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"PREDATORY CRIME"

Radio Address

by

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The warfare which an armed underworld is waging upon organized society has reached disturbing proportions. The prevalence of predatory crime, including kidnaping and racketeering, demands the utmost diligence upon the part of our law enforcing agencies, supported by an informed and aroused public opinion.

The Division of Investigation of the Department of Justice has for several months devoted a large part of its time to these two types of crime. Through the public press, and over the radio, you have been given accounts of the progress that has been made.

It was not until June of 1932 that there existed any Federal statute dealing with kidnaping. This statute, although limited in scope, has been a potent weapon in the hands of public officers.

It is gratifying to note that every kidnaping case handled by the Division of Investigation since that date, either alone or in co-operation with State authorities, has been solved. Of the 15 kidnaping cases thus reported and investigated, there have resulted 17 convictions, one death sentence, two life sentences and terms of imprisonment aggregating 312 years.

In addition thereto 30 persons are now in custody in various parts of our country awaiting trial.

The Division has also been called upon for assistance in cases involving threats to kidnap, usually accompanied by a demand for the payment of money to avert the threatened crime. In 13 such cases

the perpetrators have been convicted or are awaiting trial. Sentences aggregating 43 years of imprisonment have already been imposed.

While the crime of kidnaping, because of its spectacular nature and the human elements involved, has attracted more general interest than the crime of Racketeering, it is to this latter crime that I desire to draw your particular attention.

The use of the word "Racketeering" is of comparatively recent origin. A racketeer has been defined as "One who terrorizes legitimate business to obtain control or to collect graft".

Racketeering is not a novel type of human activity. The present day racketeer has his counterpart in characters of fact and fiction, including marauding potentates preying upon desert caravans, and the barons of the Rhine and the Danube, who sold protection to merchants who transported their wares by boat. Feudal overlords, Robin Hood, Captain Kidd, the Barbary pirates, and the Italian Mafia, may be cited as examples of those who plied the trade of the racketeer.

By the early part of the Nineteenth Century many gangs had developed in a background of slums, crowded tenements, poverty and vice. Into such conditions were crowded thousands of newly arrived and untutored immigrants. Originally the rival gangs were content to fight each other, but such unprofitable activities soon gave way to crime as a business. Recognizing his power and profiting by

his experience, the gangster began a "reaching out" process, seeking more sources of income and new methods of obtaining profit. He enlisted with both employer and employee in labor warfare and took his toll from both sides. It was but a step further until extortion, intimidation and unrestrained force were extended to trades and business enterprises.

For a time it apparently paid well for certain types of business men to enter a disguised partnership with the racketeer or to tolerate him and pay him tribute. The racketeer has now grown strong and the tribute exacted by him is said to amount to nearly a billion dollars annually. The corrupting influences of this evil growth spread in many directions.

Many so-called rackets are skillfully organized on a basis of business efficiency, with adroit lawyers under retainers and with social and other contacts developed to such an extent that they can readily enlist aid from otherwise respectable citizens including office holders in attempts to influence those charged with administering justice. This frequently results in the escape of the racketeer from conviction or punishment. Many of the safeguards provided by our law for the protection of a person accused of crime, in the hands of skilled counsel, often degenerate into gross abuses. The right of habeas corpus, the right of appeal, and the application of our parole and probation practices, are frequently and, at times, flagrantly debauched in order to shield habitual criminals from well-deserved punishment.

There are 48 states in the Union, a number of which have well established State Constabularies; and there are innumerable Municipalities and Townships supporting local police forces. One of our major problems is to bring about a close, intimate and friendly co-operation so that all these agencies, including the Division of Investigation, may, when necessary, operate as a unit, and with a maximum degree of efficiency against the common foes of law and order.

There seems to be in some quarters an erroneous impression that the police systems of other countries excel those of our own. Undoubtedly there are many lessons we can learn from the experiences and methods of other peoples. Our problem, however, deals primarily with the development of a system suitable to our own peculiar needs.

It would be idle to deny that the Constitutional limitations upon Federal activities present a serious problem in the matter of police administration. I have every confidence that we shall be able to meet this problem without doing violence either to our Constitution or to our traditions.

Co-operation is a wonderful word! And we are already reaping many benefits by applying that principle to police problems.

It is my hope that this Division, which is now operating under the skilled guidance of Mr. J. Edgar Hoover, will constantly increase in usefulness.

It is with considerable pride that I am able to state that this Division maintains the largest and, I think, the most efficient, criminal identification unit in the world. It has upon file 3,870,910 fingerprint records, and these records are available, without cost, to law enforcement officials throughout the country. Each and every day more than 2,200 additional fingerprint records are received from 6,066 officials and contributing agencies throughout the world. Upon inquiry, law enforcement officials, wherever located, receive prompt reports concerning the cases of individual criminals in whom they have evinced an interest.

Illustrative of the effectiveness of this co-operation, is the fact that of all fingerprints received for study, more than 45% result in identifications and the establishment of prior criminal records. During the month of August alone 346 fugitives from justice were located by fingerprint identifications made in this Division. These identifications are now running at the rate of about 350 per month.

As a part of the Identification unit, we established a few months ago, what is known as a "Single Fingerprint File." This is separate and apart from the main collection of fingerprints, and contains in it the fingerprints of known gangsters, kidnapers and extortionists. Each fingerprint is classified separately and filed in designated sequence, so that "latent" fingerprints may be checked against these particular records to establish the identity of suspects. By a "latent" fingerprint is meant a fingerprint left upon some object at the scene of the crime, which impression, while not obvious at first, may be made visible by the application

of chemical powders.

There is also maintained in this same file a detailed descriptive card setting forth the record of each individual involved, together with his photograph.

As of September 1st, there had been entered in this file the fingerprints of 2,363 individuals, representing a total of 23,630 single fingerprints; and the file is being constantly amplified.

For instance, 157 names of so-called "public enemies" have just been received from Chicago. Similar lists are being solicited from all of the police departments of the country.

A uniform crime reporting system is also maintained for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data concerning the volume, nature and fluctuation of crime as reflected by fingerprint records sent to the Division showing current arrests throughout the country.

A technical laboratory has been established for necessary research work. The results of the tests in this laboratory, through the use of many scientific crime detection aids, are made available to law enforcement officials throughout the country for their information and assistance.

While public attention has of late been directed primarily to kidnaping and racketeering, an enormous amount of work is being done by the Division of Investigation under various Federal statutes, including the Anti-Trust Laws; the National Motor Vehicle Theft Act; the impersonation Statute; the White Slave Traffic Act; and the statutory penalties

involved in the many attempts to defraud the Government. The high finance racketeer is likewise reached by Federal prosecution under the National Bank and Federal Reserve Acts, as well as Mail Fraud and Bankruptcy statutes.

The vast structure of the Department of Justice may be visualized when one realizes that the Division of Investigation, about which I have been speaking, is only one of eleven distinct and important divisions. At the present time, the Department of Justice is pressing a series of far reaching indictments involving racketeering, and has been successful in many heretofore brought to a conclusion.

The problem of crime presents not only a fascinating, but a highly important study. Many able and courageous people have given thought to it and devoted to it their best energies. Within the limits of the time at my disposal tonight I cannot, of course, survey this field in any adequate fashion. Later on, as our plans mature, there will be further announcements.

As no doubt you are aware, I have appointed Hon. Joseph B. Keenan, a highly skilled and competent lawyer, to represent the Department of Justice in connection with this aspect of the crime problem. Literally thousands of suggestions are pouring in upon us from interested persons. In addition to this, an enormous amount of valuable data has been assembled by the Wickersham Commission, the National Crime Commission, and various other organizations. A Senatorial Committee, under the able and energetic direction of Senator Royal S. Copeland, is making an investigation of this

matter, and collecting highly important information with a view to recommending legislation by the next Congress.

Professor Raymond Moley, a recognized and highly skilled expert, has, at the request of the Attorney General, instituted a special study and no doubt will submit a report in due course.

President Roosevelt is deeply interested, and Col. Louis McHenry Howe, whose experience has covered a wide field, is generously giving the benefit of his time, research and judgment. The press has been most helpful. The Hearst papers, the Scripps-Howard chain, the Philadelphia Record, and many others have rendered invaluable service. Col. Moss and the United States Flag Association have arranged these radio hours and are entitled to high commendation and sincere thanks.

From all these activities, there is every reason to believe there will emerge a definite and constructive program which will enable us to develop to a higher degree of efficiency, our present machinery of Justice, and permit us to recommend additional legislation of a helpful character.

It is a real war which confronts us all -- a war that must be successfully fought if life and property are to be secure in our country. Organized crime is an open challenge to our civilization, and the manner in which we meet it will be a test of our capacity for self government. It has been said that "popular government is organized self control." This is the kind of government which our forefathers set up and it is my confident belief that we shall not be recreant to our great heritage.