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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE  
CALIFORNIA PEACE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

THE SHERATON ANAHEIM

8:50 A.M. PDT

Ev, Congressman Chuck Wiggins, Sheriff Larry Gillich, members and guests of the California Peace Officers Association:

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to be introduced by my good friend, Evelle Younger, and I am delighted to have an opportunity to be in the Congressional district so ably represented by my long and very good friend, Chuck Wiggins.

It is also a great privilege and honor for me to address this Convention of the Peace Officers of California. Your daily struggle to keep the peace and combat crime has won the well-deserved praise of the people of California.

I am delighted to add my words of support and gratitude for the great success and fine efforts by each and every one of you. In a special sense, the goals of your service and mine are precisely the same -- to make life secure for our fellow citizens.

As President, for the last 21 months I have been working at home and abroad to lay down a solid, secure foundation for America as our nation enters its third century. That will be a century for individual freedom and achievements and self-fulfillment.

I see it as a century in which Americans will build on all of the great accomplishments of our first 200 years.

But, to do that, Americans must be secure in their homes and in their streets and in their jobs and in a peaceful world. It must be a century of security for all Americans wherever they live, they work or wherever they play.

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Consider the real concern of so many Americans about the problems of crime. Let us start with the great Preamble of our Constitution, which seeks "to insure domestic tranquility."

Law makes human society possible. It pledges safety to every member so that the company of fellow human beings can be a blessing instead of a threat.

Do we provide that domestic tranquility which the Constitution seeks? If we take the crime rates as an indication, the answer has to be no. Violent crimes on our streets and in our homes makes fear pervasive. They strike at the roots of our community life. They make citizens fear one another.

The time has come for society to act in its own self-defense.

As a first important step, I strongly favor the use of the death penalty in the Federal criminal system in accordance with proper Constitutional standards. The death penalty in certain circumstances should be imposed upon the conviction of sabotage, murder, espionage and treason, and I think most Americans support that approach.

In murders involving substantial danger to the national security or when the defendant is a cold-blooded hired killer, the use of capital punishment is fully justified.

The harsh fact is that passivity and permissiveness invite crime and that the certainty of punishment prevents crime, and I mean positive, swift and just punishment.

We all recognize the criminal justice system need not be vindictive to be effective. As President, I will give no comfort to those who make false allegations of police brutality. I will not excuse the real brutality that exists in America today -- the brutality of hoodlums in the streets of our cities throughout the United States.

Millions and millions of our citizens, including the elderly and the poor, lock themselves in their homes, fearing violence. I would instead lock up the criminals who make them afraid.

A legal system that is exploited by the criminal but ignores his victim is sadly out of balance. I ask your help and that of all Americans in restoring that balance. The great majority of crimes constitute violations of State laws and, therefore, under our Constitution the responsibility for dealing with them rests primarily on local officials. The Federal Government, however, can serve as a model by firmly and justly enforcing its own laws and by improving the quality of the Federal criminal justice system.

We recall in this Bicentennial year that our Founding Fathers adhered to the dictum of John Locke: "Where there is no law, there is no freedom." The overwhelming majority of Americans are law-abiding citizens. It is a hard core of law-breakers who commit a very large portion of all crime.

A recent study in one major metropolitan area recently showed that within one single year more than 200 burglaries, 60 rapes and 14 murders were committed by only 10 individuals.

A great many serious crimes are committed by repeaters, you know that probably better than I. Such criminals duly tried and convicted must be removed from our society for a very definite and specific time. A law-abiding majority in America has its rights and those rights should be given full weight on the scales of justice in America.

With very few exceptions, I strongly advocate mandatory minimum sentences for individuals who commit crimes or offenses involving the use of a dangerous weapon or who commit such grave offenses as aircraft hijacking, kidnapping and dealing in hard drugs, and for repeated offenders who commit Federal crimes that harm or endanger others.

The way to reduce criminal use of handguns is not to disarm law-abiding citizens. I am totally opposed to the registration of guns or gun owners. The way to reduce criminal use of handguns is to impose mandatory sentences for gun crimes, to prohibit the manufacture and sale of Saturday night specials and to concentrate our resources for enforcement in high crime areas.

Last July, I recommended to the Congress, as my good friend Chuck Wiggins knows, a bill to achieve these objectives, and I urge and strongly advocate action by the Congress to act immediately and without harassing the lawful gun owner.

Another important cause of the violent crime that plagues Americans and makes a major contributor to the soaring crime rate is drug abuse. The time has come: to step up our fight, sharpen the weapons in our arsenal and launch a new and a far more aggressive attack against this insidious enemy. The cost of drug abuse to this Nation is absolutely staggering.

Every year more than 5,000 Americans die from direct drug-related causes. Every year more than 170,000 injuries can be directly traced to drugs. Every year the problem of drug abuse costs up to \$17 billion.

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Significantly, the greatest bulk of this \$17 billion is money lost through crime. Law enforcement officials estimate that up to one-half of the robberies, muggings, burglaries and other forms of property crimes are committed by addicts to support their expensive and debilitating habit. It is a real tragedy. And I pledge to you today that I will spare no effort to crush the menace of drug abuse.

Clearly as we look at the picture today our first defense must be directed at our own borders, to clamp down on the illegal flow of drugs from foreign sources. Since today 80 to 90 percent of the current flow of heroin comes across the Mexican border, we must expand our crackdown in that area, and we will.

I will not recite the added activity that the Federal Government is undertaking in this area, but I can assure each and every one of you that it is being directed right from the White House.

Our efforts, however, must not stop there. We must accelerate our law enforcement efforts throughout our own country.

Despite all the rhetoric of recent years, I do not believe that we have yet succeeded in making it tough enough for drug traffickers. The people who traffic in hard drugs are nothing less than merchants of death and should be put -- and I mean put -- behind bars for a long, long, long time.

Justice Department studies show that more than a quarter of those convicted of narcotics trafficking do not spend a single day in jail. The extraordinary laxity that sometimes exists was illustrated recently in a case when law enforcement officers arrested 31 people, most of whom were major violators responsible for a very large shipment of heroin to the United States. Nineteen of those arrested were immediately freed on a \$500 personal recognizant bond even though their offenses were punishable by 15 years in jail.

All but two of the 19 had long, long arrest records and one was on parole for a narcotics offense. This is unforgiveable, and completely indefensible. We have to close legal loopholes that permit traffickers to escape the Federal penitentiary. Those who live off the misery of others must pay the price, and the higher the price, the better, as this President sees it.

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Above all, we must always remember that law enforcement alone cannot win the war on crime. The combined efforts of the Federal Government, State and local authorities, will be of little use unless the American people rally to fight the scourge of crime within their own communities.

I am particularly encouraged by the citizens coalitions against crime that are cropping up all over the United States. Here, as in other law enforcement areas, California is in the forefront. The 50,000 volunteers in the neighborhood watch program in the City of Los Angeles have been able to cut crime substantially.

In Vallejo not a single member of the home alert program had their homes burglarized during all of 1975. Americans have always stood united. Americans have always stood strong against all enemies. Crime and drug abuse are enemies that we can overcome, but there must be a very deep personal and a deep national dedication to that goal.

If I had to sum up the record of my Administration in just a few words, it would be peace, prosperity and trust in America. Today, America is at peace. Your sons are not being drafted, and they are not dying on any battlefield.

I want to maintain the peace, advance the peace among all nations, secure the peace through strength and perseverance and leave that legacy of peace for our children and their children.

I will continue my policies of the last 21 months of cutting your taxes, expanding the private economy, reducing bureaucracy and useless regulation and restraining Federal spending. These policies have brought us from the depths of a recession to a sustained recovery, and will insure that runaway inflation never robs our loved ones of the honest work and their lifetime savings.

I want to pursue a steady course that led from war to peace, from recession to recovery, from cynicism to confidence, from fear to faith. Finally, I want to finish the most important job--restoration of trust in the Presidency itself.

As your President, I will promise no more than I can deliver and I will deliver everything that I promise. The reason that I am in this race -- and I am in it to stay -- is to insure peace, prosperity and trust for the future of the 215 million Americans.

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The future belongs to those of us who come after you and myself and our fellow Americans. We Americans have always known that life will be better for our children than it was for us because life has been better than it was for our parents and our grandparents.

What do I see ahead for this wonderful country? I see a strong and confident America, secure in a strength that cannot alone be counted in megatons and a nation rejoicing in riches that cannot be eroded by inflation or by taxation.

I see an America where life is valued for its quality as well as its comfort, where the individual is inviolate in his constitutional rights, where the Government serves and the people will rule.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 9:07 A.M. PDT)