



Department of Justice

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REMARKS OF

JOHN N. MITCHELL
ATTORNEY GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES

AT THE DEDICATION OF
THE POLICE MEMORIAL

OCTOBER 1, 1971

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

As we gather to consecrate this police memorial today, I am reminded of another dedication over a hundred years ago, when Abraham Lincoln said:

"The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract."

These same words have meaning for us today as we honor the 130 men of the Los Angeles Police Department who have been killed in the line of duty. Through this ceremony we are recognizing that the police officer -- as much as the men who sacrificed at Gettysburg and on other battlefields -- is serving in the defense of his country.

We need not labor overmuch to prove this point. One of our country's great contributions to mankind was to establish, in the words of the Massachusetts Bill of Rights, "a Government of laws and not of men." Enforcing a law is just as important and considerably more difficult than making a law. And the task of enforcing the law -- so basic and essential to our nation and our government -- falls to the peace officer. His uniform is a badge of service to his country in the fullest sense.

We are reminded of the traditional manner of announcing a criminal case in court: "The People versus" -- whatever the defendant's name. Make no mistake, it is the people whom the policeman, no less than the prosecutor, represents.

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This is one of the reasons why we are appalled at the disrespect for police officers that has appeared in some quarters.

This is one of the reasons why we are appalled as the toll of police officers killed in the line of duty continues to mount. An attack on a policeman is in reality an attack on the people, on their Government, their laws.

This is one of the reasons why President Nixon moved so forcefully to support the peace officer in this country.

It is why he told a police audience: "Unless we have not only respect for our laws, but for the men and women who are doing their best to carry them out fairly and equitably, we are not going to survive as a free country."

Today we are honoring 130 policemen who gave their very best. And we would be remiss if we did not give special recognition to the brave families of these men, and the brave families of all who choose the profession of peace officer. As Milton reminds us, "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Today we must call upon ourselves to do more than dedicate this police memorial. Again referring to President Lincoln's words, "It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us. . . ." Let us continue to strive to build peace and safety in this country. Let us, by word and by example, promote respect for the police officer. Let us do our best, along with the peace officers across this land, to assure that our Government remains a Government of law.