

SPEECH BOOK

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Speech by:

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Let me tell you how pleased I am to be here with you today and to share a part in your annual convention. Two years ago I spoke to this same group, so I couldn't help but wonder why you asked me back so soon. Nick Weaver, one of my assistants, wondered the same thing.

I thought that perhaps you invited me again because my speech was short. Nick checked; it was 16 pages long - that's too long, so he made me promise to do better today.

I thought maybe you asked me back because I said all the things you wanted to hear. Nick checked; I didn't. I put in a strong plea for more support for law enforcement at a time when everyone else in your County was also clamoring for increased appropriations. I got on you a little bit about not paying officers enough or providing them with adequate equipment. Nick made me promise to be kinder to you today.

I thought maybe you asked me back because I told some pretty good jokes. Nick didn't even have to check. He knows I don't know any good jokes and if I did, I couldn't tell them right anyway.

Nick finally concluded that there is only one answer for the second invitation. The first speech was so bad you knew I couldn't do any worse if you invited me again. I promised to try to do better today so Nick let me accept your invitation.

Seriously, I am glad to be with you because when I meet with County Commissioners, I know that I am close to the government of the people and to public officials who, if they will, can affect to an amazing extent, the quality of life of our citizens. A recent Session of the North Carolina General Assembly enacted legislation to place more decision-making power in your hands. That victory by local government was likewise a victory for the people, in my opinion, and I think we all have seen the good results of that legislation.

Your responsibilities as local governing officials are many and diverse. One of the most important functions, of course, is providing adequate law enforcement for the people of your counties and it is about law enforcement that you have asked me to speak today. Of course, I am delighted to do so for nothing has been more rewarding to me during my term as Attorney General than my associations with law enforcement, primarily through the State Bureau of Investigation, which is a division of my office.

When I was with you before, I stressed that the SBI is primarily a supportive agency for local law enforcement agencies.

This is as it should be. Law enforcement is a proper and important function of local government and I do not believe that a State Police is the answer to the crime problems of today.

I was pleased to hear Governor Bob Scott echo these same sentiments in Wilmington last month at the State Sheriffs' Convention. I might say while we are talking about the Governor, that he is a real friend of law enforcement, both at the local and State level, and that much of the progress we have made during the last few years could not have been possible except for his interest and active support.

When I spoke to you in July, 1969, we had 44 SBI agents working in the field assisting local police and sheriffs officers. The 1969 General Assembly increased this number to 74 and provided funds for 10 agents to form a special narcotics squad giving us a total of 84 agents.

Scattered throughout the 100 counties and answering the calls for assistance of 100 sheriffs and more than 300 municipalities, these men still are spread very thin. For this reason, we went back to the Legislature this time and requested additional help. It came.

The 1971 Legislature provided 12 new agents, including 6 regular agents and 6 narcotics agents, boosting our total field agent staff now to 96.

So over the course of 3 years, we have more than doubled the number of field agents, going from 44 to 96. This is progress and the benefit flows directly to your counties.

In fiscal year 1971, SBI agents opened 1,000 more investigations than in fiscal 1970 - an increase from 3,700 to 4,700. Laboratory examinations increased from 95,000 to 102,000 - the vast majority of these being performed to aid in the investigations of local law enforcement officers.

Amazingly enough, it is just recently that we have had enough laboratory personnel to process in a week's time as many examinations as new requests were made for during that same time. It was a very happy Charles Dunn who reported to me April 13 that for the first time in nearly four years, the backlog of cases in the Chemical Section had been reduced to less than one hundred.

In that same report, he pointed out that most cases in the crime lab were being processed within a week. This statement doesn't sound so startling but it will when I tell you this. We had persons arrested for drug violations all over this State who were close to being released "Scot free" for a while because we simply didn't have the laboratory personnel and facilities to run tests on the drugs they were charged with possessing or selling.

Boost law enforcement every chance you get - demand in turn that your officers conduct themselves with dignity and understanding which equals your confidence in them.

Provide better equipment but make sure that it is needed and that when it arrives, every officer knows how to use it effectively.

In other words, be willing to go the last mile for local law enforcement but insist that local law enforcement agencies make a sincere effort to improve themselves.

Encourage your officers to travel to other counties and other towns to see how things are done elsewhere. They are bound to pick up new ideas, no matter how good they already may be.

Chief Justice Tucker of Winston-Salem made the statement the other day that no law enforcement agency can be expected to improve very much so long as they have no model except themselves. This is so very true. We've got to look around more and benefit from the experiences of others. If we keep using ourselves as a model, we are bound to repeat the same mistakes.

You know we have a great new source of financial support for law enforcement in North Carolina. The Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, operating under the provisions of the Omnibus Crime and Safe Streets Act, has already made millions of

Thank goodness the Legislature and the Governor's Committee on Law and Order came forward with financial help or the drug problem would be far worse. What could be worse, really, than to have persons caught red-handed and then not have the resources to prepare their cases for trial?

We now have 6 new mobile laboratories in the field, operating ^{on the scene} to find and preserve crime scenes and to make quick analysis of evidence. We have a mobile drug display unit visiting schools, shopping centers, civic clubs, PTAs and other organizations who want to be better informed about the drug problem in this State. This was a gift from a Raleigh Exchange Club, by the way.

The State Bureau of Investigation has 6 regional offices; three years ago they had none. And there are many other things we could cite of evidence of progress.

But we must keep in mind that the Bureau is an "assistance" agency, supporting local law enforcement agencies. So you can see how important it is that you, at the local level, make sure that the other link in the law enforcement chain - that first great link - be kept strong and vital.

You must see that your officers are provided training opportunities - grant pay raises conditioned on further training, if you must. Provide better benefits and better working hours - raise the minimum standards for new officers when the profession becomes inviting enough to attract persons with higher educational qualifications.

dollars available to North Carolina communities who are willing to develop long-range plans for law enforcement and to work toward achieving those goals.

These appropriations have risen dramatically in the past years. In fiscal year 1969-1970, \$619,000 was available. The following year that figure increased to \$8,300,000. This year the State Legislature alone appropriated \$1.5 million to improve the criminal justice system in this State, matching \$10.3 million in Federal grant money.

Please note this fact. The law requires that 75% of these funds go to local law enforcement and criminal justice efforts. For once the Federal Government also has realized that government should operate at the level closest to the people - has recognized also that law enforcement primarily is a local responsibility.

I hasten to add, though, that the improvement of law enforcement must be a joint venture, a matter of much cooperation. We are capable of doing this in North Carolina. The installation and operation of PIN - the Police Information Network - proves this.

(Explain how PIN operates, etc. and conclude)

61 terminals now operating throughout North Carolina

65 terminals

-Making an average of about 8,000 inquiries a day.

6 more to be added soon.

-As far west as Waynesville; far East as Elizabeth City.

-have received \$1,407,933 in appropriations
from N.C. General Assembly

- have received \$270,404 from Governor's
committee on Law and Order

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