



# Department of Justice

FOR RELEASE AT 7:30 P.M. EST  
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1966

ADDRESS BY

ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL RAMSEY CLARK

at the

CONFERENCE OF STATE PLANNING COMMITTEES  
ON CRIMINAL ADMINISTRATION

Adult Education Center  
University of Maryland

This is an historic conference. It marks the beginning of a cooperative, creative effort by governments of all levels--municipal, county, state and federal--to make every citizen safer from crime.

We begin by recognizing that while crime will be with us always, crime can be reduced and our lives and property can be better protected. Tonight I would like to discuss what we as a people are doing and what we are not doing to improve law enforcement.

Significant steps are being taken in scattered locations throughout the country. Police, courts and correctional institutions are making new, experimental approaches to old problems.

For example, the Draper Correctional Center in Alabama is testing intensive programmed instruction for some of its inmates. While time alone will tell, experience to date teaches that increasing employability of prisoners will result in a reduction in recidivism.

In St. Louis, the Metropolitan Police Department has begun a controlled experiment in two districts to determine whether a new method of police deployment will improve law enforcement. A computer is used to measure the method's effectiveness.

A municipal court judge in Royal Oak, Michigan, Keith Leenhouts, has begun a complex probation service largely with volunteer workers. The service provides among other benefits, intensive probation supervision for offenders affording them a better chance of avoiding a life of crime which has been the fate of four out of five in similar circumstances.

Experimental projects in San Francisco and Sacramento are testing a new method of treating juvenile offenders. Instead of assignment to one of California's excellent forest camps, youths--selected at random--are permitted to remain at home and are required to attend daily group sessions with probation officers. Studies indicate a dramatically lower recidivism rate for the youths in this project.

The vital purpose of reform is action, not abstraction. Recent, revolutionary changes in bail procedures were caused not by a statement of philosophy or theory, but by hard facts developed by the Vera Foundation in carefully controlled tests and then by broad based implementation.

But the first signs of pragmatic skepticism about old methods are not limited to a few individual agencies. There is widespread ferment and awakening. The federal government is making new beginnings, in cooperation with state and local governments. You will hear tomorrow about some of the new programs of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the Department of Labor. Let me tell you briefly about some of the efforts of the Department of Justice.

A year ago, the Department proposed and secured enactment of the Law Enforcement Assistant program--a pioneering venture in joint federal-local action against crime. Under the first fiscal year of the program, seven million dollars in federal funds was allocated for 83 demonstration projects in 30 states. This is not a subsidy program. Its purpose is to encourage and support promising experimental approaches--to focus attention on basic problems in a system so far deprived of the benefits of science, research and development which have brought fundamental change to our way of life.

Early results are encouraging. Projects have been in such areas as the use of computers, education and training of law enforcement officers and the application of modern scientific devices to criminal justice.

One project in New York involves an automatic license plate scanning device. One in California centers on the use of helicopters for regular police beat patrol. Another brought 50 police chiefs from all over the nation together at the Harvard Business School for a three-week seminar on management, a field in which most have had no opportunity for training in modern methods.

Again in the Department of Justice, the Office of Criminal Justice has just completed a detailed study of the Court of General Sessions in the District of Columbia. The critical insights of this study have played a role in prompting changes which may eventually make Washington's lower court an example of what an urban court should be.

The federal effort also includes the Crime Commission appointed by President Johnson to examine the causes of crime, to identify the most serious problems in criminal justice and to recommend solutions. The Commission has begun preparation of its final report, which, as the President has said, will become a "national strategy on crime."

These, then, are among recent developments which tell us that a renaissance in criminal justice has begun and none too soon. For criminal justice has been long neglected for which we pay today a terrible price. Crime, for the most part, is still viewed from a distance with fear and despair or as fiction, exciting, but not real. But society, for its own sake, must take a long, hard look. And we must apply from our abundant resources as an item of highest priority all that is needed to perfect the quality of justice in America.

As we move forward in a comprehensive attack on crime, foremost in our planning must be the firm commitment to maintain law enforcement as the primary responsibility of state and local government.

The role of the federal government in law enforcement is not central. Nor should it ever be. Nowhere among the powers delegated the federal government is a provision for police protection. There is no more local phenomenon than ordinary crime in the streets. It is the very heart of the reserved powers, the police powers of the states. And not without reason. A free man must be protected in the exercise of his rights from the lawless by a police known, respected and responsible to him in his community as a citizen.

This goal, always difficult of attainment, will be more so in the years ahead. We entered the final third of the 20th Century last month. It is to be a time of staggering problems and matchless opportunities. Two dynamics will render greater change in the remaining one-third than were wrought in the first two-thirds of this incredible century, which has already brought more fundamental difference in the ways of human life than the millennium preceding it. These are population increase and technological development.

Law enforcement will be a growth stock. As with all the services of government, the needs of the morrow for law enforcement will greatly exceed those of today. This at a time when we have yet to prove that we can deal intelligently with the complexities of criminal justice today; with the sheer numbers that confront us. Numbers like 2,780,000 serious crimes last year.

There is no service of government more vital to the people as a whole and to freedom for the individual than the police: the threshold protection for life, liberty and property.

We can spare no effort toward excellence in all local law enforcement. The 400,000 state and local police officers of our nation are essential to a Great Society. Their devotion to duty and their competence is our assurance of an opportunity to pursue happiness. We must attract to their service from the most gifted among us. The training, the research, the development for law enforcement must be of the highest order. Compensation must attract, develop and retain the best people available. Police service should be staffed with strong, sensitive and fair officers devoted to liberty under law.

As with the police, so must it be in the vital field of corrections, where opportunity is so immense, and in the final chance for justice under the law: in the courts and their administration. While the federal government must play a bold and imaginative role in all these areas and most vitally in coordination and cooperation and in creating new standards of excellence, its role must be limited: there are only 720 deputy United States Marshals; there are nearly five of New York's finest for every FBI agent; Los Angeles County has twice as many probation officers as has the entire Federal Probation Service.

You can be sure of this administration's commitment to a relentless war on crime. You can be sure that within the administration's power, the needs of law enforcement revealed by the President's Crime Commission will be fulfilled. You can be sure that federal programs to reduce crime will be vigorously presented. You can also be sure that the actions of the federal government will be consistent with the federal role and that law enforcement will remain a primary responsibility of state and local government.

To meet the needs of today, to fulfill our obligation to the 140 million more Americans, who will people our cities by the Century's end, a short 35 years hence, we must move forward aggressively now.

I would urge upon you, upon the officials of your state and the people of your states, a vigorous Crime Commission for each state, with a broad mandate to know the estate of all aspects of criminal justice within its jurisdiction, to know the best techniques and sciences of law enforcement and corrections that our total experience offers, to recommend their adoption and implementation for the general welfare of your state.

I would further recommend to you a National Association of State Crime Commissions to enable each state to profit by the knowledge, the experience, even the mistakes of every state. Our mission is too important for each of us, by trial and error, to have to learn what others already know. Isaac Newton said that if he advanced science, it was because he stood on the shoulders of the giants that preceded him.

It is for us then in concert, in constitutional harmony, to perfect justice in this vital field in which all else depends, realizing with Disraeli that "justice is truth in action."