

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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The experiences of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice in successfully attacking the backlog problem were placed before the Conference of United States Attorneys by Assistant Attorney General Warren Olney who heads the division.

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Mr. Olney said that after an exhaustive study of the present methods employed he has concluded that the three essentials for a reduction of backlog are:

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1. Inventory of all matters and cases.
2. Accurate statistics differentiating between cases and matters.
3. A task force to work on backlog until it is cleared up.

file

He added that the Criminal Division is prepared to send such a task force to any United States Attorney who needs it and wants it.

"Our first approach to our division's backlogs made it pretty clear that the first thing was to find some of them," Mr. Olney said; "Some stuck out like sore thumbs and were easy; others seemed to be buried under masses of material and in statistics about which no one was sure.

"We decided to approach the problem in two ways: first, by a first class house cleaning and, second, by correcting or changing our statistical system.

"The house cleaning was started first. It was done by giving each attorney in the division notice that after the expiration of a two-week grace period he had to report in writing listing (1) all case files in his possession and how long he had had them; (2) all official correspondence and other material he had in his possession and its age; and (3) a description and justification of any files he maintained as separate and apart from official files."

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Mr. Olney said what was turned up during the grace period was "amazing".

CRIMINAL DIVISION

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More than 1,000 case files showed up which had been out of central files from 60 days to two years and had not in the meantime been brought up to date. We quit counting the official material that had never been sent to our central files when the count came to 25,000 items and we started finding file cabinets full."

Mr. Olney said that after the two weeks' general cleaning and a study of the attorneys' lists, they began to find out where the backlogs and bottlenecks were. "The whole operation proved of such value that it has been continued with slight modifications," he added.

He said the statistical job was started in August of 1953 and at that time "we found ourselves forced to use figures which were obvious nonsense. We were predicting a workload of 126,411 cases and matters. This, of course, was based entirely on the projection of figures we had inherited and there was no way of separating what was a case and what was a matter in those figures."

Mr. Olney said it was concluded "it would be a hopeless task to audit and correct the figures being used, and the only thinking that appeared likely of success was to throw out everything and start over again."

Mr. Olney explained each of his task forces to work on a specific backlog included a senior attorney and a necessary number of first class juniors to assist. He said the over-all results of the change-over plan have been "highly beneficial."