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# Department of Justice

Welcome by

ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT F. KENNEDY

to the

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BAIL AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Wednesday, May 27, 1964

Department of State Auditorium

Mr. Chief Justice, Judge Botein, Mr. Schweitzer, and members of the Conference:

It is an honor to welcome you today to the first National Conference on Bail and Criminal Justice. It is also a source of deep satisfaction and confidence in our legal system. For so many distinguished judges, public officials, lawyers, and citizens to take the time to come here from every state, and from several foreign countries as well, testifies warmly to our concern that justice be equal for all Americans.

Here in Washington 30 years ago, Attorney General Homer Cummings convened the first Attorney General's Conference on Crime. It was a highly successful meeting, with a distinguished roster of participants. Some of you here today were here then and you know the importance of that conference to the development of the fight against modern crime.

Many of you -- police, sheriffs, prosecuting attorneys -- are deeply involved in that fight every day. You are meeting your responsibilities with intelligence, vigilance, and dedication. Yet the problem of enforcing the law extends beyond investigation, arrest and prosecution. It involves our whole system of criminal justice.

Many of you here today have other responsibilities in this broader field. As judges, probation officers, prison officials, and organization representatives, you administer our courts, analyze the causes of crime, help protect the rights of individuals, and seek to fight against poverty and delinquency. The President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime, which made the grant for planning this Conference, is vitally concerned with these problems.

This Conference was called to deal particularly with a problem central to all of these responsibilities. The relationship of bail to criminal justice is a subject which involves fair treatment for our fellow citizens

in court, whether arrested for speeding or burglary, whether guilty or innocent. This relationship determines what happens to them after they have been accused but before they have been tried. It may well affect their future attitudes toward law and their chances for rehabilitation.

Yet one of the most surprising -- and troubling -- disclosures of recent studies is that whether or not a man makes bail has a vital effect on whether, if innocent, he will be acquitted and whether, if guilty, he will receive equal opportunity for probation.

By the time we conclude on Friday, I hope all of us will have a better understanding of our bail system and what we can do to improve it. The programs and experiments you will hear about have generated new techniques for releasing accused persons prior to trial, without hampering law enforcement, without increasing crime, and without prompting defendants to flee.

These techniques have fiscal value. They can help to increase the efficiency of police forces and they can save communities the substantial costs of unnecessary detention.

But even more significant, in a land which has put the quality of justice ahead of the cost of justice, these techniques have social value. They can enable courts to tailor bail decisions to the individual. They can enable lawyers to do a better job of representing their clients. And, most important of all, they can save countless citizens from needlessly or unjustly spending days or weeks or months in jail.

One of the persons deeply concerned with this problem was, I discover, an equally concerned participant in the Attorney General's Crime Conference 30 years ago. Then he was a young district attorney from Alameda County, California, where he had already established a fine reputation for law enforcement in the West. Yet he modestly told the Conference that, except for a little experiment in his own county, "I can conceive of no reason why the Attorney General should have selected me for this discussion."

I doubt that anyone here today will question why we have invited the same gentleman to honor us by opening this Conference. He is one of the most widely respected men in the world today. In our own land he is the embodiment of equal justice under law. I am honored to present the Chief Justice of the United States, Earl Warren.