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PROGRESS IN COOPERATION FOR CRIME CONTROL

By

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It is a great pleasure to appear before the distinguished representatives of the Council of State Governments gathered at the National Capital to consider - among other important matters - more effective cooperation in the control of crime. The problem of the control of crime is one of the most vital with which we as a nation have to deal. Unless our homes, our families and our persons are secure, unless the business of the nation can be carried on without the depredations of racketeers and other criminal parasites, all of our efforts to deal with great social and economic problems will rest upon a treacherous and insecure foundation.

In the field of crime control the word "cooperation" is often on our lips, but sometimes we are apt to forget the reason for this being so. When the Federal Government in 1934 decided that the time had come, in view of a menacing crime condition, to assume responsibilities theretofore not acknowledged on an adequate scale, we kept in mind existing Constitutional compulsions, the complex structure of our form of Government and the practical difficulties of what I might term our continental geographical situation.

The Federal Government sought to deal with crime in its interstate aspects. We have resisted, and we shall resist, all attempts to bring the Department of Justice into the sphere of State or local criminal activities. We have sought to develop in the Department a structure and a technique predicated upon cooperation with State and local agencies

toward the accomplishment of our common aim - the progressive control of crime in the United States.

I will cite a single example of how this has been done. On January 29, 1935, the Department of Justice inaugurated a Police Training School under the guidance of Mr. John Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. There was thus provided a new means of cooperation in the field of detection and apprehension of crime. At the time this school was opened, I said that through its operations the Department of Justice expected both to teach and to learn. The result of our experience has proved the correctness of that observation. At the first session of the school there were in attendance twenty-three representatives of State police agencies, local police departments and other law enforcement groups. For twelve weeks these police officers were given a course of instruction covering the broad field of law enforcement, including subjects scientific and technical in nature not only in the field of investigation but also in fingerprint identification, crime statistics, firearms training, enforcement and regulatory procedure and police administration and organization. All techniques developed in the Federal Bureau of Investigation were placed at their disposal.

A little more than a week ago the fourth session of this school began with thirty-four police officers in attendance. Eighty-one officers have graduated from the three preceding sessions and are today engaged in instructing the other members of their local departments which, I might mention, have a total personnel of 52,895 police officers. The population within the jurisdiction of these departments is more than 66,000,000.

The effectiveness of this training has been due, in no small degree, to the selection by those in charge of local departments of representatives able to assimilate the instruction offered and then take back to their own cities and towns the information and the techniques learned at our school. On our part, the Department of Justice has derived great benefit from its contacts with these State and local officers, of whose problems and whose difficulties we have a new and more accurate understanding. I cite this experience as an encouraging example of what can be done, in a concrete area, to bring about the sort of cooperation which all of us desire.

But cooperation between the Federal Government, on the one side, and the 48 States, on the other, is but a part of the process, and it might even be considered the simpler part. What is of equal importance, and what is more difficult to achieve, is cooperation among the Governments of the 48 States and, within each State, between the State Government and local jurisdictions. But here also great progress is being made. The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws has been engaged in preparing and sponsoring reciprocal legislation having to do with the administration of criminal justice. The American Law Institute, with its Code of Criminal Procedure recommended for adoption in 1930, has made an important contribution. Its offer to prepare another Code, governing the whole field of criminal law and its administration, is one that should have our ardent support. Following the enactment in 1934 of Congressional consent to compacts between the States for the purpose of controlling crime, there was established an Interstate Commission on Crime which contains in its membership an official representative of each State. Here again a number of measures have been recommended to tighten up and to facilitate the administration of

justice in the criminal field. Not the least evidence of how the leaven of progress is working are the numerous State and regional conferences that have been held in all parts of the United States, some of them organized on a permanent basis, and all of them straining toward a series of objectives designed to bring about the kind of law enforcement essential to the welfare of our people. A more effective and wider exchange of criminal information, interstate supervision of parolees and probationers, the simplification of extradition, the facilitation of close, or "hot", pursuit of criminals from one State to another - these are some of the projects engaging the attention of those responsible for leadership in this inspiring enterprise. And I might mention that in the current Survey of Release Procedures, now being made under the auspices of the Department of Justice, I have been impressed with the cordial reception and unstinted assistance offered us in the various State and local jurisdictions into which our search for facts has carried us.

In short, the movement for a unified, integrated, consistent and effective administration of criminal justice is making real strides. And while we shall meet with obstacles and make mistakes in this empirical process of accommodating modern law enforcement to the exigencies of our complex scheme of Government, we can feel confident that the principles of our approach are sound.

This, we all realize, is a long-range program. It must depend for its results upon the use of materials and procedures that are at hand, and upon which we must build with all the intelligence and devotion that we are able to command. Mutual understanding of our respective problems and careful

progress in the light of that understanding, are of the essence. I for one am pleased and reassured when I reflect that we have not adopted the technique of the spectacular, which is also so often the evanescent. The work is sometimes slow, but it is sure and sound.

Public opinion is alive to what we are doing. It awaits results. It is beginning to realize that there is no magic formula for the solution of the problem of crime. It expects each of us in his own field, and each maintaining cooperative contact with the others, to contribute to our common purpose.