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Law Enforcement Week
Radio Script

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LAW Enforcement Week

Script - Radio Tape - February 6, 1969

Today, as never before, people are talking about the problems of law enforcement and the responsibility of the people to help make the officer's job easier and more effective. But are we really serious?

0 Are we serious enough in our concern to want to do more than sport a bumper sticker saying "Support your local police"? Are we serious enough to want to do more than merely tell our children that policemen really aren't bad guys after all?

I believe we are. I believe that for the first time in a long while the citizens of North Carolina, and local towns and counties are serious enough to want to do more -- to in fact do more -- to make sure that the law is respected, that the law is obeyed, and that justice is available to all of our people.

But how do we as citizens begin this job - how do we at this late date begin to provide the support which law enforcement so desperately needs and must have if we are to be safe to carry on our daily lives in safety and security?

We can begin by looking at the situation as it now exists. We must begin by realizing that we as citizens of our towns and counties send out men to perform the most dangerous duties in our society -- duties which mean the difference between safety and danger for us and our families - and that we send them often with inadequate equipment and without the training they want and need.

We do so without remembering that recent court decisions have made law enforcement more difficult than it once was and that now only the most modern equipment and competent instruction are sufficient to help them bring the criminal to justice. For today the slightest mistake can set a criminal free to walk the streets again.

We send these officers out to stand between us and the criminal element of our society without first making sure that we have obtained the best possible men for the job by offering attractive wages and compensating them for overtime service. We ask them to make unbelievable sacrifices - which they willingly do -- while at the same time we hold tight the public purse strings and deny them ~~every~~ reasonable compensation for their services. In my opinion, this is neither fair nor reasonable.

We send our law enforcement officers out to perform tasks which involve great personal danger, to do things we would be afraid to do ourselves. We ask wives to allow their husbands to serve as our protectors, and children to allow their fathers to enforce the laws which are safeguards for all of us. But what security do we provide for them in case that husband or father is killed or seriously injured while serving in our behalf?

Often very little. A meager pension plan and a little accident insurance and we think we have adequately provided for the law officer's family. But we have not. We have done so very little to provide the law enforcement officer with fringe benefits, with life and accident insurance and retirement plans ^{to insure} to insure his family they will continue to live comfortably should their breadwinner no longer be able to provide for them. We must surely do better if we are to do more than just give lip service to our concern for law and justice.

We talk about supporting our police and increasing respect for the law while we at the same time show disrespect by violating traffic laws and being dishonest in our business practices - often in the presence of our children who can hardly be blamed for later following the example we have set. We forget that our actions speak so much louder than our words.

So we have to stop talking about respecting the law in one breath and breaking the law in another. We have to show that we respect the law ourselves by actually obeying the law - and expecting, indeed demanding, that others do also.

We Americans say we are proud of the fact that we are a nation of laws and not of men. But do we really believe this? How can we say we believe this when we ourselves choose to obey some laws - most of us wouldn't steal our neighbor's car or shoot him if he makes us mad - but at the same time we feel we can ignore traffic laws, cheat on our income tax returns, or fudge a little when dealing with our business associates.

Although respect for the law has declined, dedication to the principles of law and justice is today more important than ever before, for as one judge recently put it, "Until recently, we had little reason to worry about the completeness of this

Nation's dedication to our system of law. We believed that the people of this country accepted as an article of faith the duty to obey the law. We believed that obedience to the law was an essential of self-respecting behavior. We thought that deliberate law violation and violence were confined to hoodlums and outlaws."

"We had not seen in this nation and had no reason to expect to see circumstances in which parents, teachers, and thousands and millions of citizens commended lawlessness as a way of achieving educational and social goals. It was a tacit article of faith that lawlessness was not respectable, and that everybody agreed this was so."

But we know now that this is no longer true. Disrespect for the law has become widespread and is being preached from street corners and by-ways throughout our State and Nation. Violence and deliberate violations of the law are accepted tactics

by some groups and many of our citizens have given their silent consent and even commended this action. Needless to say, law enforcement is weakened by such conduct and the job of the law enforcement officer is made more difficult and often impossible. We must reverse this trend, and we must do so immediately.

As citizens we must demand strict, but fair, enforcement of all our laws. This State and Nation of ours must in fact be one of laws and not of men. And as we do so, we must be serious in our support for law enforcement officials and act positively and affirmatively to enable them to do a better job for us. "Support your local police" must become more than merely a slogan on our car bumpers.

If we are to work together to prevent crime in our State.