



Department of Justice

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ADDRESS

BY

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Prepared for Delivery
Before the
CHILDREN'S VILLAGE DINNER
at the
RIVER CLUB

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It is a genuine pleasure for me to be here tonight and talk with you for a little while about something that is of abiding concern to all of us. Your hearts are touched by the problems and the tragedies of the youth of today and you are giving generously of your time and substance to help preserve one of our most precious assets -- boys.

All of us in the Department of Justice share your concern for the young people of today and the generations to come. We believe with you that there is no greater contribution we can make to a happy, peaceful, law-abiding and morally strong America than to inculcate in the hearts and minds of the youngsters of this land an appreciation of moral values, an understanding of the obligations of good citizenship and respect for law and the rights of others.

The responsibility for the welfare of the youth of today and of the future rests heavily upon us all. Because we are a law enforcement agency and often required to balance stern law against the too finely strained quality of mercy, we in the Department of Justice have an added obligation to guard the welfare of society while at the same time maintaining a sympathetic approach to the problem of juvenile transgression.

For more than a century Children's Village has been known as a haven of guidance for troubled youngsters who need a fresh start. This institution gives dynamic witness to the fact that human warmth,

patient understanding and intelligent guidance can provide the means through which errant boys can be turned from crime to uprightness and become the servants of society rather than its enemies.

I want here and now as a law enforcement official to recognize your contribution to a better America and express my appreciation for it. If during the last hundred years there had been a thousand Children's Villages doing what this one has done in other parts of our land, I'm sure that many of the law enforcement problems that vex us today would not exist.

We are faced with serious enforcement problems and crime among juveniles and youth is one of the gravest of them all. Statistics show that it is on the increase and unless checked, it can menace the very foundations of our country and weaken the moral fibre of our people.

You have all heard, I am sure, that the Department of Justice is engaged in an intensified campaign to uproot syndicated crime from our national life and put its overlords in jail. It is heartening to know that this campaign already has met with measured success and has bright promise for the future. We think that there is a tangible relationship between adult crime and juvenile crime and whatever is done to wipe out the former contributes to a solution of the problems arising out of the latter.

Old soldiers may not always die but only fade away and the same may be true of gangsters, racketeers and hoodlums. Sometimes they die by their own guns, liquidated under the jungle law of the underworld. More often they "fade away" into prison cells provided by state and federal governments, separated from their evil endeavors by the righteous arm of the law.

Were it not for the fact that the armies of crime, like the armies of nations, are kept up to strength by recruiting, their ranks eventually would be decimated by their own processes, by the processes of the law, or by the fulfillment of nature's irrevocable demands.

The recruits for crime's legions must come from the youth of America. Without an influx of youth the supply of criminals eventually would run dry. So I say that the problems of adult crime and juvenile crime are closely knit and whatever is done to turn youth away from lawlessness and evil helps speed the day when adult crime will cease to menace our society.

Juvenile crime, of course, is not the only form of lawlessness that is increasing. The FBI reports show an increase in all major crimes last year to a new all-time high. But what is most distressing about these statistics is that the ratio of juvenile offenders to those beyond the youth brackets is getting higher each year. It comes as something of a shock to read in a recent report of the

United States Children's Bureau that for the ninth consecutive year juvenile delinquency cases have continued to rise. No one can help being disturbed by the knowledge that more than half a million youngsters were involved in 603,000 cases that flooded juvenile delinquency courts in 1957.

This, too, was an all-time high and the increase was nearly five times as great as the increase in child population of juvenile court age. It represented 23.5 percent of every 1,000 children in the age group and was almost double the rate for 1948.

FBI reports of arrests of juveniles under the age of 18 show a similar upward trend. What is more alarming is the fact that such young people are committing an increasingly disproportionate number of serious offenses. By 1957 youngsters under the age of 18 were arrested for 68 percent of the automobile thefts and 55 percent of the burglaries. In the overwhelming majority of cases "joy-riding" and a desire to escape from broken homes are the two main reasons that cars are taken. In the case of burglary or larceny-theft, we find in many instances that the youth involved deliberately set out to break the law, often Federal law, because their homes are so inadequate or so intolerable that they actually look forward to being placed in an institution where they will be provided for and where they can find security. Whatever the reasons, almost half of the people arrested for felonies in 1957 were under the age of 18.

Projecting these trends into the future gives an outlook that is bleak. It is estimated that by 1965 there will be some thirty million youth in the most vulnerable high-risk age group. Unless the upward

trend, which has been in evidence since 1948, is checked we can expect that by 1965 the juvenile court load will have doubled and will have reached 1,000,000 cases per year.

I refuse to believe, however, that despite the seriousness of the problem and the threat it constitutes to our national life, the intelligence that has brought the stars within man's reach cannot be applied to the solution of problems of human welfare and human relationships. I believe we can create more effective delinquency and crime prevention programs and can develop more effective correctional methods.

I need not remind you that the primary responsibility for the prevention of juvenile delinquency lies first with the home, then with the church, the school and the community. But the Federal government, too, has important stakes in this matter and is not unaware of its responsibilities. It has recently taken a number of important steps to meet them.

In 1955, a Division of Juvenile Delinquency services was created in the U. S. Children's Bureau to provide professional consultation services to the states, counties and cities. The President also has authorized the U. S. Office of Education to contract with colleges and universities for research studies on facets of juvenile delinquency that relate to education. Under the provisions of the National Defense Education Act work is in progress to establish a nationwide system of educational testing backed up by counseling and guidance programs. This will enable us better to identify the special talents of young people and to guide them toward potential social usefulness.

One of the earliest steps taken by President Eisenhower, in 1953, was to implement the provisions of the Federal Youth Corrections Act. This is among the most forthright attacks which we have made on the problem of the youthful offender against the Federal laws. I have been personally interested in the operation of this program because rehabilitation, rather than retribution, is its motive.

Since the Act became operative, more than 3200 young men under the age of 22 have been committed to our youth centers. The large majority of these have been restless youngsters who have driven stolen cars across state lines. But many of them have criminal records involving other offenses and a surprising number are runaways or escapees from conventional correctional institutions. They frequently are highly aggressive, hostile, disturbed young people, often rejected by their families and by local communities as well.

We regard them, however, as the greatest challenge to our correctional program. To meet the challenge we have assembled specialists in psychiatry, psychology, case work, education, vocational training and religious counseling. The Act permits the release of the young offender at any time, but experience is demonstrating that about seventeen months is required to complete the program set up by the staff. Some youths, particularly those who have been in difficulties for long periods of time before they came to our attention, may require longer periods of training and treatment.

The work that is being done in our youth centers owes some of its inspiration and value to the pioneering done over the years by private institutions such as Children's Village. Sufficient recognition has

not been given, it seems to me, to the contribution such private agencies have made and will continue to make, in the field of human welfare. We in the Department will continue to look to Children's Village and similar agencies to provide some of the inventive leadership in the youth field.

The need for inventive leadership is great. Merely passing laws will not solve the problem of juvenile crime - or adult crime either. There must be applied to the legislative and administrative programs the understanding and resourcefulness that can derive only from sincere dedication to human welfare.

A great need, also, is money to provide adequate facilities, competent professional staffs and essential research. If young offenders are to leave our institutions prepared for good citizenship, instead of a life of crime, the correctional training and treatment they receive must not be hampered by lack of financial support. Taxpayers should do their share and the great philanthropic foundations should explore the possibilities of beneficial expenditures in this field. The nation now pays a staggering \$22,000,000,000 as the annual cost of crime. A fraction of that sum used to support programs of crime prevention and cure would substantially reduce that bill and do much to make good citizens of youngsters whose feet already are set upon the path that leads to prison gates.

As I said earlier, although the picture is disturbing, I am convinced that our skills and wisdom, applied with energy and good will, can bring success in this vital fight to protect our national welfare

from the menace of youthful crime and delinquency. I am heartened by the things you have done here at Children's Village and the knowledge that your good works will continue. May the institution founded so long ago which you who are here tonight have helped to perpetuate, endure for another century. None of us should ever forget that the future course of our Nation in the free world will soon lie in the hands of the youth of today.