

'Stalling Tactics' In Courts Rapped

LONDON (AP) — U.S. Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell charged Friday that many criminals are getting off scot free because of stalling tactics that abuse traditional rights of the accused and threatened to drown American justice "in a sea of legalisms."

Mitchell said this has encouraged would-be criminals to break the law and has led to "cynical distrust" of the courts by many Americans.

Addressing 2,000 lawyers on the third day of a week-long convention of the American Bar Association, Mitchell said America should try to adopt some methods of the English court system—"a model of swift justice."

At the same meeting, Chief Justice Warren E. Burger said American lawyers were a century behind the British in professional training and enforcement of ethical standards.

His English counterpart, Lord Chief Justice Widgery, drew applause from Mitchell and

most delegates in an unusual attack on certain U.S. Supreme Court decisions.

Lord Widgery criticized the Supreme Court for throwing out convictions which the court said were based on confessions improperly derived by police.

Mitchell, in his speech, complained that excessive legal technicalities were weakening law enforcement.

"When potential criminals are encouraged because they know there is slight chance of conviction, much less imprisonment, when the convicted felon never reaches the moment of truth and faces his own guilt, it is not just the courts that are affected by our present plague of courtroom gamesmanship, it is the whole criminal justice system.

"With all this, I do not advocate lessening the due process rights of the accused . . .

"But I am speaking of the distortion of these practices for the purpose of thwarting justice."

Mitchell said the deliberate stalling and other delays caused by red tape "can have the effect of dragging our justice to death and stealing the very life out of our criminal law."

He contended that the path to speedy trials was blocked by "the overabundance of pretrial hearings designed mainly to deprive the jury of material and relevant evidence," and by ritualistic technicalities and "endless post-trial appeals."