



Department of Justice

REMARKS

BY

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AT THE
60TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS

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Today as we gather to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, we celebrate the achievements of one of the most critical components of the American criminal justice system.

Established six decades ago to oversee Federal prisons around the country and their burgeoning populations, the Bureau has earned a deserved reputation as a model for penal systems around the world.

Composed today of 64 institutions stretching across the country from McNeil Island, Washington to Miami, Florida, the Bureau and its staff have set high standards for devoted professionalism, as evidenced today by the accomplishments of the individuals who are about to receive some of the highest awards of achievement the Bureau can bestow.

Let's take this opportunity to look back in history, if you will, for a few moments to see what was happening at the time of the Bureau was first established. While our nation was a much different place back then, there are some interesting similarities to today's Federal prison system.

For many of us, it is hard to recreate the 1930s when America was mired in the worst days of the Depression. It was also a time when the nation, under the edict of the 18th

Amendment to the Constitution, prohibited the sale of any alcoholic beverages.

The combination of economic depression and prohibition brought forth some of the most ruthless gangsters our nation had ever seen or dealt with.

Whether bank robber or bootlegger, law enforcement agencies across America brought to justice a record number of federal criminals. Soon, federal prisons found themselves overcrowded with a record number of occupants, approximately 50% of whom were liquor law violators, serving relatively short sentences.

The first Director of the Bureau of Prisons, Sanford Bates, accepted the daunting challenge of heading up this new agency, knowing full well that he must devise new ways to deal with convicted criminals. And he did.

Today, the leadership of the Federal Bureau of Prisons is in the capable hands of its fifth Director, Michael Quinlan, the third with whom I have served during my various tenures with the Department of Justice. Under Mike's direction, the Bureau is taking up new challenges relating, once again, to the changing nature of criminal activity -- challenges, however, that in many ways resemble those of the Bureau's early years.

According to your latest statistics, America's federal prisons are again half-filled with illegal substance dealers -- this time with drug dealers who aided in inflicting what President Bush rightfully identifies as "the scourge of drugs" upon the United States. A record-setting 49% of the entire Federal prison population consists of these offenders.

It is here that today's federal prison system faces your greatest challenge and it is here that we have the opportunity to achieve some significant advancements in the history of the American penal system.

Unlike the felons of the 1930's, many of today's prison inmates suffer from a substance abuse problem that in various ways contributed to their criminal behavior. In fact, 47% of today's federal inmates, whether involved in drug offenses or not, have histories of drug abuse.

In a major new initiative we announced at the beginning of this month, enhanced drug abuse treatment programs will be offered to federal prisoners aimed at encouraging them to adopt a drug-free lifestyle upon their release from prison.

The direct result of this program is that 1,000 additional federal inmates who have drug abuse problems will this year be exposed to treatment programs which can help to facilitate their successful return to the community.

Furthermore, we will be able to carefully monitor prisoners enrolled in those programs so as to determine "what works" in rehabilitation and treatment efforts.

The program will offer inmates a year of almost constant treatment and counseling backed up with a strong sense of positive reinforcement of social values -- values that are crucial to their survival and to our victory in the war against drugs.

It has always been the purpose of prison incarceration to encourage the criminal to rethink his or her offense while helping them to reform their lives and become productive citizens. With this newly enhanced program, we hold true to this ideal, carrying it to new lengths in the hope of helping those many men and women who have been enslaved by drug use.

Coupled with our drug treatment program is the largest prison construction budget that the Bureau of Prisons has ever had -- \$1.4 billion -- part of the plan to provide and additional

22,000 spaces for inmates, thereby relieving some of the gross over-crowding that is pressing our prisons.

I salute the men and women of the Bureau for your outstanding efforts to make our nation a better and safer place. All Americans owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude for all that you do. Your sixty years of service have made a real contribution to preserving that first civil right of every American -- the right to be free from fear, in our homes, on our streets, and in our communities.

Thank you and Godspeed in your further efforts.