

SPEECH BY
ATTORNEY GENERAL HERBERT BROWNELL, JR.
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Before Imperial Council, Ancient
Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles Mystic
Shrine, Denver City Auditorium

IMPERIAL POTENTATE JACKSON, IMPERIAL COMMANDRESS
MRS. MOORE, GOVERNOR THORNTON, ILLUSTRIOUS POTENTATES
AND NOBLES:

I am greatly honored to be invited to address your meeting today, and gratified to learn that the theme of the present Convention is "Freedom is Everybody's Business". I heartily endorse the attitude of your organization toward this theme because you have clearly recognized by your actions that freedom consists of more than demanding the rights of citizenship but also accepting the responsibilities of citizenship. You have shown this in the splendid support that you have given to the Tuberculosis Research Project at Freedman's Hospital, Washington, D. C. and to the Cancer Research Project at Homer G. Phillips Hospital, St. Louis, Missouri.

Today I would like to discuss with you one of the responsibilities of citizenship in which we in the Department of Justice are taking an active interest.

Now, if I were to tell you that one million youngsters will show the first symptoms of cholera this year, the nation would be aghast and people everywhere would jump up to see what they could do to prevent it.

Fortunately, we face no such plague. But, there is every sign that more than one million children this year will be in trouble serious

enough to require the police to pick them up.

Why don't people everywhere jump up and see what they can do to prevent it? They would jump too if there was danger of plague. Why not when it is juvenile delinquency? It is the same old story - - "let the other fellow do it".

The remedy must come from sources closest to the individual child -- parents, teachers, the church.

The first real breakdown occurs in the home. Lack of parental interest in the welfare of the child and, even more so, broken homes, are the basic roots of the trouble.

This, then, places a still greater burden on the schools and the churches, and, unfortunately, upon our FBI and Bureau of Prisons. We know that the cost of crime adds up to billions of dollars yearly. One authority says it runs as high as fifteen billions. We know, too, that more than half the adult criminals in the country have a past history of juvenile delinquency. Let me place some facts before you. The facts come primarily from the FBI and the Bureau of Prisons in our own Department of Justice.

Let's look for a moment at the one million or more boys and girls who will be picked up by the police this year. What are they doing?

They are doing all manner of things, not all serious. Not all bespeak serious anti-social or neurotic quirks. Some are just pranks. Some are minor violations of law.

The more serious cases go to court. This year some 350-thousand boys and girls will appear in our juvenile courts. The cases of about half will be dismissed. The other half will be placed on probation, or committed

to training schools for delinquent children where they will stay upwards to a year. The probationers will run about 95-thousand. The number committed about 40-thousand.

The juvenile court records show that the majority of boys referred to them are charged with stealing or malicious mischief. Most of the girls are brought in for being ungovernable, for running away, or for having committed a sex offense.

Police fingerprint arrests give a still more stark picture. If this year's record is like that of 1952, young persons under 18 years of age will commit: 53 per cent of the automobile thefts; 48 per cent of all burglaries; 15 per cent of rapes; 4 per cent of homicide cases, and 5 per cent of assault cases.

Juvenile delinquency is not just a "big city" problem. Reports to the FBI from police departments show the increases averaged more in smaller cities than in great metropolitan areas.

The number of juvenile court cases jumped 17 per cent, or more than three times the population growth.

The prospect for future years is even more serious. By 1960, we shall have 42 per cent more boys and girls in the 10-to-17 age group than we had in 1951. A sobering question then, is whether the number of delinquent children also will increase 42 per cent by 1960? Or will the pace be even greater, as it has been in the last few years? Suppose we had to increase our police forces, or our court facilities, detention centers, probation services 42 per cent. The prospect is frightening, dollar-wise. It is vastly more frightening health-wise.

During the weeks just passed, we in the Department of Justice, have been devoting time to the problem of bringing the new Federal Parole System into operation. To do so, we first had to find capable persons for the new Parole Board, particularly the three who would make up the initial Youth Correction Division of the Board.

I recommended to President Eisenhower, and he thereupon appointed to the Youth Correction Division the first Negro to become a member of the Federal Parole Board in its entire history. He is Mr. Scoville Richardson, Dean of the Lincoln Law School, St. Louis, Missouri, and I am confident that he will perform ably in this important high office.

The new act applies to those under the age of 22 who have violated Federal laws.

A youth sentenced under any of the new provisions is to be placed in a classification center. There a group of trained specialists will study him and then send on their reports.

Contemplated in the program are a wide variety of steps designed to aid the youth. There will be schools, hospitals, forestry and other camps in time. And, there will be special training programs under public or private auspices for the young and sometimes accidental offenders.

Another important departure from the time-worn methods is the provision that every youth be returned to his home or some place selected for him when conditionally released at least two years before the end of his commitment period. Through this, there will be continuing help in applying the training and education he has received.

The responsibility for this necessary guidance after the youth has left the institution will not rest with professionally-trained workers alone. The act provides for enlisting volunteer sponsors who can share in reclaiming young lives. These sponsors would be sought among the intelligent, stable and well-adjusted private citizens willing to aid in the program.

The community must accept some responsibility. And there is no doubt in our minds that many private citizens can make a real contribution to the lives of youngsters who previously had no one to whom they could turn for capable counsel and help.

At the present time, only one out of six communities has a sufficient number of juvenile police officers; furthermore, the majority of cities fail to require any qualifications for appointment to juvenile work other than those for the police force in general.

Clearly, then, one of the things we must do is to make sure that police departments wherever possible have a special juvenile division with a well-trained staff to work with children.

For many juvenile delinquents, their first-aid station is the detention center where they are held until the court is ready to consider their problems. This year possibly up to 100,000 youngsters will be held in jails, awaiting court action, because a jail is the only place they can be held. In these jails, impressionable youngsters are often thrown together with hardened criminals. Of the more than three-thousand jails which our Bureau of Prisons has inspected, fewer than one-fourth of them could be approved for use even for adults.

Second, then, we should make sure that no child has to be put in jail. Instead, we should have decent and suitable detention facilities, with constructive programs where children can be looked after by a trained and

experienced staff interested and skilled in getting at the child's particular problem, or even in foster family homes.

Third, a juvenile court judge should have the assistance of a trained staff for gathering information about children and for supervising their treatment program in the community. More than half of the counties in the United States fail to offer probation service to the judge and to the delinquents. A study of juvenile probation officers in 1950 revealed that only one out of 10 had completed his social work training.

Fourth, we have woefully neglected our training schools for delinquent children who need treatment away from homes and communities. To too many, we have given neither the facilities nor the staff to permit them to give individual attention to each boy and girl. Individual attention is needed to provide them with constructive educational, spiritual and psychological programs.

In order to combat juvenile delinquency and stop the trend toward ever increasing volume of crime in this country -- to maintain freedom in this country -- nothing is more important than the protection of the civil rights of our citizens.

When we came to Washington in January we found that the District of Columbia did not allow Negroes to eat in the same restaurants with white people. Accordingly we intervened in a case in the Federal Courts, known as the Thompson Restaurant case, and took the position that the law which abolished segregation in public restaurants was valid and should be enforced. The Supreme Court of the United States upheld our position and I am very proud that one of the first acts of my administration of the affairs of the Department

of Justice resulted in wiping out this blot in the reputation of our Nation's Capital.

We were warned that if the Court upheld us in the Thompson Restaurant case that social unrest and physical violence might occur in Washington when the law was enforced. I am very glad to be able to say that nothing of that sort happened, and congratulate the Negro community of Washington on the splendid attitude that all of its members took in helping to make the new law work in an orderly manner.

Freedom is indeed everybody's business. It is a dynamic concept in the fight against oppression. Our civil rights are the lifeblood of our freedom. A denial of a civil right is a curtailment of a freedom. Any deprivation of civil rights is exploited to the hilt by the Communists. We propose to work in cooperation and harmony with all state officials to protect the civil rights of all of our citizens. The Department of Justice will not encroach on states rights or the police power of the states. Just as in other cases of dual jurisdiction -- such as car theft cases, drug cases and many others -- we will work with the state authorities toward a common goal. We have made it clear, however, that we do not intend in any way to lessen the enforcement of the Federal law in the field of civil rights. On the contrary, our efforts to safeguard the civil rights guaranteed our citizens by the Constitution and protected by Federal laws will be intensified.