

Hearings before the Subcommittee on Executive Reorganization
of the Senate Government Operations Committee

Afternoon session: November 30, 1966

Witness: Judge George Edwards, U. S. Court of Appeals, 6th Circuit,
Former Police Commissioner of the City of Detroit, 1962 and 1963.

Judge Edwards outlined for the Subcommittee the problems of law enforcement in the large cities of the U. S. with examples drawn largely from his own experiences in the city of Detroit. The Judge emphasized the problems of the Negro community and the fact that the attitudes of Negroes towards law enforcement are the product of their early environment mainly in the South. Judge Edwards said that most crime is committed by Negroes and inflicted on others of their own race. He said, however, that the large majority of Negroes are in favor of law enforcement and want to see it improved.

The Judge made the following suggestions:

1. Find out more facts in regard to complaints about police brutality.
2. Transfer troublemakers on a police force and those who use brutality.
3. End investigative arrests.
4. Increase police in high crime precincts.
5. Federal government must help localities combat organized crime.
6. Professionalize policemen by upgrading their standards through better training.
7. Promote Negroes on an equal basis with whites.
8. Ban police dogs in racial demonstrations.
9. Integrate police teams.
10. Raise the pay of policemen.
11. Hire more policemen.
12. Coordinate law enforcement agencies.
13. Establish a National Police Training College.
14. Establish high level boards within police departments to investigate charges against policemen.
15. Federal grants-in-aid should be made for police training.
16. End the autonomous nature of law enforcement bodies.

Witness: Robert Coles, M.D., Research Psychiatrist, Harvard University Health Services.

Dr. Coles is a child psychiatrist who worked extensively in the South and studied the effect of racial tension on Negro children. He stated that the young Negro children who first attended white schools in the South and who had to endure many torments and antagonism showed a great strength of character. He said that it was a puzzle to him that stress produces more strength of character than an environment of luxury or middle class tranquility. However, the Doctor pointed out that after the age of twelve, underprivileged children begin to realize that obedience to the Biblical teachings of their childhood will not pay off. After this realization the

[slum youth undergoes what psychiatrists call "death of the heart." They then quite often become anti-social and turn to a life of crime or delinquency. The Doctor pointed out that some delinquents do wrong because they can find nothing right, nothing significant and challenging to do.

Main questions raised by the Subcommittee:

1. Racketeering in slum housing.

Senator Kennedy asked Judge Edwards whether organized crime plays a part in the creation and continuation of slum housing conditions. The Judge said that it probably does and Senator Kennedy told the Chairman that he thinks the Subcommittee should explore this possibility.

2. Defense by cities against rioting.

Senator Ribicoff asked the Judge what a city can do to defend itself against rioting and at what point the National Guard should be called in. The Judge said that all of his suggestions would help prevent riots, but once the riot had begun it could be counteracted only by quick organization and great mobility of substantial forces on the side of the law. He said that the force used must be overwhelming and disciplined. He believes that the National Guard should be called to a riot scene when police gunfire is needed.

3. Culture of poverty.

[Senator Kennedy asked Dr. Coles whether there is a culture of poverty in the U. S. The Doctor replied that he does not think that we really have a culture of poverty because people are no longer isolated due to the existence and extensiveness of a mass media of communications. Through TV and other media practically everyone in this country is aware of the opportunities which exist or at least that there is a better way to live although the attainment of that life is not possible.

4. Bussing of school children.

[Although Dr. Coles thinks that the Boston experiment in bussing children to the suburbs has been quite successful, Senator Ribicoff implied that in his view the money might better be spent improving slum education generally. Senator Ribicoff said that he did not think that the placing of very poor children in schools with affluent and well fed children was psychologically good for the underprivileged child.

5. Rehabilitation of slum dwellers.

[Senator Ribicoff asked whether there is any hope for the most violent members of slum communities. The Doctor replied that in his opinion anybody can change if given something to fall back on. He cited as an example the autobiography of Malcolm X who was from a most unfortunate family and who turned away from a life of crime to become a leader.

6. Means of reaching slum children.

There was a general discussion of whether the vast amount of money being spent on education today is paying off. Senator Kennedy was very interested in finding better ways to help slum children.

Senators present:

Ribicoff
Kennedy