. H. Sisk of the Department of Justice, turned this bill over to Special Agent W. F. Seery for immediate investigation. In accordance with the cooperative agreement, Special Agent Seery was instructed to communicate at once with representatives of the New Jersey State Police and the New York City Police, who thereupon accompanied him to the bank.

There were thus set in motion the three jurisdictions acting as one, and proceeding in perfect coordination. Other similar notes had been making their appearance for the past month or so, after an interval in which no notes appeared, and in each case the note was traced to the exact store, shop or garage where it had been passed. In each case a description of the individual who passed it was obtained -- a description that fits the individual now detained in New York. The area had been under constant patrol, the banks in that region had been cooperating in making a careful check of their depositors. When the arrest was made months of methodical, patient work came to fruition.

I have been asked to detail some of the work done by the Department of Justice in connection with this case. In making this statement I hope you will not lose sight of the work which has been done by the State Police of New Jersey and the Police Department of New York City. I can only detail to you the work done by the Department of Justice.

On October 19, 1933, President Roosevelt directed the centralization in the Department of Justice of all Federal investigative activities in the Lindbergh case. I placed the immediate supervision thereof under the direction of Mr. John Edgar Hoover, Director of the Division of Investigation, to whose fine intelligence and indefatigable efforts so much of our success has been due. Our Department forthwith began to accumulate, examine and analyze all known facts and evidence in the case, to organize all of the various types of information into a logical form that would serve as a proper basis and background for future operations. Thousands of letters from all parts of the United States and other countries all over the world had been written because of the intense public interest in the case. This vast amount of information contained in these letters had to be checked to determine if there was any value attached to it. As a matter of mere routine, it became necessary to prepare some 50,000 index cards and to organize the files on a chronological basis. There followed months and months of investigation, not alone in the New York area but throughout the United States and in various countries of the world. No clue, however unpromising, could be disregarded, and none was.

In order to give a little inside view of the thoroughness with which this work was done, I will recount one thing that was done which I feel sure will be of interest.

You will recall that Dr. J. F. Condon, sometimes known as "Jafsie", came into contact with the individual who demanded and received the \$50,000 ransom. In order to assist us in our investigation, the Department of Justice secured the services of an artist, who was requested to interview

Dr. Condon and obtain his description of the unknown man. This was several months ago. The artist thereupon drew from Dr. Condon's description the individual, as Dr. Condon remembered him. Photographs were taken of the artist's drawing and distributed among the agents of the Division of Investigation as a possible means of identification. Now it is an interesting circumstance that this artist's drawing bears an amazingly striking resemblance to Bruno Richard Hauptmann, the man now held in connection with this hideous crime.

Public indignation was so intense that Congress enacted a statute a few months later, making kidnaping a Federal offense where there are involved interstate features or the use of the United States mails. Since then there have been the 29 cases I have mentioned. In these cases, a total of 74 persons have been convicted, 13 are in custody awaiting trial, and total sentences of 1,236 years have been imposed, together with 16 life sentences and two death sentences. In three cases, persons committed suicide before incarceration.

Therefore, I believe that the American people have reason to feel that the prestige, the power and the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies is on the increase and that renewed faith and confidence in these agencies is justified.

Several months ago I stated that during the coming winter I intended to call a conference in Washington to consider the problem of crime from a national viewpoint. It seemed to me then that the Federal Government was the proper and logical sponsor for a conference that would bring together State Governments, representatives of local units, and the principal organizations,

societies and groups, both official and unofficial, whose jurisdiction or whose interest bear on this problem.

Recent legislation has broadened the function of the Federal Government in the punishment of crime in its interstate aspects, but further practical steps can, and must, be taken to integrate and strengthen all the forces in our national life that can aid in this great movement. The Federal Government, the 48 states, thousands of cities and smaller communities, each have their responsibilities in this vital field, each have their appropriate assistance to contribute.

No program that rests on sanctions of legislation alone, or that places exclusive dependence on Government in whatever form, can hope to succeed in ridding the nation of the criminal menace. Without the unified support of the American people, no Government -- I care not whether it be Federal, State or local -- can hope to eradicate the deep roots of crime that have penetrated the soil of our national life and enwrapped themselves around the institutions upon which our social well-being depends.

The time is ripe for action. The American people, unless I misread the public temper, demand action. At the Conference on Crime, which will assemble early in December, the Federal Government intends to offer such leadership as it possesses toward the achievement of a practical program for cooperation and for action. Such a program, I believe, will enlist the earnest, thoughtful and continuing support of all good citizens.