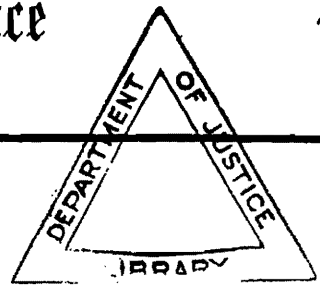


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Department of Justice



STATEMENT

OF THE

HONORABLE ROBERT F. KENNEDY

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE

GENERAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR

OF THE

HOUSE EDUCATION AND LABOR COMMITTEE

ON H.R. 7536

June 28, 1961

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to testify on H.R. 7536, the Youth Employment Opportunities Act of 1961. In appearing before your committee today I would like to talk from the vantage point of my role as chairman of the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime. This Committee, which includes the Secretary of Labor and Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, is charged with the task of coordinating federal efforts to help local communities in the prevention of juvenile delinquency.

The President's Committee was established by this administration in recognition of the fact that delinquency and crime are among the most serious problems facing the American people today. It was created out of the conviction that effective action would require a great deal of cooperation among many Federal, State and local agencies. But we are convinced that the major share of effective action must, of necessity, be taken by state and local programs and private agencies.

Nevertheless, there appears to be room for both Federal programs and Federal financial assistance to state and local programs which will (a) demonstrate new methods of working with delinquency problems, (b) assist in training personnel to work on these problems, or (c) facilitate the exchange of information and technical assistance among all

interested parties.

As a first step in carrying out this policy, the President on May 11, 1961 sent to the Speaker of the House legislation "to provide Federal assistance for projects which will evaluate and demonstrate techniques and practices leading to a solution of the Nation's problems relating to juvenile delinquency" This legislation has now been introduced by Rep. Edith Green as H.R. 7178. In essence that bill is aimed at developing programs under conditions where the delinquency pattern is already well established.

H.R. 7536, on the other hand, is, as it relates to delinquency, primarily a preventive measure. It seeks, among other objectives, to find ways of providing legitimate outlets for youthful ambitions and energies before they are turned into less desirable channels. It is, in my view an essential segment of a comprehensive program for preventing and controlling delinquency.

H.R. 7536 is, of course, not primarily a delinquency prevention measure. Rather, its aim is to aid all types of young men or women who are unemployed because they have not had adequate training or opportunities. It focuses

its efforts on the school dropout who has acquired neither the work skill nor the experience necessary in our contemporary competitive labor market. I hasten to add that very few of the young people who fit this description have ever been in real trouble with the law. Nevertheless, we have learned that a very significant portion of those who do become involved in delinquent conduct come from the ranks of the youthful unemployed.

What this Bill will do is to provide several types of demonstration programs aimed at showing how youth opportunities can be substantially enlarged. I cannot overemphasize the fact that this bill is not designed to do the whole job. The appropriations which are contemplated will permit us to give a fair test to several methods. At best, however, they will reach only a small proportion of those who need help. The success of the legislation must eventually be measured by the degree to which these programs are complemented and supported by State and local programs and financing.

I am sure that in the administration of this act, the Secretary of Labor will work very closely with the President's Committee and with officials of State, local

and private organizations to ensure that the programs which are developed are compatible with local needs. Only in this way can we expect that they will become sufficiently attractive that state and local people will undertake to finance their continuation and expansion.

I hope that the Committee will promptly approve this legislation. I am sure that within its framework, the Secretary of Labor, with our assistance, can quickly develop programs which will increase the opportunities for all youth; programs which will thereby help to stem the rising tide of delinquency.