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THE NEEDS OF THE MINNESOTA BUREAU OF CRIMINAL APPREHENSION

-- A SPECIAL MESSAGE --

To Members of the Sixty-third Legislative Session
by
Governor Karl F. Rolvaag



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Thursday, April 11, 1963

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Thursday, April 11, 1963

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, and Members of the Sixty-third Session of the Legislature of the State of Minnesota:

I would like to call attention to the unfortunate situation of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, widely known as the Crime Bureau. I feel that this agency requires a considerable increase in budget, personnel, and equipment over present levels.

Recent highly publicized and gruesome murders, some still unsolved, dramatize a serious immediate problem Minnesota faces. Without attempting to sensationalize, or to unduly arouse public fears, I wish to point out what I consider a serious failure in affording our citizens protection against dangerous criminals.

Statistics point to a grim and relentless increase in crime in our state, paralleling a general increase across the nation. In the past 35 years, the Minnesota crime rate has doubled. In 1962 crimes against the person (murder, manslaughter, rape, and aggravated assault) increased 22.2% over 1961; all major crimes, including those against the person and against property, increased 29.2%.

Fifty-thousand major crimes were committed in Minnesota last year, and we can expect, if current trends continue, that 75,000 will be committed in 1970.

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More disturbing are statistics which indicate that we are falling behind in solving these crimes. Thirty-five years ago, an estimated 50% of major crimes were solved; today, only about 23% are solved. One out of five murderers, one out of two rapists, two out of three robbers, four out of five burglars, and nine out of ten grand larcenists escape the just punishment the law provides. In absolute terms, this means that in 1962, 7 murders, 54 rapes, 671 robberies, 8,146 burglaries, 6,955 larcenies of \$50 or over, and 16,354 larcenies of less than \$50 were not solved.

This high rate of unsolved crimes is not the fault of the sheriffs and police officers of Minnesota. These dedicated men, whose workload has increased all out of proportion to their facilities, perform their difficult and dangerous work with a skill and devotion which deserves our highest praise.

I think our apparent losing battle against crime is in large part attributable to our failure to provide our local police forces with the effective support and coordination on the state level which they deserve.

I refer to our scandalous neglect of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

For 35 years the Crime Bureau has assisted sheriffs and other law enforcement officials with expert investigators, laboratory analyses, centralized criminal files, and police training facilities. They have performed this job against ever-lengthening odds, to the point where their present situation can now be truthfully described as critical.

I noted earlier in this message that in the last 35 years, the crime rate in Minnesota has doubled. Yet since 1935, we have added exactly one new staff position to the Bureau - it has been raised from 28 to 29 employees. This

serious oversight must be viewed in light of the fact that 1963's criminal is more intelligent, more sophisticated, and, above all, much more mobile than 1935's.

The Bureau's needs have recently been studied by Attorney General Mondale's Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee, whose membership included some of the most outstanding law enforcement officials in Minnesota, representing all groups who have responsibility for the administration of criminal justice. The Committee's chairman was the Hon. Arthur A. Stewart, Judge of Minnesota District Court - Retired. The other members were: Mr. Lester Albrecht, Crystal Chief of Police and Past President of the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association; Mr. Edward Bolstad, Minneapolis Police Department and President of the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association; Mr. Kermit Hedman, Ramsey County Sheriff and Past President of the Minnesota Sheriffs Association; Hon. George M. Scott, Hennepin County Attorney and Past President of the Minnesota County Attorneys Association; and Mr. Roy T. Noonan, Superintendent, Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

Governor Andersen's Commission On Crime and Delinquency, the Hon. James C. Otis chairman, also studied the operation and needs of our Crime Bureau and strongly recommended strengthening its program. This Commission approved the report of the Attorney General's Committee.

I would like to discuss my recommendations for improving the Bureau's five divisions, which should go a long way toward remedying the situation in which the Bureau now finds itself after so many years of neglect and false economy. These recommendations are fully supported by the findings of the Attorney General's Committee.

LABORATORY DIVISION

This Division provides central laboratory facilities for the convenience of local police departments who cannot afford to maintain their own crime labs. The laboratory performs ballistics tests, chemical analyses, microscopic examinations, and photographic analyses, essential to modern crime detection. While several dedicated men are assigned to the Laboratory Division, its tragic lack of equipment and understaffing led the former director to resign late last year to take a subordinate position in the California crime lab, which offers much better facilities. This is only one example of the serious kinds of losses which neglect can bring about.

In order to properly perform the functions assigned to it by law, the Laboratory Division needs at least the following equipment: (1) A spectrograph, used for chemical analysis of such clues as bullet fragments and other small pieces of metal, poisons, paints, and dirt particles; (2) An X-ray diffraction unit, absolutely essential for certain types of analysis of paints and other substances; (3) A portable X-ray unit for detection work at the scene of a crime, such as locating bullets in bodies or in walls or examining suspect parcels for weapons or other evidence; (4) An electrophoresis apparatus, used for studying inks, paints, dyes and metals; (5) A reflectance unit, used for examining particles of paper, cloth or other material to determine whether they are the same color; (6) Four new microscopes, used extensively in all types of examinations of materials; (7) Air conditioning, essential for holding material under analysis at even temperature.

In addition to needed improvements in equipment, the present laboratory staff must be increased by four persons. The laboratory's present staff of five is too small to perform the tasks which crime detection in Minnesota requires. Many tests requested by local agencies cannot be performed, simply

because the lab is undermanned. If performed, the tests are often too late to be of use in finding the criminal.

Further, the salaries of the lab personnel must be raised, if we are to retain the dedicated men we have now, and attract good men to fill the badly needed new posts.

IDENTIFICATION DIVISION

This Division keeps fingerprint records of all persons committing felonies in Minnesota, as well as other fingerprints received from federal authorities. It finds and identifies fingerprints on objects sent by local police officers. It also keeps records of the mode of operation of criminals. Formerly, the Division sent out a bulletin to police officers every week on crimes committed in Minnesota, the mode of operation of the criminal, and other useful data. Because the enormously increased workload of the Division has not been accompanied by an increase in staff, this bulletin is now issued only bi-weekly.

In another instance of false economy, the last session of the legislature deprived the Bureau of funds for providing 24-hour service in supplying information to police officers. This service merely costs the salaries of two clerks. Unfortunately, our criminals have not obliged us by limiting their activities to the hours in which the Bureau can afford to be available. Thus, a police officer who must make an immediate identification of a suspect, or obtain other urgent information, simply must wait, if his needs arise during the evening hours. This enormous hole in our detection and enforcement systems greatly improves the criminal's opportunity to escape, or to destroy evidence of his crime. Minnesotans have a right to expect immediate action for their protection.

STATISTICAL DIVISION

The Statistical Division studies crime patterns. Besides measuring the rate of change in the over-all crime rate, the Division carefully examines trends in geographical distribution and type classification of crime. This activity is extremely valuable to local law enforcement agencies, for it helps them to use their available manpower effectively. In 1935 the total personnel of the Division was seven. Since then, in the face of a great increase in the number of offenses which must be recorded and analyzed, the Division's staff has been cut to one. At the very least, an additional statistician and clerk-typist are needed for this Division to perform effectively.

POLICE TRAINING DIVISION

The Bureau performs invaluable services to local law enforcement agencies through police schools, which it sponsors in conjunction with the Police Officers Training Advisory Board. The Police Training Division currently employs only one man, who conducts training courses for police officers in many areas of the state.

The Training Division of the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension is the only facility we have for training local police officers outside the metropolitan areas in the techniques needed in apprehending today's resourceful and mobile criminals.

The Bureau's present personnel strength does not enable it to make this type of instruction available to every local law enforcement agency requesting it. The Bureau's resources for the training program should be increased to a level which would enable every law enforcement officer to take the Bureau's basic training and advanced courses.

In view of recent decisions of the United States Supreme Court, particularly Mapp v. Ohio, the importance of proper police education increases. Rules which

exclude evidence obtained in an unconstitutional manner require that police competence be improved, both to insure that the guilty are not set free and to protect the civil rights of the citizen.

INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION

It is our investigative services which have been most seriously neglected. In 1930, the Bureau had sixteen investigative agents. Today, with the crime rate nearly doubled, and the solution rate cut in half, there are nine agents. As for equipment, the Division doesn't possess a lie detector, so essential for modern police work. It is thus little wonder we are moving backward in our fight against crime. The Bureau was able to respond to only one-third of 7,500 requests for help from local police officers last year. It is impossible to estimate the number of murderers, rapists and robbers who are now free and who would have been apprehended if the Bureau could have provided investigative services, if needed, in the remaining 4,352 cases. However, there is reason to believe that the number is large.

I have discussed here in some detail the various divisions of the Bureau and their operations. I think you will agree with me that, while present personnel are performing effectively, lack of adequate staff and needed equipment prevents the Bureau from fulfilling the needs of our local law enforcement agencies.

Crime in Minnesota costs \$14 million a year in property losses alone, not to mention the sufferings of innocent people who are murdered, orphaned, widowed, or physically injured by criminals. Improving the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension is one investment we cannot afford not to make. Continuing to deprive this agency of its needed resources is shortsighted and wasteful, and I urge you to appropriate funds to the full extent requested by the Bureau.