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"WHAT REVENUE SHARING MEANS TO YOU"

REMARKS OF

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ATTORNEY GENERAL

BEFORE THE

NATIONAL SHERIFFS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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First let me say that I'm not only enjoying the chance to meet with you, but I'm doubly pleased to be able to convey a brief message to you from the President of the United States. When he learned I would be speaking to the National Sheriffs Association, President Nixon asked me to extend his personal greetings to the members, and his best wishes to the outgoing and incoming presidents. He also wished me to reaffirm to you his confidence in the peace officers across our nation, and his appreciation of their tireless work in preserving the safety and well-being of our communities. I certainly wish to join him in those sentiments.

In fact, whenever I meet with a large body of chief law enforcement officers who have left their localities to travel across the country, I have an uneasy feeling, and the question comes to my mind, "Who's minding the store?"

I bring this up only to illustrate the point that the office of Sheriff is one of ultimate responsibility. There is no one to whom you can pass the buck. There's not a man here who knows what it is to say, "Let George do it."

I'm afraid that in many areas I stand in the same position.

We can all take some comfort, however, in knowing that there is at least one public official who has to make even tougher decisions every day--the President of the United States. Harry Truman had on his desk a little sign that said: "The buck stops here."

I mention this because today, and still more so in the days ahead, most of the nation's domestic problems are primarily local in nature. Urban blight, crime in the streets, overtaxed courthouses, crowded jails and prisons, traffic congestion, air and water pollution-- their causes are largely local, and because each problem has its peculiar local aspects, they generally require local solutions. It would therefore be easy for a President of the United States to say, "Well, these are not my problems. Let the states and counties and cities take care of all that."

There is one trouble with this approach. If the states and localities don't have the resources to do the job, and the nation falls into desperate straits, nobody is going to step forward and say, "That's all right, Mr. President, it wasn't your fault."

This brings me to the subject of my remarks--the President's program to share Federal revenues with the states and localities.

Revenue sharing is important to you because it offers funds to help solve some of your most pressing needs--better training and more advanced equipment for your law enforcement staffs... expansion and modernization of county jails. I venture to say that you have few problems that can't be solved in whole or in part by increased funds. Money isn't everything, but try to tell that to the county budget director.

For what comfort it may be, you are not alone. At the state and city levels, problems have multiplied faster than the resources to solve them. Tax revenues haven't kept pace with expenditures. From 1948 to 1969 the debt of state and local governments rose from \$19 billion to \$135 billion. This year the states and localities will have an estimated revenue gap of \$10 billion. Governors and mayors meeting in conferences across the nation have not hesitated to tell us they face serious financial trouble.

Until recently, when the Federal Government has come forward with offers of help, there's been reason for the states to be on their guard. Beginning in the 1930s the Federal Government seemed happy to relieve the states of one responsibility after another, while preempting one tax source after another. With this kind of help, the states worried whether they were going to get helped right out of business.

Today, I am happy to say, there's a decided movement to reverse this trend. Leading it is President Nixon, who as a candidate in 1968 called for a return of power to the states. He supported revenue sharing as a means to accomplish this and to meet some of the nation's pressing domestic problems. As President he has pursued revenue sharing as a cornerstone of his domestic program. He has presented the general program to Congress, followed by specific programs in six major areas, including law enforcement.

In both houses of Congress, most of those members who have expressed themselves on revenue sharing have favored it. This includes 184 members of the House of Representatives, against only 49 in that House who have said they oppose it. It includes 43 Senators, against only 11 who have announced against it. Yet Congress has not acted on revenue sharing, and it is not clear when it will act.

To my knowledge there is no movement with any substantial support to provide an alternative method of enabling the states and localities to solve their critical problems. We are told, however, that it is somehow wrong to give Federal money to the states and localities.

The fact is, though, that this has been done for years, though not in the form contemplated in the revenue sharing program. And it has grown to very sizable amounts. Federal grants to state and local governments have approximately tripled between 1962 and 1971; \$38 billion is proposed for 1972.

In the last three years, part of this effort has been the responsibility of the Department of Justice, through the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. The funds have gone to states and localities

to improve the effectiveness of law enforcement, the courts, and correction facilities. Total LEAA expenditures have mushroomed from \$63 million in fiscal 1969 to a total of \$530 million for the current 1971 fiscal year.

Many of these funds are given in block grants to the states, and they are further distributed by them to state and local agencies, according to plans approved by LEAA. However, other discretionary funds have been granted by LEAA directly to various state and local organizations--again, on the basis of work plans submitted by them for specific tasks in such areas as research or training.

Sheriff's offices have, of course, participated in these LEAA grants, but we don't think it's been at the rate it should be.

It's not that you aren't aware of serious needs in both law enforcement and corrections. Some of you may not know how to effectively present your programs for consideration. Others may not have taken enough initiative in seeking LEAA funds from their State Planning Agencies. Tomorrow the Administrator of LEAA, Jerris Leonard, will address you in more detail about the LEAA program and how it affects County Sheriffs. If you have any questions, I'm sure he will be happy to answer them.

The fact is that the LEAA program is a forerunner of revenue sharing . It already answers much of the criticism that had been directed at Federal aid programs. Many of these other programs are confined to narrow categories, which do not necessarily fit the particular problems of individual states. But most of the LEAA funds are provided in block grants to the states, leaving it to them to do their own planning and allocating.

Now when we come to revenue sharing--and it would include most of the LEAA program--we go even further in eliminating the objections to Federal aid.

It was said, for instance, that the frequent requirement for matching funds by states and localities put an undue burden on them. But the condition for matching funds is not part of the revenue sharing program. So far as law enforcement funds are concerned, this will enable more states to take advantage of Federal aid, when they previously had been deterred by the matching requirement. And those states which had been participating could now use their matching funds for other projects.

Again, it was said that categorical Federal aid required such administration that part of the funds were used up in red tape and bureaucracy. But under revenue sharing, there is no Federal supervision of the type previously employed.

It was said that some former Federal aid programs placed a burden on the states by making them take over a program completely after the first year or two. This would be eliminated under revenue sharing, which could fund the same program year after year.

I would add, too, that under revenue sharing, there is no concern that the states will not pass funds on to the local units. These will receive funds in proportion to their overall spending in general categories covered by the President's revenue sharing program.

Finally, the funds available under revenue sharing would be considerably greater than present Federal aid--thus providing further relief to the states and localities. There would be enough funds year by year for some good long-range planning and some really substantial accomplishments. Under revenue sharing, provided

the program gets Congressional approval, we can look forward to even more dramatic progress in our law enforcement capabilities, in the operation of our courts, and in the quality of our corrective institutions.

All of this is why the revenue sharing program has such wide public support. A nationwide poll last January showed it was favored by 77 percent of Americans. Forty-six out of the 50 state governors have endorsed it. Both houses of 19 legislatures have passed resolutions approving it. Revenue sharing is endorsed by official national organizations representing governors, mayors, city and county executives, school boards, and other types of public officials. It was endorsed in the 1968 platforms of both the Republican and Democratic parties. And I hope that, with my remarks today, I may have recruited additional support for a program that offers so little to argue with, and so much to gain.