

Address by: Robert Morgan
Attorney General
Asheville Civitan Club

ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

I am very pleased to be with you today and to have a chance to speak to a group of people who are so highly respected in their community and so active in the many civic activities here in the Asheville area.

Because of your involvement in the affairs of your community, I would like to talk to you today about one of the most important functions of my office - the area of law enforcement. As you all know, the State Bureau of Investigation is in the Office of the Attorney General and as Attorney General, I am responsible to you for seeing that this agency is an efficient and supportive arm for local law enforcement agencies.

I say "supportive arm" because law enforcement is an important and responsible function of local government, and should never be the complete responsibility of the State.

Once in Greek mythology, there was an ancient King of Corinth who was condemned in the lower world to roll to the top of a hill a huge boulder that constantly rolled back again,

making his task both incessant and futile. The American people of this generation are experiencing somewhat the frustrations of this ancient king in the administration of criminal law. Each year greater efforts are made in numbers of personnel, expenditures of money and enactment of statutes on federal, state and local levels to combat crime with the net effect that serious crime increases in every category in every succeeding year.

You might be interested in the Uniform Crime Reports for 1970 that have just been published with the crime index for the United States. There were 2,500 offenses per 100,000 inhabitants in 1969 to 2,750 in 1970 and this crime rate should be considered as a victim risk rate. In other words, the statistics reveal that the risk of becoming a victim of crime in this country is increasing and that population growth cannot alone account for the crime increases. This is an 11% increase in victims. The national crime rate, or the risk of being a victim of one of these crimes, has increased 144% since 1960. Compare this with only a 13% increase in population.

Is it any wonder that the law-abiding citizen has the feeling of being on the syndrome of the ancient King of Corinth?

While the 1970 National Uniform Crime Reports are not bright or particularly encouraging, I believe that we are making some progress; I believe I can see a glimmer of light.

For instance, the quarterly FBI Uniform Crime Report shows that the national crime rate increased only six percent during the first three months of 1971 - the lowest increase in five years. The national rate of crime increase for the first quarter of 1970 was 13%.

But note, while this statistic is encouraging, the statement reads: increased only six percent, and though I am hopeful enough to see a glimmer of light in this statistic nationally, I believe that here in North Carolina for years we were too complacent that organized crime could come here - we could not have a drug problem - that was for the larger cities to the north of us.

While perhaps other states have been spending more on crime prevention, this has not necessarily been true in North Carolina. We are in the process of catching up - and we have got to move.

Let me tell you some of the things we have been doing in law enforcement on the State level during the last three years or so to catch up.

When I took office in January 1969, we had 44 SBI agents working in the field assisting local police and sheriffs. We went before the General Assembly with an ambitious request and that body increased this number to 74 and provided funds for 10 agents to form a new, 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 were spread very thin. For this reason, we went back to the 1971 Legislature and asked for additional help. It came.

The recent General Assembly 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 cities and counties throughout the State whose officers we assist on a day-to-day basis. In fiscal year 1971, these SBI agents opened 1,000 more investigations than in fiscal 1970 - an increase from 3,700 to 4,700.

How about in the technical area? Prior to the 1969 Legislature, we had 2 chemists, 2 fingerprint analysts, and

1 photographer and 1 ballistics specialist serving this entire State. Unbelievable, isn't it.

The 1969 Legislature gave us 2 more chemists, 2 more fingerprint men, another photographer and 3 technical persons, 2 of which were assigned to ballistics. In 1971 the Legislature gave us another boost - 4 chemists and 4 fingerprint analysts. Help came also from the federal government in terms of 2 chemists funded with Law and Order money.

So today we have a total of 17 highly trained technical people - 9 chemists, 4 fingerprint analysts and 4 ballistics experts. This is a long way from the grand total of 5 which the Bureau was struggling along with in 1969. Do you see how complacent we were?

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 - in other words, enough personnel to keep from getting any further behind. 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.

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 fo trial?

We now have 6 new mobile laboratories in the field, operating on the scene to 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, by the way, from the North Carolina Exchange Club.

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 the local link in the law enforcement chain - that first great link - be kept strong and vital.

In other words, as respected and responsible citizens of this community, you must be willing to go the last mile for local law enforcement but insist that local law enforcement agencies make a continuing effort to improve themselves and provide maximum services to the community.

Encourage your law enforcement officials 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.

Insist that your officers continue to be provided with training opportunities. Support efforts to provide better benefits and better working hours and then see that minimum standards for new officers are raised when the profession becomes inviting enough to attract persons with greater education and professional qualifications.

Boost law enforcement every chance you get and demand, in turn, that your officers always conduct themselves with dignity and understanding which equals your confidence in them. Urge your local leaders to provide better equipment.

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 provision of the Omnibus Crime and Safe Streets Act, has already made millions of 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.

But, 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 operation of PIN
Network)

65 terminals now operating throughout North Carolina
Making an average of about 10,000 inquiries a day
As far west as Waynesville; far east as Elizabeth City
Received \$1,407,933 in appropriations for the biennium
from General Assembly
Received \$270,404 from Governor's Committee on Law
and Order

Many arrests have been made throughout North Carolina as a result of information obtained from the National Crime Information Center after an inquiry through PIN to the national files was made.

How does this occur? On a routine check of a parking lot, the Highway Patrol located an abandoned vehicle. When an inquiry was made into NCIC's files, a positive response was received and the vehicle had been stolen from Village Ford, Delran, New Jersey.

A man on probation was suspected of having guns in his home. A warrant under the Gun Act on People on Probation was sworn out and six guns were recovered. An inquiry

was made on all six with one positive response and that gun had been stolen in Michigan.

On a routine stop and check of an individual by city police, an inquiry into NCIC produced a positive response that he was wanted by the Department of Correction as an escapee from prison. These examples are typical uses of PIN

If time were sufficient, I could give you many more. I used these to help show that law enforcement is making a real effort to keep up with the times.

With concerted effort, I believe we can avoid the plight of the Corinthian king and break the syndrone of the rolling stone. But I believe it must be a joint effort on the part of local, State and federal law enforcement officers, and by concerned citizens.