



Department of Justice

REMARKS OF

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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE
UNITED STATES

On

Law Enforcement Appreciation Day

Charlotte, North Carolina

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I want you to know that as I traveled to Charlotte and Mecklenburg County this morning, I was already aware of your reputation.

I'm not referring to what General Cornwallis said about this part of the country, although that was impressive enough, and I've been on the lookout for hornets all morning.

I am referring to the enthusiasm passed on to me by President Nixon, after the warm hospitality he received here a month ago on Billy Graham Day.

I'm also referring to the good things said about Charlotte by one of the ablest persons in the Department of Justice, who is Director of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, and former police chief of Charlotte, Jack Ingersoll.

From these sources, I have learned of people who are gracious and friendly... of dedicated citizens who work together in solving public problems, and who believe their own fortunes are tied to the success of the whole community... and of law-abiding citizens who give willing support to their police departments.

I must say that my observations today amply confirm this reputation.

I was told by Jack Ingersoll that when he was police chief here, the people came forward with the strongest kind of support, morally and financially. They voted the bonds for a new Law Enforcement Center, and

through their forward-looking city council the salaries of police officers were practically doubled.

This same spirit of cooperation continues in full measure today, as I'm told by the two men who have so ably led this community in its fight against crime--Chief Goodman of Charlotte and Chief Porter of Mecklenburg County. That spirit is certainly evident to me in the very existence of this special Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, staged by the citizens of this city and county.

So while we are here honoring the police of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, I think it's also appropriate to take note of the fine support given to the police by the people of this community. And this, after all, is the most vital ingredient in the success of any police department in a democratic society. It is a terrible twist of thinking for any American citizen to regard the police with hostility--a viewpoint that seems to have become popular in some quarters. On the contrary, the police draw their authority from the people, and they represent the people. Any community whose citizens understand this and live by it will surely have a first-rate police department. Charlotte and Mecklenburg County constitute one of those communities.

Further, I am convinced that this kind of active community support and self-help is one of the reasons why state and federal officials have felt justified in approving grants to this community from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, one of the agencies within the United States Department of Justice. Its purpose is to provide funds to

states and localities to help upgrade the criminal justice system at all levels of jurisdiction in this country.

Over the three years in which LEAA has been operating, more than 1.4 million dollars has gone to Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, either directly from LEAA or through the State Planning Agency. This has been used to provide a police helicopter, walkie-talkie sets for improved communications, equipment for the Crime Laboratory and other purposes, and a number of training programs.

In fact, last December LEAA selected Charlotte and Mecklenburg County as one of its "pilot cities" for development of a model criminal justice system that would serve as a guide for other American cities.

This combination of factors--well-managed police departments, local citizen support, and federal financial help--has brought still greater improvements to law enforcement in this community. And the results have shown up in the crime figures. For the first nine months of 1971 there were 11.2 percent fewer serious crimes in Charlotte than in the comparable period in 1970. In Mecklenburg County there was a similar drop in crime--9.9 percent.

It is my hope that this kind of record and this kind of trend can be repeated in more and more cities throughout the United States. Last September I sponsored a Conference on Crime Reduction, held in Washington, D. C., and attended by several hundred law enforcement executives. Among those who came were the chiefs, including Chief Goodman, of the 60 American cities of 100,000 or more population that has shown a drop in crime for the

first quarter of 1971. Special attention was paid to these particular chiefs as they described how their cities had been able to reduce crime. I hope that the Charlotte experience will profit many, many other American cities, so that the reduction of crime in this country will be general, and decisive.

Next month I am sponsoring a conference that is equally as important, and one that has come about because of the personal interest and concern of the President. The subject is one which may not appear to be of direct concern to you, but let me assure you, it should be.

This meeting, early next month, is the first National Conference on Corrections. It is being held to measure the progress we have made toward corrections reform and the distance we have to go.

We didn't need San Quentin or Attica to tell us we had a problem in corrections. In 1969, when President Nixon directed me to mobilize federal resources to improve corrections, he noted that the American corrections system presented a convincing case of failure.

The state of America's prisons comes close to a national shame. No civilized society should allow it to continue. And I don't say that lightly. Four out of every five felonies committed in the United States is the work of a person with a criminal record. And two out of every three men released from prison are back in trouble with the law again in a very short time.

It does little good to train and equip our police forces if our prisons are turning out criminals faster than they can be rounded up. Certainly we need firm law enforcement, but there's more to reducing crime than

making arrests. Until we bring our corrections systems into the 20th century, all other efforts will be frustrated.

The present Administration in Washington realizes that fact. So does Congress. Chief Justice Burger has lent his prestige to the need for reform, and his words have been a vital and continuing force toward that goal.

But as in so many areas, money was needed, and thanks to the requests of the Administration, and the wisdom of Congress, money is now being provided, on a scale undreamed of a few short years ago.

Last year, for instance, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration provided more than \$100 million to states and other units of government -- solely to improve corrections. This year the figure will be more than double that -- possibly as much as a quarter of a billion dollars. That represents almost 100 times as much as was spent on corrections reform three years ago.

The Congress, under the guidance of Senator Roman Hruska of Nebraska and others dedicated to the reform of corrections, has written into the Safe Streets Act new provisions which require, in effect, that states virtually double their corrections spending, with the federal government providing most of the funds. Furthermore, this new legislation reflects the latest in corrections thinking, and requires that the money be spent on modern, community-based systems -- not on perpetuating the old fortress-type prisons.

We need to learn to use the time a man serves in prison to equip him to live a useful life in the community. Teaching him a useful trade is an

important step toward rehabilitation. Making license plates, for instance, is useful in the sense that it takes up a prisoner's time, but there's only one place where he can practice his trade -- and that's in prison.

We are making some progress, especially at the Federal level, but we have wasted enough time. We have to bring the rise in violent crime to a halt, and we will. But to do so, we have to put our correctional reform program into high gear.

The times we live in cry out for a reversal of the crime increase which has been rising for more than a decade. There has even emerged a whole new type of criminal -- the fanatic revolutionary who kills with bombs and incendiaries, who ambushes police, who burglarizes public files, who inflames mobs to violence. At the same time, criminals old and new have more legal weapons to help them escape conviction and correction than ever before. And ironically, the claim is actually raised that people are being repressed, when in fact the only tyranny that threatens is the tyranny of the mob.

In the midst of all this, the spotlight of public scrutiny is on the police officer, more than ever before. His task of maintaining the public peace is greater than it has ever been, but he must perform this task within narrower legal restrictions. The requirements demanded in the name of due process are changing so fast that what may be a lawful arrest today may be unlawful by the time the case comes to trial. And the prospect of lawsuits asking damages for police irregularities is now greater than ever.

In short, never has so much been expected of the police officer.

Some people expect, in fact, that he will fail--that he will overstep his authority so that they can claim police repression.

One result of all this was a rising atmosphere of permissiveness in this country.

Criminals have believed they could commit crimes and avoid punishment through legal loopholes.

Draft dodgers have gone to Canada and renounced citizenship and believed that after they avoided military service they could return to the United States as though nothing had happened.

Rioters have believed they could do violence and escape arrest.

Revolutionaries have believed they could commit murder and other crimes and avoid incarceration by crying, "Political prisoner!"

This trend of permissiveness in the enforcement of the law was welcomed by many as being "liberal" and "progressive." In my opinion it is nothing of the kind. It is a throwback to a time of chaos in human affairs. The history of man's progress has been measured by his willingness to accept a world of law, rather than of brute force unrestrained by law. As the ancient motto tells us, "Where law ends, tyranny begins." America as we know it cannot stand permanently if it tolerates the tyranny of the mob, or the tyranny of the criminal.

This is why, in the past three years, President Nixon has done

everything possible to restore respect for the law, and for the peace officer, in this country.

He asked for and received from Congress large funds to aid state and local law enforcement.

In Washington, D. C., the one major urban area under Federal jurisdiction, he called for reforms that have brought a decisive reduction in the volume of crime.

He instituted a drive against violations of Federal criminal laws, especially against the organized crime that for too long has been a parasite on our society.

He crystallized public indignation over the rising number of police killings, directed the FBI to help investigate them when asked by the local authorities, and requested from Congress a substantial grant to the survivors of any policeman killed on duty.

Most of all, President Nixon has used the moral weight of the presidency to stimulate stronger public support for the peace officer. At every opportunity he has spoken out for the vital role of the policeman in maintaining security in this country. Several months ago he told an audience of policemen gathered in Washington:

When you go home, tell your colleagues that the era of permissiveness with regard to law enforcement is at an end in the United States of America. Tell your colleagues that...in terms of the support of the President of the United States and the Attorney General, we back law enforcement officials in their attempts to reestablish respect for law, in their attempts to enforce the law with justice.

Ladies and gentlemen, nearly 200 years ago the people of Charlotte adopted resolutions that became known as the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. They did so more than a year before the members of the Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, signed our national Declaration of Independence.

There is no doubt that the Mecklenburg declaration was a revolutionary document, flung in the face of tyranny. But the significant point is that, while the people annulled the laws derived from that tyranny, well over half of their declaration was devoted to the means of establishing new laws, maintaining the peace, settling legal disputes, collecting taxes, and the other requirements of an ordered society. While rejecting misrule, they were still determined to maintain the rule of law. They demanded their rights, but they instinctively upheld the maxim that has served man's progress since antiquity: "For every right, a duty."

I know that this devotion to law still prevails here in Mecklenburg County, now perhaps more than ever. I believe it prevails in the hearts of an overwhelming majority of Americans. This is why I firmly believe that we have seen an end to the era of permissiveness, and the beginning of a new era of national progress under the law.