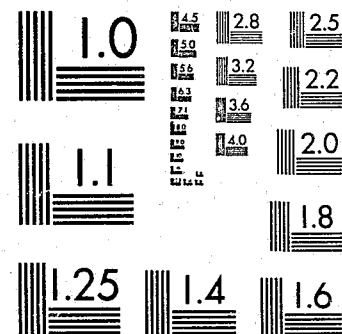


National Criminal Justice Reference Service



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ADDRESS TO THE DIRECTORS OF  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE CENTERS  
in  
AMERICA AND CANADA

by  
THE HONORABLE JAMES K. STEWAART  
DIRECTOR  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

DENVER, COLORADO  
November 15, 1983

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

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11/15/83

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today, on the eve of the 35th annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology.

I particularly welcome the opportunity to address your distinguished group. As Director of university and private criminal justice research centers, you bear a great deal of the responsibility for making the critical decisions which help to shape and direct criminal justice research in the United States.

I remember participating at the conference in Toronto last year, when I had only been Director of the National Institute of Justice for some two months. Before that, I had been a White House Fellow and Special Assistant to Attorney General William French Smith. That experience and the first-hand knowledge of the consequences of crime control policy I acquired as a police official in Oakland, have convinced me of the important practical implications and benefits of sound research.

During the past year, I have become more than ever persuaded that research can find the answers to the critical problems facing us - and we must make policy-makers aware of the real progress research is achieving.

When President Reagan appointed me as Director of the Institute, I found that since the mid 70-'s Research had suffered a drastic decline in funding. Confidence in the practical value of

research had eroded among practitioners and policy-makers.

That situation compelled the Institute to impose a moratorium on the funding of various research proposals and to concentrate instead/first on clarifying the priorities for research. I felt it was critical that we build support for the Institute's research program.

During those first months I became increasingly aware of the uneasy relations which existed between the researcher and the practitioner. Of the considerable misunderstanding and mutual suspicion with which each sometimes regarded the other. The researcher often perceived the practitioner as inflexible and uncooperative - while practitioners tended to see research as being unrealistic and of little practical use to them.

It was a situation which inhibited positive and effective research - and which exacerbated the practitioner's sense of being excluded from the research process.

It was then and still is - a priority for the National Institute of Justice to open up better lines of communication between the two groups. To encourage and contribute to an active partnership - so that, from your different perspectives, researchers and practitioners can jointly address the issues and problems which confront the criminal justice professional in the real world.



In August of last year we saw clear evidence of the practitioner's willingness to become a full partner in the research process. The publication of the Wilson Committee's report brought an outcry from practitioners that their views and concerns had not been canvassed. The Institute sought to redress the balance and published a report this June that is the result of written responses and a series of meetings conducted with criminal justice practitioners. That report, 'practitioner's perspective', reflects their views on the utility of research and what role they see themselves playing in its conduct.

During the course of this year the Institute's Presidentially appointed Advisory Board held public hearings with nationally recognized criminal justice leaders - where they have heard testimony and exchange insights and ideas on the priorities for research.

In addition, the Institute conducted a national needs survey involving more than 1400 officials from corrections, courts, probation and parole bodies, as well as prosecutors, defenders and the police, to identify their most pressing concerns and the policy implications of their observations.

All of these endeavors are illustrative of the Institute's determination to involve the practitioner in the research process and to bring the practical and the theoretical into symmetry.

It is critical that the practitioner's needs are addressed. Research must aid the criminal justice professional if it is to have any value - and the National Institute of Justice is committed to setting an agenda for research that can make a real contribution to the effectiveness of law enforcement. Research that encourages the active cooperation of the police, the community and of all branches of state and local government.

As Director of the Institute, I have initiated new research experiments and I understand the difficulties and frustrations involved in trying to develop programs that will produce accurate and policy-relevant results. Through our policy of canvassing the practitioner - and of engaging in continual consultation with researchers - the Institute has developed a clearer picture of the fundamental problems which threaten the fabric of our society. Problems which cut across the whole criminal justice system and affect us all - from the police and the courts, to corrections and parole officials, and to policy-makers and legislators. (Pause)

One of the most obvious of those problems concerns the violent offender. The threat of becoming the victim of a violent attack has spread a contagion of fear among Americans today that is gradually eroding our quality of life. Criminal Justice professionals need more effective means of identifying the

We need to help the police to develop more effective methods of responding to these one-man crime waves. An experiment is underway in Washington, D.C. where suspected career criminals are kept under special surveillance for one or two days after their release from custody, in an attempt to determine if this technique is more effective than the traditional police patrol in helping to apprehend such offenders. And the Institute is looking at the potential of selective incapacitation as a means of dealing with the career criminal on conviction.

The national survey which the Institute recently conducted, showed that among practitioners, jail and prison overcrowding is perceived as the major issue confronting our criminal justice system. And I recognize that this problem is inevitably an important factor in any discussion of selective incapacitation. We are forced to consider that if we choose to impose longer prison sentences on career criminals and violent offenders - then how are we going to deal with the consequences? Do we attempt to alleviate the added burden on our already overstretched prison system by building more prisons? - Or do we reduce the severity of the sentences we impose on less serious offenders? And if we pursue this course, could we be jeopardizing the deterrent effect which imprisonment represents? And what answer could we make to those who might raise the ethical question and charge us with taking too utilitarian a view - without regard to the retributive

principle of punishment - the principle of 'just deserts'? These are all valid and critical questions which demand our attention.

In relation to the problem of violent crime - research has shown that the fear of crime can become so strong that it exceeds the real danger. And that fear can cause people to behave in ways which in turn leads to higher crime. There is growing evidence that the fear of crime and crime itself are often accompanied by physical and social signs of deterioration - such as broken windows and derelict buildings, graffiti, vagrants, prostitution and drug use in the streets. Community crime prevention initiatives have already proven effective in reducing the fear of crime. Closer cooperation between law enforcement agencies and the community they serve - through efforts like the crime stoppers and neighborhood watch programs - are further promising indications of how an active partnership between the police and citizens can help to improve crime control.

And research has shown that community involvement is vital in another way. We have found that information about offenses and offenders which leads to arrests, prosecutions and incarceration, is often provided by victims. For this reason, the Institute has and will continue to give special attention to the problems of these individuals and their experiences within the criminal justice system. We must recognize that a more sensitive and

effective means of treating victims needs to be established if we are to encourage their involvement and support. The President's Task Force on Victims was an attempt to meet that challenge - and that effort must be sustained.

A fifth area which requires research derives from the fiscal stringencies which have hit our criminal justice system in recent years. Our law enforcement agencies are confronted by severe budget cut-backs - and this lends greater urgency to the need for these agencies both to improve the decision-making process by which resources are allocated - and to explore cost-effective strategies.

For example, one avenue to reduction in court delay may be the use of pro-bono judges in certain cases. For the police, crime analysis techniques can help them to identify the best distribution of resources to achieve the maximum public protection.

The five issues I have briefly outlined here - the career criminal, the violent predator, community involvement, victims and improved allocation of resources - involve complex questions to which there are no single or quick answers. But they are the critical areas which merit the attention of research in the future. They are critical because they vitally concern not only officials throughout the criminal justice system but the public as well.

Over the last year, the National Institute of Justice has - with the guidance and counsel of its advisory board and through consultations with researchers and practitioners - developed a program of 8 priorities which represent the major thrust of research for the coming year. Much of what I have already described to you as being my perception of the critical problems we face, is incorporated in the Institute's 8 priorities.

These priorities, affecting both present and future research, include further research into the identification and better handling of the career criminal. Seeking to consolidate on the success of recent community crime prevention efforts, the Institute will conduct studies to improve crime stoppers and neighborhood watch initiatives and to explore ways of involving corporate interests in the criminal justice system on a broader scale.

The Institute is planning a major initiative to help criminal justice administrators make better cost effective choices in resource allocation. The critical problem of court delay will continue to be a major priority. The Institute will examine the factors which influence pretrial release decisions and will look at the effectiveness of alternative dispute resolution strategies, as a way of relieving case backlogs.

Research will explore ways of improving not only the treatment of victims within the criminal justice system, but techniques for enhancing their usefulness and effectiveness at trial. Studies to assist prison officials in managing crowded institutions are underway and the Institute will examine various alternatives to conventional incarceration for certain classes of prisoner.

In addition, the Institute is supporting studies to determine which offenders receive probation, which succeed on probation and how parole decisions can be improved.

Finally, the Institute will support the Administration's effort to improve cooperation and coordination among law enforcement agencies at all levels and the increased sharing of existing federal resources with State and local jurisdictions. The National Institute of Justice will contribute to this effort by examining ways of improving or refining the Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee program.

I believe these priorities represent a new, positive approach to research in the criminal justice field. And I hope that researchers will recognize and take up the challenge that these priority areas offer. The National Institute looks to you, the researcher, to identify those operating agencies who are willing to embrace new ideas and to open up their operations to the rigors of experiment. The power of the experiment lies in the

opportunity it offers us to pursue the hard knowledge needed to pierce through accepted wisdom and examine the issues of fundamental concern.

The onus is on the researcher to enter into an active partnership with the practitioner. To collaborate in developing policy-relevant research. The Institute's 'Unsolicited Research Program' is intended to encourage initiatives in this direction from all constituencies within the criminal justice community. And we will continue to lend our vigorous support to research proposals which are clearly concerned not merely with gathering new information but with exploring ways in which research findings might be utilized to improve the criminal justice system.

Getting the most that research has to offer is our priority for the future. As scholars you have worked to push back the boundaries of ignorance in the complex and sometimes controversial field of crime and social disorder. Yours has been a major contribution - and today, with the criminal justice practitioner, you can work together to confront the challenge facing us all. We have the opportunity to enter (into) a new era of partnership and to make real advances in the effort to combat the debilitating consequences of crime and the fear it generates.

And now I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Thank you.



**END**