

"THE RECURRING PROBLEM OF CRIME"

An Address

by

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## THE RECURRING PROBLEM OF CRIME.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the National Anti-Crime Conference.

For many years our civilization has been challenged by an element which makes a business of crime. I compliment you on your public spirit in coming to Washington for a discussion of this important matter. You who have studied this problem are doubtless aware of its manifold difficulties, but your presence here proves that these difficulties are not a source of discouragement but an incentive to greater effort.

In the last few months the Government at Washington has been burdened by an unexampled multiplicity of problems arising throughout the Nation. The Department of Justice has been called upon to perform its share of work in trying to solve them. In order that it may function efficiently the Department is divided into a number of subdivisions. Twelve of these are of outstanding importance. One of them relates to crime.

Several months ago I stated that it was my purpose to carry on an intensive campaign against organized crime and expressed the hope that, in the field of law enforcement and in the detection and prosecution of crime, I might be able to bring about a better coordination of State and Federal activities. The campaign which I have in mind contemplates a steady, unrelenting and persistent effort, continued over a long period of time.

There are those who advocate a great Federal police force in the nature of Scotland Yard. The structure and functions of this famous and efficient organization are hardly adaptable to our complex problems. Rather should we stress thorough and whole-hearted cooperation between the proper Federal and State authorities. There are many curious **misapprehensions**

about Scotland Yard. Commissioners, Constables, Inspectors, and Superintendents of that organization have thrilled us as they stalk through the pages of fiction and romance. Charles Dickens' "Inspector Bucket"; Sergeant Cuff in the novel "The Moonstone" by Wilkie Collins; Lestrade, who is so frequently saved from failure by the greatest of all amateurs, Sherlock Holmes; and countless others have fostered a popular misconception of this excellent British police department. Scotland Yard, contrary to popular belief, is not a detective force and does not have jurisdiction throughout England or the British Isles. The former home of the London police force at Scotland Yard, near Whitehall, was occupied in ancient days by the kings of Scotland on their visits to London, and this name was retained when the present building was erected. Scotland Yard is simply the Metropolitan Police Department of Greater London and is one of the 187 police forces in England and Wales. It has no jurisdiction outside the city of London, except upon rather infrequent occasions when it is invited by some other police department to aid in the solution of a particular crime. Its Criminal Record Office acts as a clearing house of identification data for the British Isles, in much the same way as the Identification Unit of the Department of Justice serves the law enforcement agencies of this country.

It may be interesting to know that Scotland Yard has a collection of about 500,000 fingerprint records while the Division of Investigation of the Department of Justice has over 3,925,000.

Even if it were assumed that Scotland Yard operated over the total area of Great Britain its problem could not be compared to the conditions which exist in the United States. Let us take the Urschol kidnaping case

by way of illustration. Mr. Urschel was seized at his home in Oklahoma City and transported to an obscure farm in the northern part of Texas. The two gunmen who kidnaped him were not alone in the enterprise. The abduction had been carefully planned and the place of imprisonment prepared. In the State of Missouri other co-conspirators were awaiting the receipt of word of the kidnaping with a view to demanding and securing the ransom money. In the State of Minnesota still other members of this gang stood ready to receive these funds and exchange them for currency that could not be traced. Thus, in accordance with carefully laid plans, four distinct, coordinated groups of conspirators collaborated in the execution of this crime. You will observe that the operation of these criminals covered four states, Oklahoma, Missouri, Minnesota and Texas. The combined areas of the states over which these criminals were operating is greater than that of England, Scotland, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Austria and the Netherlands. The terrain to be covered by the forces brought into play to identify and capture the perpetrators of this crime is out of all comparison to the area of a country such as England.

Amongst the constructive suggestions which have been made is the suggested establishment of a national institute of criminology, which would include among its functions scientific research, training for officials showing an aptitude in certain specialized fields of law enforcement, the maintenance of a library to provide a further basis for research, the publication of articles found of value to law enforcement, and the furnishing of actual aid to law enforcement agencies in the study of latent evidence in a scientific or technical laboratory. Steps along these lines have already been taken in the Department of Justice, but this work should be extended

in scope. If this activity is to be properly developed an extensive study of ways and means might well be undertaken. In practically every European country a person entering upon a career in the higher police service must show proof of attendance at a University Law School. Similar standards are now being required in the Division of Investigation of the Department of Justice. Numerous institutions have been founded on the Continent to give police officials the scientific training necessary to cope successfully with the highly trained criminal. The Criminology Institute of the Vienna Police Department and the School of Criminology and Scientific Police at Belgium have courses of every description, and frequently those who wish to become judges of criminal courts or prosecuting attorneys become students at these institutions. The Belgium school is now finishing its thirteenth year and has graduated sixteen hundred students in its elementary course and three hundred in the advance course. The Administrative Board of the school is presided over by the Minister of Justice, and among its members are the leading prosecutors of the country and the President of the Bar Association. There are other important criminal institutes in Lausanne, Lyons, Paris, Rome, London, Berlin, Dresden and Munich. The laboratories of these institutions are said to be more modern and scientific than those of the most advanced police department within the United States, with the possible exception of New York and St. Louis.

The formation of state constabularies in every state in the Union, unhampered by county lines, would undoubtedly be of real assistance in combatting crime and making the possibility of escape less likely. Cooperation between these bodies and the Municipal authorities, with the already existing investigative units of the Federal Government, would form an inter-

locked, coordinated system, the value of which would soon be demonstrated.

It is gratifying to be able to report that the American manufacturers of machine guns have entered into an agreement with the National Recovery Administration and the Department of Justice not to dispose of machine guns to other than law enforcement officers, banks, or institutions having police departments. The smuggling in of machine guns from abroad still presents aspects of difficulty. Congressional action upon this subject may well be considered.

Our records demonstrate that a large percentage of the serious crimes are committed by men who have escaped from prison. These men operate in groups and make a study of methods by which to avoid punishment when they are caught. At large they prey upon the public, confined they plan and encourage prison outbreaks. Intimidation, bribery, and violence are their accustomed methods. The majority of the inmates of our prisons are comparatively well behaved, but a few desperate criminals among them present a menace to any penal institution. Relatives, friends and fellow members of the gang congregate near the prison to be of help when a favorable opportunity is offered. This condition exists where large penitentiaries are located. For some time I have desired to obtain a place of confinement to which could be sent our more dangerous and intractable criminals. Such a place should be apart from the large centers of population, preferably on an island which would not be easy of access. It was not my purpose to find a prison in which the inmates would be subjected to any unusual or unreasonable environment, but rather a place which would be apart and inaccessible, so that the holding of the inmates would be assured and their

influence removed from that of the better class of prisoners. You can appreciate, therefore, with what pleasure I make public the fact that such a place has been found. By negotiation with the War Department we have obtained the use of Alcatraz Prison, located on a precipitous island in San Francisco Bay, more than a mile from shore. The current is swift and escapes are practically impossible. It has secure cells for six hundred persons. It is in excellent condition and admirably fitted for the purposes I had in mind. Here may be isolated the criminals of the vicious and irredeemable type so that their evil influence may not be extended to other prisoners who are disposed to rehabilitate themselves.

There has been far too much glorification of the criminal! The real heroes are the efficient states' attorneys and district attorneys who conscientiously prosecute the dangerous criminals; the courageous Judges who impose adequate penalties, and the unassuming and faithful police officers and Federal investigators throughout the land who, taking their courage and their lives in their hands, track down these remorseless enemies of our common country.

There is another matter to which I invite your serious attention. I refer to unscrupulous lawyers who aid and abet criminals in their unlawful undertakings and employ every unworthy artifice in their defense. There is reason to believe that in many localities certain members of the Bar are in touch with and regularly employed by the criminal element. These men are the scavengers of the Bar and are unworthy of the profession they disgrace. Their elimination is a part of the problem of crime.

The public support that is being given to the campaign against crime is a source of intense satisfaction to all who realize its significance

and deep importance. In no small degree is this due to the efforts of this Association which has dedicated itself primarily to the great task of informing and stirring the public. With an awakened citizenry and alert public officials, the efforts of organized crime cannot successfully continue.

Permit me to congratulate the United States Flag Association for calling this important conference. In particular, Colonel Moss, I extend to you my congratulations for your disinterested, untiring, and patriotic services in this great cause.