



Department of Justice

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ELLIOT L. RICHARDSON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

DEDICATION CEREMONY
POLICE HEADQUARTERS
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Mayor Lindsay, Commissioner Cawley, fellow law enforcement officers and New Yorkers, I am delighted to be here today to share in your celebration and to join in dedicating the new headquarters for New York's finest. William Gilbert, of the famous team of Gilbert & Sullivan, in the Pirates of Penzance, wrote "When constabulary duty's to be done, the policeman's lot is not a happy one!" Certainly, the headquarters that we dedicate today should lessen the need for Gilbert's lament. But there are many reasons, beyond handsome new facilities, for concluding that the policeman's role is not and need not be an unhappy one.

Today's outpouring of affection and appreciation for New York's police effectively rebuts misguided critics who claim that our police are isolated by a barrier of suspicion from the rest of our society. Today's festivities are convincing proof that our citizens--you and I--view our

police as an all-too-rare species of public servant, as our genuine allies and friends in maintaining the precious sense of security which must belong to a free, orderly society.

On this occasion, it's worth noting briefly some of the reasons people throughout the country in recent years have come to a sharper realization of the importance and overall constructiveness of the policeman's role.

The basic impulse is no mystery. In the past decade, Americans of all races, income levels, and political persuasions rejected the notion that they were destined to go through life scared of dark streets, concerned for their property when they returned to an empty home, and nervous that their children might find tragedy instead of joy in the parks. Americans simply refused to put up with what they heard and what they sensed from personal experience--that life in urban America had lost its historical promise and was becoming more fearful than fruitful. Just as we looked to diplomats and soldiers when our security was threatened from abroad, at home we turned to our domestic specialists in public safety--the police and their chiefs.

But the need for police to perform their assignments effectively hardly explains the positive and appreciative spirit of today's celebration--a spirit evident in communities throughout the country. I doubt our citizens give police the kind of support we see here simply because they feel there is no other choice.

No, the reasons are more complicated, and they provide lessons for all of us in public service.

First of all, police have made remarkable efforts in cities throughout the country--including New York--to understand and to level with their communities. Certainly, all the difficulties inherent in police-minority group relations have not been ironed out anywhere, including New York. However, more rapidly than in many sectors of our government and private economy, police departments--including New York's--realized that new lines of communication have to be opened to minority groups and to the less privileged.

Police have called on another equally important quality in enhancing public confidence. Most of the policemen with whom I have worked--and this goes back to my days as a

federal prosecutor and Attorney General in Massachusetts-- have an indispensable attribute of the effective public servant: they are realistic and candid. Unlike the captains of the various wars we fought in the 1960s, at home and abroad, most police officers I know have refrained from predicting quick victories in the war on crime. They are, to be sure, outspokenly critical of attitudes which hamper their work--whether those of courts more concerned with the alleged rights of defendants than with the interests of victims, or those of reformers who feel the best way to change a law is to break it. But unlike a lot of people whose strong opinions come only in black and white most policemen are too tough-minded to suppose that they have any panaceas.

We can't underestimate the importance in public service of candor. The experience of recent years has taught us nothing if it hasn't confirmed that exaggeration, distortion, and over-promising breed frustration, anger, and cynicism. People are entitled to the truth--and this often requires the admission that a situation is unclear and that no simple solutions are at hand. We need straight talk from

our public officers. From false or unrealistic promises, we can expect nothing in the end but disappointment and cynicism. And massive cynicism, as policemen know better than any other public servants, makes effective government action all but impossible.

The increasing support the police receive also results from the solid appreciation we all have of the policeman's role and contribution. Not that sympathy with the police should take any special effort. What other public servants are killed--five in the line of duty so far this year in New York City alone--by depraved hoodlums simply because of the uniform they wear and the trust they embody? More than the brutal facts of these awful encounters, American understand that the cop on the beat is often required to make decisions of considerable difficulty and with potentially grievous immediate consequences. Most of us in and out of government usually have the luxury of time to reflect calmly, to exchange ideas with our colleagues, and from time to time to defer decision. Policemen, whether they are dealing with a heated family dispute, a call to the scene of an ugly accident, or a child darting across a crowded street simply don't have this time.

It is widely understood at last that police spend and will inevitably continue to spend much of their time performing tasks other than investigating and apprehending criminals. And the tasks we call on them to perform--essentially helping to deal with the endless range of human disturbance--call for qualities of tact, decisiveness, and that indefinable quality we call judgment. We demand qualities in patrolmen that are hard to find in the most seasoned statesmen.

As Attorney General, my interest in the performance of local police, including New York's goes beyond that of most people. In a variety of important Justice Department programs, our success in enforcing federal law and doing our share to protect our citizens requires the active cooperation, initiative, and skill of local police.

I need give only a few examples, of which many of you are aware. Within the past few months, in cooperation with the New York police department and in large part due to Mayor Lindsay's initiative, we have greatly expanded the Joint New York Task Force to combat drug-related crime. The force includes agents from the Justice Department's Drug Enforcement Administration, New York City and New York

State police. Its joint strength is 242 men, and most of the manpower is from your force. Very soon a unified Intelligence Division will begin operating. Any positive results from this important cooperative venture are as much a tribute to the men who paraded here today and whose building I am proud to help dedicate as they are to Washington or City Hall.

Any yet, I wouldn't be true to my own words if I failed to say that it is too early to tell whether programs of this sort promise any great breakthroughs in protecting our society--and your city--from the contagion of despair and lawlessness surrounding drug abuse. But there are hopeful indications that this expanding effort to curtail drug traffic is making some headway. The number of deaths through drug overdose is down from last year. So is the incidence of serum hepatitis--a disease often caused by the non-sterilized needles addicts use. Another encouraging indication that the traffic is moderating is the reduction in the purity of the heroin sold on the street--from roughly 9% purity in late 1971 to about 3% this year. And I know that the men here working in this effort will never be complacent.

In the fight against organized crime, where the federal interest is especially heavy because of the economic complexity and wide geographic range of so much mob activity, your support and skill has also been invaluable. According to the career Justice Department officers helping to administer the two strike forces in New York City--and these men are not prone to use superlatives--your police's efforts are viewed as among the most outstanding in the Nation.

Finally, the entire Law Enforcement Assistance Administration revenue sharing program which I am proud to oversee is based on the fundamental premise that local police departments deserve our faith in their imagination and initiative. As a believer in expanded cooperation between police and other criminal justice agencies, I am happy to learn that some of LEAA's grants to New York City go to a joint police-courts-corrections-addict service agency program to divert apprehended addicts to treatment centers.

Indeed, scanning the partnership which we in Washington are privileged to have with you in New York indicates perhaps the most convincing reason why today is a festive occasion

for policemen and for all New Yorkers and for me. The New York police force--its rank and file and its administrators--refuses to tolerate stagnation. In the best spirit of enlightened public service, it's direction is set by bold, but careful innovators.

I am sure your headquarters will be the focal point of continued good work, and of continued effective partnership.

Further, it will symbolize this community's and the Nation's support and admiration for some of its most important, courageous, and unselfish members.