



Department of Justice

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CHARLOTTE, North Carolina -- Attorney General John N. Mitchell said today that "the state of America's prisons is a national shame" and that all law enforcement efforts will be frustrated "until we bring our corrections systems into the 20th century."

Speaking at a luncheon honoring local policemen here, Mr. Mitchell said "it does little good to train and equip our police forces if our prisons are turning out criminals faster than they can be rounded up."

"We have to bring the rise in violent crime to a halt," he said, "and we will, but to do so, we have to put our correctional reform program into high gear."

He noted that four out of five felonies committed in the United States is the work of a person with a criminal record and that two of every three men released from prison "are back in trouble with the law again in a very short time."

"We didn't need San Quentin or Attica to tell us we have a problem with corrections," Mr. Mitchell said.

He said the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration provided more than \$100 million to states and other governmental units last year to improve corrections and said that the amount may be more than doubled in the current year.

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Corrections reform is receiving the personal attention of President Nixon and Chief Justice Warren Burger, the Attorney General said, calling attention to the first National Corrections Conference early next month which will be held at the direction of President Nixon.

The three-day meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia, which begins December 6, will "measure the progress we have made toward corrections reform and the distance we have to go," Mr. Mitchell said.

The Attorney General commended the legislative efforts of Congress, pointing out that new Federal legislation "reflects the latest in corrections thinking, and requires that the money be spent on modern, community-based systems -- not on perpetuating the old-fortress-type prisons."

He also stressed the need for vocational training in the rehabilitation of prisoners. "We need to learn to use the time a man serves in prison to equip him to live a useful life in the community," Mr. Mitchell said.