



ADDRESS

By

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Prepared for Delivery

at

NATIONAL PROBATION AND PAROLE ASSOCIATIONS'  
CONFERENCE OF SOCIAL WORK

Chalfonte-Haddon Hall  
Atlantic City, New Jersey

Thursday, April 27, 1950

8:30 P.M.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Members of the Conference,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am most grateful to you, Mr. Chairman, for the generous introduction, and to you, the members of the Conference for your kind invitation to participate with you in this conference. As the chief law-enforcement officer of our great Government, I am, of course, deeply interested in proceedings of this nature.

In these days of stress and turmoil, when the minds of mankind are absorbed with the catastrophic possibilities of violent discord between nations we are apt to forget many of our domestic problems. Yet it must not be forgotten that the United States can do little to assure the peace of the world if this country itself does not have internal strength; and the prevention and cure of crime is surely an important element in the maintenance of a secure and stable democratic government.

Recent reports disclose that crime has increased across the nation. While the increase is not alarming, and while the reports indicate improvement in some areas, crime is still on the rampage. That is why on February 15 last, I, as Attorney General, called a conference at Washington on Organized Crime.

You have asked me to discuss the federal responsibility for the youthful offender. I welcome the opportunity to do so, for the problem of the youthful offender is the root of our crime situation. It is common knowledge that 31 percent of all persons committed to federal prisons last year were from 18 to 24 years of age, and what is most tragic, 70 percent of these were first offenders.

The typical apprehended criminal is between 14 and 20 years of age; and over one million juveniles annually come to the attention of the police in the United States. More portentous still, adults who are arrested are mostly former juvenile delinquents who, as they have matured, have graduated into crimes of a more serious nature. It is not amiss to state, therefore, that the whole crime problem in this country is essentially a youth problem.

It is not only the financial cost of crime -- twenty billion dollars a year -- which concerns us, but also other costs which cannot possibly be evaluated in money. I refer particularly to the spiritual expense and exhaustion brought to families of criminals and to victims of criminals.

The welfare of our country and the peace of the world depend upon observance of law. Widespread evasion of law spells chaos for our democracy and, resultingly, for the world at large. No better foundation can be laid for a spirit of law observance than through the building of a better youth.

President Truman, in his opening remarks to the Attorney General's crime conference held on February 15 last, said:

"Our children are our greatest resources and our greatest assets; the hope of our future and the future of the world. We must not permit the existence of conditions which cause our children to believe that crime is inevitable and normal."

The first steps in the direction indicated by the President must be made by the careless adult. Very frequently, it is the general public's

attitude toward law obedience which sets the pattern for the youngster. Unfortunately, there are too many of us who, except in cases of serious offenses, consider it smart to get away with a violation of the law. Youngsters often have only a vague idea of their duties and obligations to society. Youngsters are influenced by the actions of adults. Consequently, we must insist on a general public obedience to law and on a general public respect for the organized forces of the law.

Equally important in the struggle against delinquency are the coordination and integration of all the weapons available to society for this purpose. To date, we have made little progress in this respect. Only five States have set up central bodies to plan and supervise comprehensive programs with reference to delinquency. We must direct our efforts to seeing that all forces are brought to bear in a strategic battle for society in the interest of bringing about and maintaining a morally and spiritually healthy youth. The doctor, the psychologist and the psychiatrist, the sociologist and the social worker, the group and recreational leader, the minister, the educator, and the policeman -- all must coordinate and integrate their efforts toward determining the facts which produce juvenile delinquency, and in the light of these facts establish and carry out a sound plan to wipe out conditions that interfere with the happy and constructive development of young people in the home and in the community and to aid those of our youth who do get into difficulty.

On the preventive side, first and foremost should come improvement of the social and economic conditions of our communities, so as to eliminate the primary causes for juvenile delinquency. Again I quote

President Truman's words at the February 15 Crime Conference:

"Above all, we must recognize that human misery breeds most of our crime. We must wipe out our slums, improve the health of our citizens, and eliminate the inequalities of opportunity which embitter men and women and turn them towards lawlessness. In the long run, these programs represent the greatest of our anti-crime measures, and I wish to emphasize particularly equality of opportunity."

The Federal Government has, out of necessity, assumed to a great extent the responsibility with respect to this aspect of the prevention of delinquency. You are all familiar with our federal housing program, slum clearance program, and minimum wage, child labor and other economic measures directly affecting our national economy. You know also of our efforts in the closely related civil rights field.

With measures to prevent delinquency there should be also, as I have said, a mobilization of our forces toward helping the youth in difficulty. An important factor in this matter is the Juvenile Court. In fact, the juvenile-court system has been characterized by Dean Pound as the most significant advance in the administration of justice since the Magna Charta was signed at Runnymede.

The philosophy of the juvenile court has as its basis personalized justice; and this was a new concept in the field of jurisprudence. It was just 51 years ago, on April 14, 1899, that the Illinois Legislature passed the first Juvenile Court Act. It was a novel idea to remove a child offender from the ordinary criminal court, designed to administer penal punishment, to a court specially adapted for helping children back to the

path of responsible citizenship.

I have been very much interested in juvenile courts, as I have been interested in all juvenile problems. As Governor of the State of Rhode Island, and as the United States Attorney there, I had opportunity to observe the operations of its juvenile-court system, and I was proud of the manner in which it was administered.

I hasten to say, however, that much remains to be done to improve the efficiency of these courts. In at least forty States there are no separate juvenile courts. There is no uniformity as to their jurisdiction. Courts are not adequately staffed, and personnel not properly trained. In the years since the founding of the juvenile courts, they have changed in attitudes, skill and effectiveness. But perfection has not yet been achieved; these courts still have to be improved.

There must be improvement in the personnel of the courts. It is important that they all have able judges, who will provide treatment, not punishment, for the delinquent child. Children can not be held accountable for their behavior on the same basis as adults, for the simple reason that they are not adults. We must have judges who understand this.

A qualified probation and parole officer is an indispensable element of any juvenile court. Upon him devolves much of the responsibility for making the juvenile court function and serve the purposes for which it was established. Yet not every man is cast in the mold of the first probation officer, the lovable John Augustus, the Boston shoemaker of 1841.

One of the most important requirements in combating juvenile delinquency is an intelligent, trained and efficient probation staff. The job of probation officer is a big one. He must replace, in the case of children, the blundering parents who did not understand the child. There

must be a sufficient and adequate staff of men and women to do the work. They must be well compensated, and must have security of tenure. The probation staff must be recognized as engaging in an honored profession. To be sure, we must not encourage the glib sentimentalist, and we must be cautious in the administration of our parole system so that youth does not get the idea that it can commit crime and get away with it, but it is the competent probation officer who can best accomplish this.

What I have said about the probation officer in large part applies to the case worker and to executives engaged in detention work.

I am pleased to be able to say that in the field of training of personnel the Federal Government has taken steps which have been very effective.

An institute for jailers, such as the one held in Dallas, Texas in 1948, with its courses on jail administration, is a good example of what can be accomplished along these lines. Also, the Administrative Office of the United States Courts has a training program for probation officers which has furthered the breadth of knowledge and skill of those charged with the carrying out of our juvenile as well as our adult parole and probation programs.

The aspect of detention rightfully occupies a major field in the juvenile delinquency program. I think you will all agree with the general proposition that detention in the case of youth should be protective and not penal in character. We have made much progress in this field, but unfortunately we still have much to be disturbed about. We still have neglect, filth and corruption in our detention facilities. These must be eliminated.

It is satisfying to state to you that the Federal Government is playing a leading role in this struggle. The Federal Bureau of Prisons since its establishment in 1930 has maintained a staff of inspectors whose full time has been given to the visitation and inspection of and report upon conditions found in local jails and workhouses. While the origin of the practice was due to the necessity of selecting institutions for the boarding of federal prisoners held for trial or on short sentence, the inspection system has developed in a manner so as to focus official attention on the inadequacies of existing systems.

There is much to be done yet. The Federal Prison Bureau, in its latest published report, indicates that of the more than 3,000 jails inspected, only 435 were approved for the regular boarding of federal prisoners, and only 365 others for emergency use.

Our Federal Prison Bureau has helped in many other respects. We have set forth our views on minimum standards for local jails, in a publication by that name issued in 1945. Moreover, the Bureau offers its services in the planning, construction and operation of local penal institutions, and that offer frequently has been accepted. These services of our Federal Bureau of Prisons will continue with my full support.

It is pertinent in this connection to observe that in the administration of federal detention institutions I believe we are setting a fine example for the country as a whole. We are proud of our National Training School for Boys in Washington, as well as of our newly constructed correctional institution at Englewood, Colorado. We are equally proud of our boys' forestry camp at Natural Bridge, Virginia. In these institutions, the federal officials have strengthened the training and treatment program, have emphasized counseling, and have inaugurated, under the inspiring

leadership of my predecessor, sponsorship and group psychotherapy programs which are proving to be extremely successful. I am particularly impressed by the program of lay sponsors for boys at the National Training School for Boys. The sponsors under the program, outstanding citizens, have become real Big Brothers. They have helped markedly in the preparation of detained youths for the most difficult period -- the return to the community. I shall endeavor to do all possible to encourage the expansion of this program.

An association such as yours deserves the gratitude of all Americans interested in the welfare of our country. From the day of the foundation of your organization in 1907, when as a group of probation officers, meeting in Minneapolis with the National Conferences on Charities and Correction, you formed the National Probation Officers Association, you have rendered invaluable service to the cause of combating juvenile delinquency.

As Attorney General of the United States, I pledge my full support to your programs, and especially to those pertaining to youthful delinquents. While responsibility for the treatment of persons who are in conflict with the law rests mainly with the local community, I am fully cognizant that the National Government must do its share.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that above everything else, no juvenile program can be completely effectuated without mobilization of the spiritual forces in our lives. Prevention of crime can best be achieved by the building of character, in the home and in the school, and with the guidance and inspiration of the church.

Our democratic institutions are dear to us. They are a heritage hard won by our ancestors, and ardently defended by them and by our own generation. To preserve this precious heritage for themselves and generations to come, our youth must be spiritually and morally prepared.

Thank you, and Good Night.