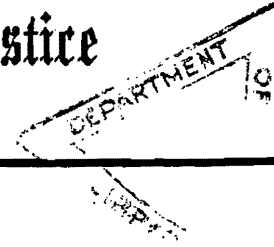




# Department of Justice

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## ADDRESS

BY ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT F. KENNEDY

PORTLAND CITY CLUB,  
PORTLAND, OREGON  
October 6, 1961

I am extremely pleased to be back in Portland, Oregon, for a number of reasons. First, since I am not going to be a witness, I now feel free to shake hands with a couple of judges. Secondly, I have good friends here and I always have admired the Pacific Northwest as a place to live. And perhaps nowhere in the West are the historical ties closer to my native state of Massachusetts than here in the Rose City. But for the flip of a coin this great city would have been named Boston.

But there is a third reason why I am happy to be here. This is a part of our country which probably more than any other honors and cherishes individuality and independence. This is the history of Oregon. This is your tradition. It was true even back in the early part of the 19th Century when settlers were urged to come to Oregon, although the region was described - rather unromantically I believe - as one that would sustain a rich economy of "furs and bread."

The pioneers who came, nevertheless, were the spirited, the tough, the hardy, the adventurers. Often they received little support from their fellow Americans in the East. GEORGE MC DUFFIE, the Senator from South Carolina, arose in the Senate in 1843 to ridicule the whole idea of the settlement of Oregon. Could anyone believe that such a far distant land would ever form a state in the American union?

"I wouldn't give a pinch of snuff for the whole territory," MC DUFFIE said, and then he went on to tell his colleagues:

"I wish to God we did not own it! Could anyone believe that farmers from Pennsylvania and New York, or even Ohio and Missouri, would settle in such a place? God forbid!"

But come they did. By foot and by horseback. By covered wagon, through Indian territory, over the South Pass, fording snow-fed rivers in the shadows of snow-capped mountains.

In 1847, a bill for Oregon territorial government failed in the Senate because it contained a provision prohibiting slavery. However, the next year, despite the vehement opposition of JEFFERSON DAVIS, 13 years later the President of the Confederacy, Oregon received the right to govern herself, and with slavery excluded, as her people desired.

Independence of spirit and belief in man's right to control his own destiny has continued to be the guiding star in this area. It is indicative of the independence and free thinking of Oregon and its people that it is one of the two states which has a lady Senator; is the only state to have both a Congresswoman and a lady Senator, and perhaps most significantly, it is the only state to have Senator WAYNE MORSE. I salute you for it.

For it is this kind of spirit, firmly founded in belief and history, that is needed so much today. The problems we face are immense. The challenges are so enormous that they are often difficult to comprehend. But, admitting all that, ladies and gentlemen, the future for all of us in this room and for our children can be bright and promising.

When the President was elected last November, he expressed these challenges which we face, by invoking the image of our pioneer ancestors. Those who followed the Oregon Trail in search of a better life suffered incredible hardships to open up the great West. The President spoke of a new frontier which today reaches

across the seas and even into the vast reaches of space. He reminded us all that the same spirit, the same sacrifices, the same determination, and the same hopeful vision would be required of this generation, as was required of our ancestors. And on January 20th, he said:

"In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility - I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion, which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it - and the glow from that fire can truly light the world."

The major problems, which we as Americans face, obviously relate to foreign affairs. The sword of <sup>*Damocles*</sup> ~~Banathos~~ in the form of nuclear holocaust, which Mr. KRUSHCHEV holds over the face of the whole world, must be foremost in our minds. And at the same time we also struggle to work out ways and means to assist in the development of Latin America and the emerging nations of Africa and Asia. What happens in Berlin, or the Congo, or in Laos, or anywhere else in this shrinking world has its impact in Oregon and in every city and home across our nation.

Our long-term objective obviously is to create an international system of law and order - to create a peaceful and productive society throughout the world. We are not going to succeed this year or next, and perhaps not for many years to come. But struggle we shall and succeed we must!

As the President said to the United Nations last week, the key to survival of the human race in dignity and honor is that the rule of law be maintained and scrupulously upheld. We cannot be the leaders in this field unless here at home we have the will and the determination to meet our responsibilities to live by the rule of law.

As Attorney General, I have been charged with a responsibility in three areas where there exists challenges to the rule of law at home. Unless successfully combatted they corrode not only our respect for the law, but our will and determination and our ability to defend our basic freedoms. These areas relate to crime, civil rights, and corruption in management and labor. Let me briefly outline the problems as well as the possibilities.

Organized crime has become big business. It knows no state lines. It drains off millions of dollars of our national wealth, infects legitimate businesses, labor unions, sports, and most importantly, corrupts public officials, F.B.I. statistics show a 7 per cent increase in serious offenses of all kinds during the first six months of 1961. The upsurge in the crime rate cannot be explained away by our population growth for crime has been increasing four times faster than the population. I believe the explanation can be found primarily in the fact that disregard for the law is tolerated too much at every level of our society--giving rise to cynicism and the cheap, false philosophy that everything is a racket.

So, it is not just the physical harm and financial loss that the criminal element inflicts on this nation that is of concern, but what the racketeers and hoodlums are doing to our moral fiber. Ninety per cent of the major racketeers would be out of business by the end of this year, if the ordinary citizen, the businessman, the lawyer, the union official and the public authority stood up to be counted and refused to participate.

In the Department of Justice, we have taken action to coordinate all federal law enforcement investigations and to work wherever possible in this endeavor with local police. The Department also is pooling information about more than 700 top racketeers. The Administration's efforts, with the help of both Republicans and Democrats in Congress, also have resulted in enactment of five anti-crime bills--the

most legislation in this field since 1934. The laws are aimed primarily at gambling which provides the money which bankrolls organized crime. These laws are welcome new tools and the cooperation among the federal agencies and the pooling of information are producing some encouraging results. But this is a problem for all America, not just the FBI or the Department of Justice. Unless the basic attitude changes here in this country, the rackets will prosper and grow. Of this I am convinced.

The racketeers are professional criminals. However, there are the amateurs---men who have law-abiding backgrounds and respectable positions, who, nevertheless, break the law of the land. We have been concerned in the Department of Justice about the spread of illegal price-fixing, frequently defrauding the government as well as the consumer. From the evidence we have these activities are merely symptomatic of many other practices commonly accepted in communities throughout the nation.

In an alarming number of areas, businessmen have conspired in secret, not only to fix prices, but to make collusive deals with union officials, defraud their customers, and even in some instances, cheat their own government. These are not complicated mergers or highly involved questions of antitrust policy. The cases I am talking about involve such matters as the sale of milk to children in a large public school system and the sale of bread to the Navy. These are clearcut questions of right and wrong as well as being violations of laws that have been on the books for more than half a century.

Our enemies assert that capitalism enslaves the worker and will destroy itself. It is our national faith that the system of competitive enterprise offers the best hope for individual freedom, social development and economic growth.

Thus, every businessman who cheats on his taxes, fixes prices or underpays his labor; every union official who makes a collusive deal or misuses union funds; every

lawyer who makes all or part of this possible damages the free enterprise system in the eyes of the world and does a disservice to the millions of honest Americans in all walks of life.

But, let me say again, this is not a situation which can be cured by the Department of Justice. We can take action and we shall, but in the last analysis the answer lies with the business community, union officials, the lawyers--in other words--the people themselves

In the sensitive, emotional problems of civil rights there has been major progress in recent months, but we still have a very long way to go. For example, though a number of large school districts were desegregated without violence of any sort last month, the problem still is extremely difficult. Of 3,000,000 Negro children in 17 Southern and Border states and the District of Columbia, only 213,500 attend integrated schools.

And in the North, Midwest, and West, we have segregation in a far more subtle, but often in a more sinister and damaging form. So, this is a major problem, a problem for the whole country. It is one that will require our best effort, ingenuity, tolerance and understanding. The Supreme Court has acted. The Constitution is clear. There are those who might not like it, but it is the law of the land and it must be maintained.

In my estimation, the fact that the important cities of Atlanta, New Orleans, Dallas and Memphis desegregated their schools this fall without disorder and disrespect for the law, provided the world with a convincing demonstration of the American people's respect for the law, and of the progress that is being made in improving the position of minority groups in the United States. But it is only a beginning.

The rule of law in an open society still is a revolutionary ideal throughout much of the world. Our strength to transpose this ideal into reality throughout the world must depend over the years on our dedication to it at home.

And these matters that I have mentioned are unfortunately not the only difficulties that show that all is not what it might be here in the United States.

The television quiz scandals of several years ago; the basketball scandals of last year; the corruption the McClellan Committee found in important parts of labor, management, and the bar; the revelations of this past week that more than 30 officers and men of the Denver Police Department were themselves operating active and lucrative burglary rings and this after similar revelations in Chicago last year; the corruption of public officials--all of this must be a source of sorrow and concern to everyone of us--just as it is at the same time a source of continuous comment and pleasure to the Communists.

These are all matters that cut across every segment of American society. No one group can point to another and say: "There lies the fault."

No one section of this country can say: "We are clean. They are corrupt."

No one financial or economic group can plead innocence.

These are matters which are a reflection on all of us as American citizens.

These are matters which are the responsibilities of all of us.

In meeting that problem, we must all play a role. No citizen can escape from freedom and still enjoy it. We cannot corrupt our own processes of government and law nor allow others to do so. We cannot yield to the temptation to let someone else perform the job, or to remain aloof from what in a free society is everyone's business.

As for me--I welcome the challenge and the opportunity and I pledge my best effort. As Abraham Lincoln said early in the Civil War:

"I do the very best I know how--the very best I can and I mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference."