



Department of Justice

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REMARKS BY

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TO

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE EMPLOYEES

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
THE GREAT HALL
WASHINGTON, D.C.
OCTOBER 7, 1988

NOTE: Because Mr. Thornburgh often speaks from notes, the speech as delivered may vary from the text. However, he stands behind this speech as printed.

Today marks my first opportunity to address this department as a whole. Many of you have been kind enough to drop me a note or stop by to welcome me back and I have had a chance to nod to still others as we have passed in the hall.

During my first month as Attorney General I personally visited with the top leadership of all the divisions and law enforcement agencies within the department, with the United States Attorneys Advisory Committee, with the members and staff of the National Drug Policy Board and with various national law enforcement leadership groups. Tomorrow I will meet with the United States Attorneys, our valuable partners in the battle against crime and the constant pursuit of justice, at their annual conference. All of this has been done to give me a sense of the department's current status and our unfinished agenda.

This week I also completed the filling of all of the vacancies on the Attorney General's staff when I assumed office, and the Senate has finally confirmed the Deputy and Associate Attorneys General.

This is consequently an appropriate time to share with you some of my views on our future -- whether that extends for another four weeks or another four years of my personal tenure.

As many of you know -- and some of you remember -- this is not my first tour of duty with the Department of Justice. Yes, I

am a recidivist. I served as the head of the Criminal Division during the Ford Administration from 1975 to 1977, following six years as United States Attorney in my home town of Pittsburgh.

My return to the department, after eight years as Governor of Pennsylvania and a year and one-half sojourn in private practice and the academic community, came about because President Reagan literally made me an offer I couldn't refuse!

It has been a great honor and privilege for me to return to a department for which I have so much respect and affection and I look forward to working with you on a wide variety of matters of concern to us all.

I.

This is a department with a great tradition of professionalism and excellence. Gathered here today are some of the most talented and dedicated public servants in the federal government -- lawyer and non-lawyer alike.

But those of us in government today have a heavy burden to bear. I was chagrined to read the results of a poll released earlier this week by Media General and the Associated Press, which shows that seven out of ten Americans think illegal

payoffs are common in the federal government! Half of those polled said the federal government is not honest overall.

Let's face facts -- with a climate of opinion like that, all departments of government must respond -- lest we forfeit altogether the confidence and support of those whom we seek to serve. We can argue with these perceptions, to be sure -- and I do -- but perceptions persist, no matter how ill-informed and unfounded they may be. Our response must be not only to proclaim our high standards, but to keep and maintain them so that fact overtakes fiction and our true record wins out.

This is a tough challenge, to be sure, but one of the lessons I have learned is that questions of integrity in any organization, from a corner convenience store to a cabinet department, cannot be addressed indirectly. Subordinates cannot not be left to speculate as to the values of the organization. Top leadership must give forth clear and explicit signals, lest any confusion or uncertainty exist over what is and is not permissible conduct. To do otherwise allows informal and potentially subversive "codes of conduct" to be transmitted with a wink and a nod, and encourages an inferior ethical system based on "going along to get along" or on the notion that "everybody's doing it."

To help build the kind of future we want in this department, I have requested the Deputy Attorney General to gather the views of all senior management to help in developing proposals that will aid our employees in maintaining the highest ethical standards. A variety of questions should be addressed: How to avoid any appearance of personal and financial conflict of interest? How to deal with lapses in behavior, whether job-related or not? How should we properly regulate interaction between employees and outside groups? What "perks" are proper and which are out of bounds? And others.

The overall goal is not to put shackles on a department whose honesty and integrity are beyond any serious dispute, whatever people in a poll may say. The goal, rather, is to put our ideals and principles on the record, and to say to the public, "these are our standards and we mean to live up to them. Watch us do it."

II.

The issue of ethics is most relevant in the context of our need to continue to attract top-quality men and women to public service -- in this department and elsewhere. Clearly these are related. Frankly, if the public continues to hold the views about government that the Media General/Associated Press poll attributes to it, then, to say the least, the best people will

not be drawn to public service and the nation will be the worse for it.

But there are other things besides demonstrated ethical standards that we need in order to spread zeal for public service among those best qualified to carry it out. And let's face it, financial compensation is a very real problem facing management in the public sector today.

Compensation for a job well done comes in a number of forms, to be sure. Those entering into a career in public service, particularly those with advanced professional degrees, are never going to be fully recompensed in the pocketbook for their hard work. The report issued last week by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management shows that federal government salaries today lag around 24 percent behind salaries in the private sector.

This is a particularly urgent problem where government lawyers are concerned. To compare starting salaries in prosecutors' offices or in our operating divisions with those in private law firms is to understand, to some extent, why, for example, the criminal justice system is hard pressed to keep up with the criminals. It is also to understand why I as Attorney General am committed to presenting the case for adequate

appropriations and competitive compensation for this department and all of its employees at every opportunity.

But there is more to it than dollars and cents. The distinctive rewards of public service, I have found, consist to a large degree in the satisfaction to be had from making a contribution to improving the quality of life for one's fellow citizens: From helping all Americans to enjoy the "domestic tranquility" guaranteed by our Constitution to assuring what I have always felt to be the first civil right of every American: The right to be free from fear in our homes, on our streets and in our communities. And that satisfaction is a very real one. We can and must make this point over and over in stepping up our recruiting and retention efforts.

III.

There are other goals for this department that I call upon you to help us achieve. I have publicly identified our priorities in the law enforcement field as those established by this President and his administration:

- * An all-out war on narcotics and dangerous drugs;

- * a continued strong effort against the subversive influence of organized crime and racketeering;

- * a major push against white collar crime -- "crime in the suites" which has the potential to erode our business and financial institutions;

- * an unremitting effort against public corruption and those who would use the public trust for private gain;

- * a leadership role, in concert with our partners at the state and local level, in the effort against violent street crime and the pernicious effect of pornography.

There are other priorities as well -- vigorous enforcement of our civil rights laws, protection of the environment, enforcement of anti-trust laws and the effective representation of the United States in a wide variety of civil actions.

Moreover, there are goals to be achieved that affect all in this department: The establishment, for example, of a visiting scholar program and perhaps a quarterly journal to keep us on the intellectual cutting edge of the law.

In keeping with the concern I have expressed for prosecutors, we should establish special career development programs for those who work in the U.S. Attorneys' Offices,

hoping to encourage them to make careers out of representing the interests of the United States and its citizens in the criminal justice system.

We should expand our excellent Attorney General's Advocacy Institute, perhaps by linking it with some of the fine law schools in the Washington metropolitan area and elsewhere.

We will also necessarily be expanding the international reach of our department. If I were asked to identify what was the biggest single change in the department in the decade or so since I last served here, I would say it was the growth of our international involvement.

Drugs, terrorism, and other national security matters all have international aspects as a matter of course. The Drug Enforcement Administration, for instance, recently cooperated with 30 other nations in a truly Pan-American crackdown on drug suppliers and traffickers. In addition, the paper trail in organized crime and white-collar crime investigations often leads us into foreign jurisdictions.

I expect that, in close collaboration with the Department of State, the international role of the Justice Department will

continue to grow. And we must be structured and staffed to handle that role.

Before closing, let me touch on a couple other subjects. First, I believe there is a real consensus developing in the Congress respecting the need for vigorous law enforcement. This, in turn, creates a real opportunity for bipartisanship in our dealings with the hill, and I intend to exploit that opportunity. Congress, for example, now has a chance to set the stage favorably for the next year and for years to follow by passing the drug bill that they are negotiating about as we meet. And we better be prepared to help.

Another important initiative is the need to look analytically at the relationship between the Department of Justice and the White House. That relationship is complex and multifaceted, and it has changed over time. The Department of Justice is today the law firm for the entire federal government. It is also the agent of the American people in federal criminal prosecutions and civil suits. The President, meanwhile, has his own counsel's office within the White House.

How the relationship between the Attorney General and the President can be both as close as it should be and as correct as

it ought to be is a difficult question, and one that I think worthy of study.

One thing is certain, however. In our relations with the Congress and the White House, and with the news media as well, it is vitally important that this Department of Justice speak with one voice. Internal debate and argument is important to ensure that no voice is unheard and no viewpoint unexpressed. But once our policy is set, ranks must be closed and the appropriate channels utilized to express our views. To do otherwise will only promote counter-productive confusion, giving aid and comfort to our adversaries and ill-wishers.

One more point. It has often been said, with no dissent from me, that the hallmark of Dick Thornburgh's management style is "no surprises." When something is of concern to this department, I want to hear it from you. When success has been achieved, I want to hear it from you. Good news or bad news, I don't want to find out about it first by the backdoor or from the news media.

That's it. I hope you all now have a better idea of my goals and priorities for this department. I know that I have learned from a month's quick study that devotion to this department and the highest professional and personal standards

are still very much in vogue here. Let's make sure together,
that it stays that way.

Thank you.

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