

For Release Afternoon Papers
Saturday, March 30, 1940

REMARKS

of

ROBERT H. JACKSON,
Attorney General of the United States

on the occasion of the

Graduation Exercises of the 13th Session

of the

FBI NATIONAL POLICE ACADEMY

Great Hall
Department of Justice Building

March 30, 1940
10 a. m.

In extending congratulations to the graduates of the National Police Academy I will ask you to note and to take back to your respective communities three sets of facts which are very significant in view of the current generalities of praise and blame of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

First. During the last fiscal year the investigations by the Federal Bureau of Investigation touched the activities of approximately 60,000 individuals. This means that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had under scrutiny during a year approximately four ten thousandths of 1% of the total population of the United States. Considerably over 99.99% were not touched by any investigative activities of the Bureau. They were affected only by being protected from those engaged in or suspected of serious federal crime.

Second. In the last fiscal year Federal Bureau of Investigation cases resulted in 5,162 convictions. When in a year it gets more than one conviction for every twelve persons touched by investigation, it does not indicate to me that the Bureau has been throwing its net very far from the mark, but has centered its investigations pretty well on those who were proven guilty when brought to justice. When we consider the number of people who report groundless suspicions and malicious charges which the Bureau must eliminate by inquiry, the number of entanglements that every criminal case involves, the number of cases that grand juries think not strong enough to indict, and the number who escape on trial, the ratio of one convicted for every twelve investigated

is very significant.

Third. The work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation is under continuous, close, and hostile examination in the courts. In every trial sharp, well-informed, and bitterly antagonistic lawyers use every device to discredit the government agent. Of cases investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice and prosecuted as a result of those investigations the government wins approximately 96%. This means that in actual courtroom test the odds are 25 to 1 that a case made by the Federal Bureau of Investigation will stand up under fire. The underworld pays those results a hateful respect.

I can well understand that the terrible perversion of policing powers in some countries of Europe has made many Americans, whose sincerity and intelligence I deeply respect, rightly sensitive about police activities here.

Certainly, however, nothing in this general picture warrants fears that it is permeating our country like an OGPU or a GESTAPO.

My official responsibility and first-hand contact with the work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation is very recent. To profess that I could on personal knowledge vouch for the wisdom and good judgment of its every act would only cast doubt on my own credibility. But I accept the responsibility for future activities, which goes with the office of Attorney General. I have found no disposition to disregard or override my instructions or those of my predecessor. I will not allow anyone in this Department to be made a scapegoat for carrying out

his instructions in good faith.

I regard it as a duty, which I am ready to perform, to correct at any time either the orders of the Attorney General governing the Bureau or any improper zeal in executing them. No such action will be taken, however, except after careful study and upon complete information. I have had effective and, I have every reason to believe, sincere cooperation from Mr. Hoover in the steps I have so far taken.

A truly liberal administration will have no sympathy with lawlessness and no tenderness towards violence or crime. A people can suffer no oppression worse than the threat and fear of depredations by those criminal elements which thrive where administration of the criminal law is weak or indecisive.

In the United States the primary burden of crime control must be carried by local, municipal, county, and state police forces. A national system of policing is not practicable. A vast federal force would be required to penetrate each community as effectively as can local enforcement officers. Such a force would not be consistent with our system of government. There is no purpose to try to build up a national police force to supersede, rival, or even relieve local law enforcement agencies in the enforcement of local law.

At the same time, since crime stops at no city limits, recognizes no state lines, and is often the work of widely separated but closely cooperating criminals, local agencies require some national clearing house, nation-wide research, and leadership, as well as a national force to deal with federal crimes which transcend state and local bounds.

Some years ago Mr. Hoover recognized this need and wisely planned to meet it by establishing a National Academy. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has provided an example of elimination of politics from the selection of personnel, of requiring thorough and specialized training as a qualification for membership, of advancing scientific methods of identification and laboratory methods of investigation and detection of crime.

We may well dedicate ourselves on this occasion to the creation of a profession of law enforcement in nation, state, and local government. It should be one in which honorable careers may be sought without the favor and without the fear of political interference; one which will at all times obey as well as enforce the law; and one in which efficient and accurate scientific methods, if not equal to preventing every crime, will at least make a career of crime impossible.

To each of you I offer congratulations and the hope that your stay here has given you improved techniques and a new devotion to the thankless task of law enforcement.