

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

AN ADDRESS

By

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PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

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AND CONTROL OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

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I am profoundly happy to extend greetings to you upon this significant occasion - the convening of the National Conference on Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency.

It is both appropriate and important that I say something about the origin of this conference.

Shortly after I became Attorney General, I visited a Training School for Boys near the Nation's Capital.

What I saw there disturbed me, and I determined to do something about it.

Little, however, did I vision that the visit to the Training School one year ago would culminate in this great Conference today.

I believe that some people were rather taken aback when I announced my intention of placing the might of the Department of Justice into the fight against juvenile delinquency. They associated the Office of the Attorney General with such activities as, - trust-busting, prosecution of tax violators, and war against the Dillingers and the Capones.

They could not understand why the Attorney General should embark upon a program for the control of juvenile delinquency, particularly on such a wide scale as the calling of a National Conference.

The Department of Justice, it is true, does have a grave responsibility with regard to those who violate monopoly or tax laws. It must ever be vigilant to deal with the Dillingers and the Capones - in many instances, tragic end results of juvenile delinquency. These are jobs that have to be done, and that will be done.

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But the Department has a wide range of other activities that strike a more positive note. Some of these give me a real inner satisfaction.

Perhaps you can better understand the pattern of these activities, and why I feel that helping youngsters in trouble belongs in the same category, if I mention briefly two or three of them.

The Department has responsibility for seeing that all Americans have the opportunity to enjoy our priceless civil liberties.

Those recently returned from the battlefields of Freedom learned that no artificial barriers - racial, religious or economic - separated men on the fighting front.

Yet, some people now act as if good will, understanding and friendship among men belong only to wartime.

Some individuals, some groups, would turn the hand of one man against another because of difference in race, color, or creed.

The Department of Justice must be constantly alert to make sure that they do not succeed, for if they did they would strike at the very heart of the institutions upon which our liberties rest.

I regard the way in which we discharge this responsibility as having a direct bearing upon the future of our children. They must not, particularly during their impressionable years, come under the influence of hate, prejudice and bigotry.

The Department has many duties affecting those who come from other lands to seek American citizenship - the most precious gift this country has to offer.

Incidentally, 27 percent of our present population are foreign-born, or the children of foreign-born parents or parent.

Indeed, all races and nationalities make up America and contribute to its life.

During the recent war about 109,000 soldiers in American uniform were naturalized, approximately 14,000 of them while on duty overseas. These American soldiers were natives of 122 different nationalities and their possessions.

The Department has responsibility, not only for the selection of those who fill our immigrant quotas, but also for the preparation of the new-comers for citizenship.

I have recently initiated a comprehensive citizenship program to emphasize the worth of American citizenship. The program will be one of continuous effort to stress the ideals of this country from the time of entry of a potential citizen to the moment when citizenship is granted him by the court, and even beyond that.

This program is important for the new citizen, since it is designed to help him understand the American way of life.

It is still more important for his children. As many of you know, far better than I, the gap that normally exists between generations is often widened by differences in the customs, traditions and attitudes of the old and new worlds, making the children - especially the native-born children of foreign-born parents - more vulnerable to delinquency.

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The Department of Justice has immediate responsibility for those juveniles who come into conflict with Federal laws.

As I indicated in the beginning soon after I was appointed Attorney General I became concerned about this group. I wanted to know where they came from, what they had done to bring them within the Federal jurisdiction, what we were doing for them, and what would happen to them when they passed from our care. I wanted to know how we could be most helpful to them while they were in our charge.

I soon learned, however, that the Federal juvenile problem cannot be isolated from the local juvenile problem.

Perhaps I can state the situation a little more clearly with this illustration.

Two brothers each stole a car.

One boy drove the car which he had taken just outside the town limits. He was dealt with by the local juvenile court and placed on probation to remain in his own home.

The other boy drove the car he had stolen out of town in the other direction. In doing so he crossed the state line. He became a Federal offender. His case was heard in a Federal Court and he was committed to a Federal institution a thousand miles away from his home.

Yet both boys came from the same broken home;

Both had difficulties in the same school;

Both encountered social handicaps in the same church;

Both missed other essentials for normal development in the same community. Federal juveniles, like state juveniles, are victims of community failures.

They come from all parts of the country.

They get into the Federal jurisdiction merely because they happen to violate Federal law.

I wish they didn't get into the Federal system.

It gives me real concern when a juvenile becomes a Federal offender to be dealt with and cared for by a government agency which may be located several hundred, perhaps even a thousand or more miles away from his home and community.

For many years, the policy of the Department of Justice has been to refer the cases of Federal juveniles to their home communities if those communities will accept the responsibility of caring for them and have the facilities to do so properly.

The Department's policy is a definite recognition of local responsibility and of the social factors involved in the handling of problems of behavior.

My interest in the Federal juvenile problem, therefore, cannot be limited to the offenses committed by boys and girls. That would be a legal interest only.

Social interest inevitably compels me to consider not only the act, but the juvenile as an individual and his relation to the total situation in the community from which he comes.

The problem of how best to deal with the juvenile delinquent as an individual to be put back on the road which leads to a happy and useful life, a credit both to society and himself, is common to all communities. It does not differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

As I said before, I realized that the Federal juvenile problem could never be regarded as isolated from the local juvenile problem; that it is inextricably bound up with the conditions in the homes and communities of the juveniles, and with the local resources for normal, wholesome, happy life available to them.

I realized that the Department of Justice would succeed in meeting its immediate responsibility only as the states and local communities succeed in carrying out their responsibilities for juvenile delinquency.

I realized also the present situation is such, that each community in America, from the largest to the smallest, must accept its responsibility if our country is to avoid a wave of delinquency perhaps greater than ever before experienced in our history.

Since the causes of juvenile delinquency are found in all aspects of our social and economic life, the problem must not be approached on a narrow basis.

Furthermore, these causes have been accentuated by wartime conditions, and by the changes and stresses which aggravate the problem still more as the Nation returns to the days of peace.

We must not only meet the present emergency; we must lay long-range plans for the future.

We must always remember that the same kind of coordinated effort is required for the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency in normal times, as is needed in times of special stress such as we experienced during the war, and are now experiencing in the days of reconversion.

Finally, I realized that each and every community must marshal all its social forces in the war against delinquency. The extent to which a juvenile receives a socialized type of treatment should not depend upon

whether he lives in the North, South, East or West, nor upon whether he is a State or Federal offender.

All agencies and people who are concerned in the prevention or control of juvenile delinquency should pull together, and gird themselves for the common task.

Because of all this, I called together in Washington in February of this year a group of leaders from the civic, educational, religious and social work fields to serve as an Advisory Panel to the Attorney General on Juvenile Problems.

I wished to get an appraisal of the problem; to hear the views of these authorities; and to focus the attention of American communities upon the very serious character of the situation.

I wanted advice with respect to juvenile delinquency problems specifically within the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice, and with respect to collaboration between the Federal government and state, county and municipal governments in meeting them.

I wanted also to have consideration given to ways in which Federal, State, and local officials as well as private welfare organizations and public spirited citizens could unite to mobilize and develop community resources.

During a two-day meeting, the Panel arrived at some general findings, which it recommended be given further consideration and implementation in a larger and more broadly representative conference. The National Conference on Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency, which begins its session today, is that Conference.

Its objective is the carrying out of the earlier findings, and the consideration and recommendation of programs for specific action in the various fields which touch on the juvenile delinquency problem.

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In undertaking this campaign against juvenile delinquency we have been given courage through the sincere and consistent support that has been extended by President Truman.

At this point I wish to express appreciation to those men and women who have served on the Advisory Panel, and particularly the members of the Executive Committee, since our initial meeting of last February. They have given generously of their time to help us in planning for this conference.

I should like also to pay tribute to the representatives of thirteen Federal agencies, of state and local governmental agencies, and of private agencies, as well as other individuals, who have prepared tentative statements for consideration at this Conference. During the past several months, they have given unselfishly of their time and talent to provide each group meeting here today with a framework for discussion to the end that all extraneous matter may be eliminated and lost motion avoided.

As I have watched the unfolding of plans for this Conference, and have received reports from the preliminary working groups, I have endeavored to get a better perspective of the problem. It seems to me that a broad approach, both for meeting the present emergency and for long-range planning, should be along certain basic lines.

It is of primary importance that we emphasize the strengthening of services that are essential to the well being of all children.

If every community in America strengthened and united its resources for all of its children, it would save many of them from taking the first stumbling steps toward delinquency.

Delay in community action to mobilize resources to lead children into rich and purposeful living until some are already in trouble is more costly, more difficult and often too late.

In reading over the advance statements that have been prepared for discussion at this Conference, I am happy to note that there has been an emphasis upon strengthening those traditional institutions needed for all children - especially the home, the church, and the school.

All children are entitled to happy, wholesome home life.

The right kind of home life is vital to the welfare of the child.

It is vital also to the welfare of the Nation.

But the home is not complete within itself.

It must be fortified and supplemented by the church, the school and other forces in the community.

After each great crisis in our national life, there always seems to be a moral and spiritual let down.

I am happy, therefore, to note that re-emphasis of moral and spiritual values is to be given attention.

Society cannot afford to contribute to the delinquency of its children by allowing spiritual guidance and social education to lag behind economic and scientific development.

The church has primary responsibility for spiritual guidance.

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It can help children distinguish between fundamental values in human conduct and transient ideas as to acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

In essence, the church can help to guide youth in the formation of a scale of values in keeping with the principles of democratic living.

I have read with interest the preliminary statement on the school as a preventive agency. I feel the report of this group will be a challenging one.

The school is strategically placed to reach practically all children.

Also it reaches them at an early, and impressionable period of life.

The school that sees the child's school experience as a part of life itself, as well as preparation for life, can develop healthful habits - mental and physical, proper attitudes and interests and a sense of civic responsibility.

The school is in a position to recognize attitudes and behavior that may be the forerunners of delinquency.

An all-round good school helps to prevent delinquency.

Everyone has need for fun, relaxation and release, and self-expression.

Recreation can play an important role in the conservation of youth as it meets the needs of millions of our young people.

Time will not permit the mentioning of other services essential for the well-being of all children.

As services become more nearly adequate for the millions of our youth, offenders and delinquents will become fewer.

Passing from the general - that of meeting the needs of all children, we know that specialized services are necessary to meet the special needs of certain children.

For example, some children require special protection of the community. They are <sup>the</sup> physically and mentally handicapped children, boys and girls in employment, children of working mothers, and children who live in congested areas, or whose families are in economic need.

In addition, some community conditions are destructive to the welfare of children.

The elimination, or control, of such harmful or potentially harmful influences that lead children into delinquency is a public responsibility.

The preliminary statements that I have read indicate awareness of the importance of giving protection to children who are especially vulnerable to delinquency, and of providing control of harmful influences in the community.

Of course the subject with which we must immediately deal in this Conference is how to get services to those children and youth who have already become delinquent, or have serious behavior problems, and what those services should be.

As I indicated earlier, undoubtedly, if we are to retrain children who have become delinquent, a variety of resources must be drawn upon.

The delinquent child or youth needs the basic services and resources that are essential for all children.

He needs the protections that are necessary for the child in danger of becoming delinquent.

He needs skillful handling of his own particular problems.

He needs help from the home, the school, the church, the youth serving organizations, the social agencies, the law enforcement bodies, and all the other forces in the community that can play any part in his training, re-adjusting and re-creating.

That is why we are here today.

This multiple approach to the problem of juvenile delinquency, its prevention and control, involves a community of social forces and a concentrated and coordinated effort on the part of all in building a well-rounded and evenly developed program.

Representatives of the National, State and Local scenes, we are here, therefore, to study our problems, to take stock of our resources and to chart a course of action that may be helpful to every community in America.

Here, I must emphasize the limitations of my office and of this conference. We can meet and mobilize public opinion concerning the problem with which we are confronted -- we can make specific recommendation for action; can carry out some of these recommendations. But the essential responsibility must rest with the local communities. It is for them to utilize the reports and the results of this conference. It is for them to take these reports and to translate them into coordinated community effort.

In this connection I take this opportunity to pay a tribute to our law enforcement officers. No group is more deserving of our heartfelt appreciation and real admiration than the police officer -- under paid and over worked he renders yeoman service to America. In this fight he is in the front line trenches. Its success largely depends on "the man on the beat". We are counting on him.

In conclusion, I wish to express both my official and warm personal appreciation to each and all of you for coming together in a united attack on this grave national problem.

The spirit in which you come is the guarantee of your success.

I shall await the results of your deliberations with confidence.