



AN ADDRESS

BY

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To be in Oklahoma is almost as good as to be in Texas. In fact, Oklahoma -- geographically -- is almost in Texas.

For his part in making it possible for me to be here I thank Senator Bob Kerr, whose smile and handclasp are as contagious as good cheer.

You in Oklahoma have gotten the habit of placing in high office people of integrity, capacity and dependability. Your great Governor, Roy Turner, and Bob Kerr, and Elmer Thomas, your senior United States Senator, are examples of the wisdom of your people.

It is always a treat to speak in behalf of Young America -- especially when it concerns a project so important and timely as that of building America's future.

Oklahoma has contributed much to that building since its entry, in 1907, into the Union of States.

Your State and my State of Texas have much in common. We are both blessed with rich and diversified resources -- agricultural, mineral and industrial.

However, our most precious asset is the youth of our respective communities. For without our children our wealth would dissipate like snow before the sun. Our country would soon crumble like the Empires that made gold and power their God.

This gathering here tonight of leading citizens -- men and women workers in the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations -- volunteer recruits in God's work -- is striking evidence that Oklahoma City intends to and shall protect and develop this blessed resource.

And, what is even more important, you realize the responsibility of good citizenship. We can't make the world a world of freedom for all mankind -- a

world of justice and opportunity for all -- unless we in America have made our own country strong and secure.

We must have the assurance that youngsters now growing into maturity, and the oncoming generations, will have a safe and secure nation in which to live, just as our parents and grandparents found and left for us.

The thought of what you are trying to do here in this fund-raising campaign is heart warming. It is an encouraging sign, and I hope your accomplishments will echo and re-echo throughout the country -- from the smallest hamlet to the largest city in this land of ours. I know how badly is needed the additional \$1,250,000 which you have set as your goal. You will surpass even that high ambition. I appreciate fully how vitally necessary are the homes and recreational centers you plan to construct in these modern days and scientific times. In this fast-moving universe, we must train our children to be ready to take hold of the reins in the tomorrow.

As your Attorney General I am sorry to have to tell you that the present picture of crime in the United States is far from good. In fact, I would say it is shocking -- particularly so in regard to the percentage of juveniles involved in law-breaking. As you know, youths running afoul of the Federal law are placed by the judges in the care of the Attorney General.

In a recent FBI report by Director J. Edgar Hoover it is estimated that in 1948 the total number of major crimes reached 1,686,670. This was an increase of 1.3 percent over the 1947 crime statistics.

The arrests numbered 759,698, the highest figure ever recorded in one year. Among these were 115,940 males and females under 21 years of age, or more than 15 percent of the total.

Last year a serious crime was committed, on the average, every 18.7 seconds. At this rate, during my brief talk here about 50 crimes will have

been committed in scattered sections of the country -- at least 8 of the 50 by youths.

In 1948, on the average, 36 persons were murdered each passing day, 255 persons were victims of assault or rape, there were 150 robberies, 436 automobiles were stolen, 1,032 places were burglarized, and in addition there were 2,672 miscellaneous larcenies.

When I assumed my present post in 1945, I visited our National Training School for Boys in Washington. There I found over 600 lads, wards of mine as Attorney General, ranging in age from 12 to 19 years -- all fine-looking fellows. How did they get there? Most of them came from broken homes, slums, underprivileged parents, bad communities, and criminally-crazed gangs. The vast majority of them had started out in life with two strikes against them.

Today, it is comforting tonate, there are less than 250 in that institution. This is attributed by those working in this field to the fact that the local communities are awakened to the deplorable situation and are creating wholesome opportunities for growing youth.

On that visit to the Training School, I talked to the boys. One young fellow told me he was to be given parole. He pleaded, "Don't send me back home."

Surprised, I asked, "Why?"

His reply was astounding. He said that his mother ran a house of ill repute and had used him as a chamber maid.

What chance had a boy like that?

I placed him with a service club in another community, and he is making good.

Yes, you would meet all types of youngsters there -- and girls, too, at our institution in West Virginia.

In a case at the latter institution, the girl's home life was a fertile field in which the seed of human wreckage could flourish. It represented a sordid travesty on the type of a home that produces healthy, normal children.

The home had been broken by divorce. The mother had remarried, but the stepfather was so disagreeable to the child that the problem was aggravated rather than cured. The result: a social outcast at 16; a bank robber at 17; and a sentence of 10 years in Federal prison.

Needless to say, she was not a member of the Y. W. C. A.

If every citizen could go through one of these institutions, he would become a crusader for youth opportunity -- just as you are doing here. You recognize the needs of the time, and you are doing the job to meet those needs.

Now, what do you think it costs to maintain one juvenile offender in one of our training schools? It costs \$1,000 a year to keep one boy there. And the statistics on reformation show that about 52 percent of first-time juvenile offenders return to the penitentiary in their adult years.

Two-time teen-age offenders return to prison in later years, in 61 percent of the cases. And 72 percent of the three-time offenders land in prison in later life. Remember, it costs a thousand dollars a year to keep a boy or a girl for a year in an institution.

Here in this big city of approximately 300,000, there are about 40,000 children ranging in age from 8 to 20. It doesn't take a wizard like Einstein to figure out that your goal of \$1,250,000, divided among all the children of this area, amounts to only \$30.00 per child -- merely a pittance to invest

in our youth and in future mothers and fathers of America.

Then divide that \$30.00 by 20 years, the likely life of the buildings, and the investment is only \$1.50 per child.

All we need in the fight on delinquency is an expansion of youth opportunity.

Attempting to lead youths into rich and purposeful living after they are delinquents is not an easy task. It is not only difficult, but more costly and, most of the time, too late.

If every community strengthened the traditional institutions of American life -- the home, the church, the school, and related activities: A YMCA - a YWCA - some boys or girls clubs - summer camps - medical clinics -- then there would be few juvenile problems.

Our trouble is ourselves. We are too busy with our own affairs, particularly accumulating money.

It was Socrates who said: "What mean ye, fellow citizens, that ye turn every stone to scrape wealth together, and take so little care of your children, to whom ye must one day relinquish all."

That was many centuries ago, and still we are faced with the same problem -- the neglect of parents - of communities.

Congratulations to Oklahoma City and the patriotic citizens who are making these splendid buildings possible. Under the new plans they will be most serviceable.

It is fitting and proper that this service be founded on religion. Bring up our children to be religious and they will translate that faith into the words of the Four Freedoms. They will conceive a United Nations - an Atlantic Charter - yes, they will break a blockade.

I am sure Senator Kerr and Governor Turner will agree with me that no legislation is necessary to bring out the spiritual and idealistic qualities in Americans. You cannot legislate morals. But institutions like the "Y" can instill it in the very bones of children.

We can well be proud of our American youth. Only the smallest fraction of the millions of youngsters have fallen from the path of honesty and righteousness. Ours is the opportunity to see that this small fraction is wiped out.

I am happy to say that your program is both a preventative and a cure for such deficiencies. All youth asks of us is our affection, our guidance, and, in our modern, complicated and fast-moving civilization, the meeting of the basic necessity for healthy living, wholesome recreation, good association and surroundings. These cardinal needs of youth will be met in the "Y's" of Oklahoma City.

Let us all put our shoulders to the wheel, and on Victory Day, May 23, we can join together in singing that famed Oklahoma song:

"Oh What A Beautiful Morning!

Oh What A Beautiful Day!"