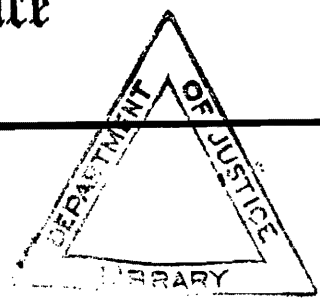


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# Department of Justice



FOR P. M. RELEASE

ADDRESS  
BY  
HONORABLE ROBERT F. KENNEDY  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

Prepared For Delivery  
Before The  
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEWSPAPER EDITORS

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Washington, D. C.  
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3:15 P. M.

Thank you Mr. Royster.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I want to express my appreciation to all of you for inviting me here this afternoon. This is my first speech as Attorney General and I think it fitting that I make my debut before the American Society of Newspaper Editors. No one needs to tell me about the importance of the free press in a democratic society or about the essential role a newspaper can play in its community.

When I was counsel for the Senate Rackets Committee, about 25% of the important leads which our committee developed came from newspapers. This increased my respect for those courageous newspapers which assisted us. It also caused me to look with wonderment at some of the newspapers that did not. Throughout the three years of the Committee's investigations there were some large newspapers which never once asked the Committee for any information about what was going on in their cities nor gave the Committee one single lead.

And so I welcome this chance to talk with you today. I am aware that some of you raised your editorial eyebrows when I was named Attorney General. . What I would like to do is give you a thumbnail run-down on what we have done in the Justice Department, and what we hope to do. Then I'll be glad to answer questions for as long as your time permits. I hope that out of this you will give us some assistance in at least one particular field -- organized crime and racketeering.

I don't think there is doubt that among the most powerful forces threatening our nation are the hoodlums and racketeers. They have made their hold on gambling, narcotics and racketeering more secure and have moved in on legitimate businesses and labor unions. My three months in the Justice Department have not allayed my concern over what organized crime and racketeering are doing to this nation -- economically and morally. They have increased my concern.

The ultimate responsibility for dealing with the rackets rests with local law enforcement. However, it is quite clear that in many areas the rackets have outgrown the authorities. The rackets have become too widespread, too well organized and too rich.

We have sent to the Congress eight proposed bills which we believe can be effective in dealing with the rackets. Essentially these bills will give the FBI increased jurisdiction to assist local authorities.

Three of these measures are new. Three were proposed by my predecessor and two are substantial revisions of bills he initiated. They range from prohibiting interstate travel in support of racketeering to banning interstate transportation of gambling material.

I invite your attention to these bills. If you feel they are in the public interest, I appeal to you to give them more than just passing editorial support.

I think they can be most effective, but laws are only as good as the men who enforce them. We are working very hard to develop a

coordinated effort to curb the racketeers and the hoodlums, and put them in jail. We haven't been talking much about what we are doing or how we are doing it. We are not going to. It really doesn't make any difference at all what we say now. We will let the record speak for itself three - four years from now. You will make a judgment and so will the people of the United States.

I can tell you -- that in the past three months the FBI and the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice have made substantial progress in pooling information about known hoodlums and in coordinating investigations in organized crime and racketeering. There are more than 30 federal agencies which have investigative units.

When I was on the Rackets Committee it was evident that a much better job could be done against organized crime if all federal investigative agencies pooled their information and coordinated their investigations. I advocated a national crime commission. At present this idea has been shelved. We are doing the job of coordinating investigations and pooling information in the Organized Crime and Racketeering Section of the Criminal Division. It appears to be working out well but it is too early for a judgment. We are also working with local law enforcement agencies where we can.

I think each of you can give us some assistance. I don't believe newspaper reporters can substitute for a district attorney but a newspaper has a very valid investigative role. Newspaper reports on corruption

in government, racketeering and organized crime conditions can be very helpful to your communities and the whole country. If the Department of Justice legally can aid or assist you, you will find us ready to do so. Some of you already have.

The electrical antitrust cases have attracted much attention. The Sherman Act has been on the books since July 2, 1890. The Clayton Act became law on October 15, 1914. However, the fact that seven top executives went to jail, brought home for the first time to many Americans that there are laws to prevent companies from banding together in secret -- to rig prices -- to fix bids -- and to stifle competition. These cases also have focused much attention on what the Department is going to do in the antitrust field.

Again, I would rather let our actions speak for us. But we will be vigorous. We will be extremely interested in mergers, as well as price-fixing violations.

Our aim in enforcing the anti-merger laws is to make sure that no enterprise has a chance to dominate or control an industry or to start in that direction. We plan to prevent, and where necessary undo, monopoly control. Our main objective is to protect the American system of free enterprise.

I regard price-fixing violations such as those in the electrical cases, as serious reflections upon our morality and our integrity as free people. These men were not hoodlums or gangsters. They were highly

respected in their communities. Yet, they got together in secret -- in a classic conspiracy -- to cheat their own government -- the Army, Navy, the Air Force, the Department of the Interior, Atomic Energy Commission -- as well as their local governments. Our investigations indicate this type of thing is widespread. We have investigations of price-fixing under way in every major city.

Again, we are concerned with the American system of free enterprise. When companies get together secretly to fix prices and attempt to eliminate competition, honest businessmen suffer. I think this is wrong. I respectfully suggest that you take a very close look at the cases which may develop in your community.

We look at the Antitrust Division as being pro-business -- by helping, assisting and protecting the small businessman, the middle-sized businessman and even large businessmen -- where they cannot help themselves.

In the last two months we have brought indictments charging bakeries in Florida with a conspiracy to fix bread prices in sales to Navy bases, and several dairies in Baltimore with rigged bids in the sale of milk to public schools.

In price-fixing cases we intend to bring indictments against the individuals involved. The record shows there are a number of companies which repeatedly have violated the anti-trust laws. A series of fines hasn't stopped them.

Our general policy will be to oppose pleas of nolo contendere by defendants in price-fixing cases. When such pleas are accepted, the cases are disposed of without having the facts aired in court. Also, a conviction or a plea of guilty is prima facie evidence which can be used against the defendants in suit for damages. We are going to oppose nolo contendere pleas. Price-fixing is a serious matter. It shouldn't be treated as it has too often in the past as though the Government is handing out tickets for speeding -- or parking.

Civil rights matters have occupied a considerable part of my time. This has been and is going to be the most sensitive area. While most of the civil rights cases currently are in the South, the problem is by no means confined to the South. I believe there has been a great deal of hypocrisy and talk.

In the school integration and voting cases in the South, we are trying to show the flag -- not wave it. We are in communication with the responsible local authorities in every situation.

When our investigations indicate there has been a violation of federal laws, we acquaint the officials involved with these facts. We ask them to take steps to correct the situation. In a number of cases they have. When they have not, we have taken action in the courts.

We will not stand for a defiance of federal court orders whether by a mob or by a reluctant official. On the other hand, we will make every effort to work with people of good will and integrity in the South to solve

these very difficult problems without another Little Rock and without another New Orleans.

I think we can do it. I think the fact that the President has placed the full weight of this Administration behind the Supreme Court order of 1954 and the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960 will make the difference.

I could talk a good deal longer about the other work which is going on in the Department. We must recommend to the President new United States Attorneys, new Marshals, and about 100 judges who will be appointed this year -- about 70 of which are for new judgeships provided for in a bill now before Congress. I sometimes wish that there were some other way of doing this job. However, it is our responsibility and we intend to pick the best possible candidates. All of the candidates come highly recommended. But, we make our own investigation and I personally interview most new United States Attorneys, Marshals and judges before sending their nominations to the White House. We want the best possible persons in terms of integrity, honesty and independence and skill to do the job. I believe the Department of Justice and, to an extent, the Administration will be judged on how we perform this task.

We have a Civil Division which handles the Government's civil litigation; a Tax Division which is heavily engaged in tax prosecutions and a Lands Division which handles acquisitions, eminent domain and condemnation cases involving literally billions of dollars, not to mention very complex cases being tried under the Indian Claims Commission Act involving more than a billion acres of land.



There is the Office of Legal Counsel which prepared legal opinions and memoranda for the Administration. The Office of the Solicitor General takes the Government's cases before the Supreme Court. The Tennessee reapportionment case which was argued Wednesday has extremely important ramifications for each one of you.

The Department also has within it the Bureau of Prisons, the FBI, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Parole Board, Internal Security Division, and the Office of Alien Property.

In a world where peace is our great endeavor and where we are fighting continuously for the good will of all mankind, I think it is tremendously important that the American public gets an accurate picture of what is happening. And I don't know of any better way than by newspapers digging into the government, finding out what is going on, and reporting it accurately.

You and I hold unique roles in our society. This is a government of laws. The events of the past week in Cuba have underscored the grave threat to men and women who would live by the law and remain free. In the Department of Justice, we pledged our best effort -- our complete dedication -- to seeing that justice shall prevail in the land and that the cause of freedom -- under the law -- shall be advanced.