

REMARKS BY GOVERNOR JAMES B. EDWARDS  
GOVERNOR'S ANNUAL MAGISTRATES MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 1976

(RESPONSIBILITIES OF MAGISTRATES)

LAST YEAR WHEN I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE WITH YOU FOR THE FIRST TIME AS GOVERNOR, I TALKED ABOUT HOW THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF OUR MAGISTERIAL SYSTEM HAVE GROWN. DURING THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS, THOSE RESPONSIBILITIES HAVE BECOME EVEN GREATER.

IN 1976, PEOPLE ARE INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT THEY ARE GETTING FROM GOVERNMENT IN RETURN FOR THEIR TAX DOLLARS. RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS OF GOVERNMENT IS A BIG ISSUE THIS YEAR. THIS MEANS THAT PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BE LOOKING AT THE PERFORMANCE OF GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS VERY HARD IN THE DAYS TO COME.

THIS MEANS WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO WORK TWICE AS HARD TO MAKE SURE THE TAXPAYER IS HAPPY WITH THE SERVICE HE GETS FROM BOTH ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS.

AS MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIAL BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT, YOUR JOB IS ONE OF THE TOUGHEST. YOU DEAL WITH THE BROAD CROSS SECTION OF OUR CITIZENS. YOU MUST BE HIGHLY INFORMED, WELL AWARE OF RAPID CHANGES IN THE LAWS OF THE STATE AND WISE IN YOUR JUDGEMENTS. THAT'S A BIG ORDER FOR ANYONE.

I HAVE FULL CONFIDENCE THAT YOU ARE DOING A GOOD JOB AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO.

MORE HELP IS AVAILABLE TO YOU NOW THAN IN THE PAST. MAGISTRATES' TRAINING PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN EXPANDED SO THAT YOU MAY IMPROVE YOUR ABILITIES TO PERFORM YOUR DUTIES.

I ALSO THINK THE IMAGE OF OUR STATE'S MAGISTRATES HAS IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY IN RECENT MONTHS. I BELIEVE THAT THE PUBLIC VIEWS YOU WITH PROPER RESPECT AND LOOKS TO YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO MAKING OUR COMMUNITIES BETTER PLACES TO LIVE.

DURING THE PAST YEAR, A WORKABLE GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE CITIZENS RECOURSE WITHIN THE SYSTEM. THIS WILL BE OF GREAT VALUE TO YOU FOR A LONG TIME TO COME. BY BEING AWARE OF COMPLAINTS AND PROBLEMS, YOU ARE ABLE TO CORRECT POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND BE MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.

(JUDICIAL REFORM)

AS YOU KNOW, THIS IS ONE OF THE IMPROVEMENTS WE HAVE BEEN WORKING TOWARD IN THE ENTIRE JUDICIAL SYSTEM. I HOPE THAT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY WILL TAKE POSITIVE ACTIONS ON A JUDICIAL REFORM PACKAGE THIS SESSION...THAT WILL INCLUDE A GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE AS WELL AS QUALIFICATION SCREENING OF JUDGES. THESE ARE TWO VITAL PARTS OF MAKING OUR JUDICIAL SYSTEM A MORE EFFECTIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT. I BELIEVE, AS IN THE CASE OF THE MAGISTRATES' GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE, IT WILL PROVIDE MUTUAL BENEFITS FOR BOTH THE PUBLIC AND THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM.

THE YEAR AHEAD WILL HOLD MANY OF THE SAME CHALLENGES AS THE PAST YEAR. I TRUST THAT YOU WILL ACCEPT YOUR ROLE IN THE DAYS AHEAD WITH THE SAME PROFESSIONALISM AS YOU HAVE ALREADY DEMONSTRATED.

(CRIME RATE)

UNFORTUNATELY, OUR NATION'S CRIME RATE CONTINUES TO BE A MAJOR PROBLEM FOR OUR SOCIETY. OUR CITIZENS DEMAND BOTH EQUAL AND SPEEDY JUSTICE FROM OUR JUDICIAL SYSTEM. AS THE FIRST LINE OF OUR JUDICIAL SYSTEM, YOUR DECISIONS AFFECT THE PEACE AND STABILITY OF OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

WOULD-BE OFFENDERS ARE GOING TO THINK TWICE WHEN THEY KNOW THAT SWIFT JUSTICE AWAITS THOSE WHO WOULD BREAK THE LAW.

IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO SET AN EXAMPLE THAT WILL PREVENT WRONG-DOING. A STRONG MAGISTERIAL SYSTEM IS CRUCIAL TO REDUCTION OF OUR CRIME RATE. THIS IS A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY...BUT IT IS ONE THAT MUST BE ACCEPTED WITH SERIOUS DEDICATION.

(MAGISTRATES ASSOCIATION)

I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE MAGISTRATES ASSOCIATION AND I WOULD URGE YOU TO USE YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN THAT GROUP FOR THE CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT OF YOUR JOB.

I HAVE RELIED ON THE ASSOCIATION TO LET ME KNOW WHAT YOUR PROBLEMS AND YOUR NEEDS ARE. I AM ANXIOUS TO HELP YOU IN ANY WAY THAT I CAN TO DO A BETTER JOB FOR THE PEOPLE OF OUR STATE.

(WARRANTS)

DURING THE PAST YEAR...WITH YOUR HELP WE HAVE MADE SEVERAL OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS THAT WILL BE OF ASSISTANCE TO YOU. OF COURSE WE ARE GLAD THAT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY APPROVED THE STATEWIDE USE OF STANDARD ARREST AND SEARCH WARRANTS.

THE LEGISLATURE ALSO APPROVED THE ISSUANCE OF COPIES OF THOSE WARRANTS TO THE ACCUSED. THESE TWO MEASURES WILL BE OF GREAT HELP TO YOU IN THE COMING DAYS.

(JUDGE FRANCIS PRINCE)

BEFORE CLOSING, I WANT TO ADD MY TRIBUTE TO THE MANY OTHERS THAT HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO JUDGE FRANCIS PRINCE. JUDGE PRINCE'S DEATH IS A LOSS TO THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM OF OUR STATE. HIS LONG SERVICE AS A MAGISTRATE IS A LANDMARK OF THE HIGHEST PROFESSIONALISM AND QUALITY. HE WILL BE MISSED BY BOTH FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES.