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MONDAY, JULY 16, 1956

ADDRESS

BY

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Prepared for Delivery  
before  
Conference of United States Attorneys

Great Hall  
Department of Justice  
Monday, July 16, 1956

I am happy to welcome you to this our third annual United States Attorneys' Conference. I hope you will find your trip not only productive, but enjoyable as well. Although I have the opportunity of seeing some of you from time to time, I look forward to these Conferences which afford me the chance to meet all of you. I earnestly hope that you will take advantage of your time here in the Department to confer with Division Heads and Section Chiefs and others handling cases assigned to your offices. We have set Wednesday aside specifically for this important purpose.

I should like to begin by discussing the very important problem of case backlog. I congratulate all of you on the tremendous advances you have made since we commenced the drive to reduce the cases pending in United States Attorneys' offices. The elimination of the long delay which exists in some districts between the filing of a case and its ultimate disposition has been among our primary objectives since taking office. We recently held in the Department a National Conference on Congestion in the Courts. To this Conference were invited the presidents of the bar associations of all of your states and principal cities, and the heads of other bar, research and judicial organizations. Ninety members of the bar and other interested groups gathered here for the purpose of pooling their knowledge and making concrete suggestions toward the solution of this serious problem. We discussed the subject for two days and adopted a program for launching an all-out, continuous attack on delays in litigation. This attack will be directed by an Executive Committee soon to be appointed. The entire Conference will

meet again as often as the need arises. We all know, in this connection, that one of the most important factors is continuing close working cooperation between the government, the bench and the bar. In this regard, you have played an important and significant part. Without exception, the bench and the bar appreciates not only your cooperation but the great contribution you have made to the administration of justice.

When we first began our all important drive on the backlog in September 1954, there was a staggering total of 74,972 cases and matters, civil and criminal, pending in the United States Attorneys' offices. We call a case anything that is pending in court and a matter anything that is not. This total has been reduced since that time as of June 30, 1956 by a total of 23,552 cases and matters leaving the existing total at 51,420, the same being a reduction of 31.15 percent.

As you know, we have been greatly concerned with court congestion. Consequently, a major portion of our effort has been directed toward reducing the number of cases actually pending in court. The number of civil cases actually pending in court has decreased by 6,390, or 27.29 percent. This leaves the United States Attorneys' offices with 17,023 civil cases pending. This is the smallest number of civil cases pending since June, 1946. During the same period of time the United States Attorneys and the Department of Justice were able to reduce criminal cases by 3,030 or 29.16 percent. This means that as of June 30, 1956 the U. S. Attorneys had fewer criminal cases pending in court than at any time in the last 20 years. There are now pending only 7,362. This remarkable achievement has taken place in the short space of 22 months.

The entire Department of Justice has a right to be proud of these outstanding accomplishments. This very large reduction in the number of matters pending, all of which represent potential litigation is bound to have further impact on case reduction in the not-too-distant future. Private litigants are already beginning to feel the results of our backlog reduction drive.

With your permission I would like to point out a few actual examples of the Government case backlog reduction. The Middle District of North Carolina reduced its pending cases from 330 to 60, or a reduction of 81.8 percent; Maryland, from 636 to 331, or 47.9 percent; Florida, Southern, from 913 to 502, or 45 percent; Michigan, Eastern, from 798 to 502, or 37 percent; Illinois, Northern, from 1,059 to 682, or 35 percent; Massachusetts, from 927 to 619, or 33 percent; Pennsylvania, Eastern, from 963 to 665 or 30 percent; and New York, Southern, from 2,059 to 1,533, or 25 percent. This decrease has extended all along the line with reductions rising as high as 77 percent in districts with proportionately smaller workloads.

Although there have been a number of contributing factors, in the final analysis your good hard work and devotion to duty have been the most important. We in the Department have endeavored to furnish you with every assistance to help you in your work, by providing additional personnel in many districts, by enlarging your authority to compromise and settle cases, and by pressing for long overdue and very well-deserved salary increases. All of these are important aids in themselves but without the determination to make the fullest and most intelligent use of them you could not have achieved the outstanding record which you have made.

Since our last Conference, we have arranged for a number of so-called "task forces" of experienced attorneys from the Department to visit some of your offices. These visits have been of inestimable value to the Department and, I hope, of substantial assistance to you. They have made it possible for us to view your problems first hand and to appreciate them more fully. This mutual benefit has resulted in closer, more effective cooperation between the field and at all levels here in the Department. In addition to these "task forces" we have arranged with the Federal Housing Administration for the assignment of personnel to visit many United States Attorneys' offices for the purpose of reviewing FHA accounts and lending whatever assistance is needed. We hope that FHA lawyers will, within the next 90 days, have covered every one of your offices. During the past year, 85 "task force" visits have been made by personnel from the Department and the Federal Housing Administration. I wish to express my appreciation to you for the way in which these representatives have been received into your offices and treated. Our own attorneys, as well as the FHA representatives, have mentioned many times the cordial receptions they have received.

The Litigation Reporting System which was initiated in July of 1953 has been both extended and improved since you were last here. The statistical data furnished through this system has been invaluable to all of us and to you in many ways in connection with budgeting, general management, and backlog reduction.

We also have been busy since the last Conference in getting the cooperation of other Federal agencies in eliminating the reference to

United States Attorneys of a great many small, old, and obviously uncollectible claims. The curtailment of these referrals will become a major factor in preventing the future accumulation of a backlog such as we found when we came into office more than three years ago.

Another spectacular development which has resulted from case backlog drive has been the amount of money that has been collected through the United States Attorneys' offices for the Government. During our first full fiscal year in office you collected \$21,217,000. The second year you collected about \$6,283,000 more. During the year just past you collected about \$14,285,000 more than the second year, for a total figure of \$41,785,000. This is the all time record for the Department of Justice. It exceeds by more than 8 million dollars the highest prior year. What does this mean to the Government and the taxpayer in terms of money spent by your offices? For every dollar spent on your operations the Treasury received in return \$2.61 and the second year \$2.96. This year for each dollar that was appropriated you returned \$3.75 to the U.S. Treasury. There may have been other factors contributing to this successful effort on your part but it seems to me that the principal factors are your unselfish devotion to duty and your intelligent and energetic efforts in protecting the interests of the Government.

I believe that in this fourth year of our Administration we can look back with a certain pride over our accomplishments and review the constructive good that has come from them. We have renewed the faith of the American people in the administration of justice. We have conducted our operations in the full light of publicity and have kept the public properly informed of our policies and objectives. We have ascertained,

from the first over-all inventory in the history of the Department, the number of cases pending. We have devised new and efficient means of checking regularly on the progress of cases toward disposition. We have engineered a country-wide many-pronged attack on the case backlog and court congestion. We have disposed of more cases than in any similar period in Departmental history, and we have collected and returned to the Treasury many times the cost of operating our United States Attorneys' offices.

Although we have done much in the comparatively short time we have been in office, we must not be content with the results we have so far achieved. We must bend every effort to a further reduction of the existing backlog. It is essential that we make every reasonable effort to dispose of all pending litigation as rapidly as the best interests of the Government will permit. All of us here in the Department will continue to cooperate to the utmost with you and with the courts in continued efforts to reduce the backlog and relieve the congestion presently found in many court dockets. I am sure that if you all continue the fine work which you have been doing, we will soon be in a position where we can report to the American people that all of the litigation in which the Government is involved is current.

I hope that you all enjoy your stay here, although it is but a few days. Mrs. Brownell and I will be looking forward to being with you at the Anderson House tomorrow evening.