

Ford Urges Crackdown on Criminals

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NEW HAVEN, Conn., April 25—President Ford said today that virtually all persons convicted of a violent crime, particularly where a gun is involved, should receive mandatory prison sentences.

In a tough speech on crime at the Yale Law School, Mr. Ford also urged prison reform, less use of plea bargaining in the courts and a crackdown on criminal repeaters.

Without referring to Watergate by name, the President nevertheless discussed it more extensively than at any other time since he has been

in office, declaring that when there is crime in high places it makes law enforcement more difficult.

"We have recently suffered the national disgrace of law-breaking in high places," the President said. He said that in his administration "I have made it a matter of the highest priority to restore to the executive branch decency, honesty and adherence to the law at all levels."

"This has been done," he emphasized. "It will continue to be."

The President urged state and local authorities to make the same effort because, he said, there have been too many scandals at all levels of

government as well as in industry and labor.

"There is no way to inculcate in society the spirit of law if society's leaders are not scrupulously law-abiding," the President said.

In a reference to the way the courts, Congress and the Watergate special prosecutor brought down the Nixon administration, he said the nation has seen how "lawbreaking by officials can be stopped by the proper functioning of our basic institutions—executive, legislative and judicial branches."

Mr. Ford also tried to divorce himself from the Nixon administration in another way, by saying that he would not

use the term "law and order," which former President Nixon often used.

Rather, Mr. Ford said, "I return to the constitutional phrase—insuring domestic tranquility."

The nation has been "far from successful" in providing adequate "domestic tranquility" and has allowed street crime to flourish, he said.

The President said he did not seek "vindictive punishment of the criminal but rather protection of the innocent victim."

Declaring that the victims of crime "are my primary concern," Mr. Ford said it is es-

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essential to place dangerous criminals behind bars, not to give them suspended sentences.

The president argued that there are too many short prison sentences or no sentences at all and too much reliance in the courts on plea bargaining, noting that half the person's convicted of felonies in recent years in New York were not imprisoned.

"I am urging that virtually all of those convicted of a violent crime should be sent to prison," he said. "There certainly should be imprisonment if the convicted person has a prior record of conviction."

Urging prison reform and the humane treatment of convicts, Mr. Ford said it should be possible to encourage better use of prison facilities "to minimize detention of persons convicted of minor crimes, thus making more room for

the convicted felons to be imprisoned."

Declaring that he was not urging "cruelly long terms," he said nevertheless that he believed that "all, or practically all, of those actually convicted" of serious crime should be imprisoned as the best way to protect the innocent and to eliminate the repeaters.

The "relatively few persistent criminals" cause much of the misery and fear in the

country and are at the heart of the crime problem, Mr. Ford said.

"Most of the victims of violent crimes are the poor, the old, the young, the disadvantaged minorities, the people who live in the most crowded parts of our cities, the most defenseless."

These victims of crime have "a valid claim on the rest of society for protection—in a phrase, for domestic tranquility."