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## Capitol Punishment

# It's Good News

By Art Buchwald

There was good news out of Washington last week, according to Attorney General John Mitchell, President Nixon's war on crime has been successful, and the results of the administration's monumental efforts have been so great that "fear is being swept from the streets of some—though not all—American cities."

He was supported in his optimism by Jerris Leonard, of the Justice Department's law enforcement assistance administration, who said the only ones who weren't happy with the decrease in the 1970 crime statistics were the President's critics.

"I believe," Mr. Leonard told a conference of law enforcement officials, "they are principally disturbed because they have lost something—crime as a political issue has been taken away from them. They feel they have been robbed, and being robbed they are angry."

The reason for the euphoria in the Justice Department is that FBI statistics for 1970 indicated that the rate of increase of crime had gone down from 12 per cent in 1969 to 11.3 per cent in 1970.

This sounded terrific, until I read that the same statistics revealed that 566,700 more crimes had been committed in 1970 than in 1969.

Admittedly confused, I sought out my friend Professor Heinrich Applebaum, the great Justice Department statistician, whose definitive book "Do Decimal Points Have a Sex Life?" is used in every math class in the country.

"Professor Applebaum, the Justice Department reports that the rate of crime has gone down in the country under President Nixon. Yet the same report says there have been a million more crimes in the past two years. How can that be?"

"It's quite simple," said Applebaum. "Percentagewise

crime has gone down, crimewise it's gone up.

"But where does that leave the average person?"

"It depends whether you're a Republican or a Democrat. If you're a Republican you have nothing to fear walking the streets of our American cities. But if I were a Democrat, I'd stay home."

"Are you saying that the Republicans are trying to take the crime issue out of the 1972 campaign?"

"They have," Applebaum said. "The last year the Democrats were in office crime had gone up 13.3 per cent. When the Republicans took over in 1969 it only went up 12.0 and last year 11.3 per cent. The Democrats can't argue with that."

"But still more people were robbed, mugged, murdered, and raped in 1969 and 1970 than they were in the previous four years."

"We're not talking about people," Applebaum said, irritated. "We're talking about percentages. You can't think about the people who were molested in 1969 and 1970, you have to think about the ones who weren't. There are probably over 100,000 citizens who weren't mugged this year thanks to President Nixon's leadership."

"It's hard to think in those terms," I admitted.

"That's because you're not running for election next year. You must understand the reporting of crimes is a very serious business, and can cause great conflict. J. Edgar Hoover, in order to prove he is doing his job, has to show that crime is going up in the country. At the same time the administration has to prove that crime is going down."

"The Attorney General has solved the problem by reporting the percentages, which are lower, and Hoover, by reporting the crimes which are higher. That's the beauty of statistics. It makes everyone feel better."

"Well, thank you, professor for the explanation."

"That's perfectly all right. Here let me unlock the door for you. This is really a creepy neighborhood."

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