

# Militants Causing Prison Disturbances, Mitchell Says

WASHINGTON (AP) — **Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell** says recent prison disturbances appear to be the work of a militant hard core among inmates.

But, making clear he was not referring to any specific incident, the attorney general said he can imagine some prison conditions that might "drive the human being to such extremes that he is likely to do anything."

Mitchell said in an interview that increases in crime of recent years are bringing home the need for improvements in the nation's corrections system.

The attorney general, who recently joined President Nixon and Chief Justice Warren E. Burger in calling for prison reforms, will be keynote speaker at the first annual Conference on Corrections at Williamsburg, Va., Monday. The conference is sponsored by the Justice Department.

Questions and answers:

Q. What should be the purpose of a prison system?

A. It has to be rehabilitation. It's absolutely necessary because recidivism is one of the great causes of crime. Unless we are able to rehabilitate the people that go into these institutions, we're a long way off from solving our problems in crime.

Unless we do have institutions that, first of all, continue the relationship of the inmate with his family and community, he's going to drift further and further away from society.

Secondly, of course, we have to provide for the treatment of narcotic addicts; we have to provide psychiatric treatment; we have to provide health services and, of course, we have to provide meaningful education and employment while they're there.

Q. You mention maintaining relationships with families. Do you favor the concept of conjugal visits?

A. I would think that this would depend entirely on the nature of the institution and the parties involved. This, of course, is more an area for the expertise of the psychiatrists, doctors and prison managers than it is for the attorney general. But, if it contributes to the maintenance of ties with the family and the community and to the rehabilitation—whatever does that, of course, should be permitted and allowed.

Q. Do you think the length of time that a man is sentenced to prison has an effect on his chances of rehabilitation? Doesn't a man with a two-year sentence have a better outlook than one facing a 10 to 15-year sentence?

A. Oh, I don't think there's any doubt about that. Of course, this is the basis on which your parole systems come into operation, and parole is a very important part of rehabilitation. If somebody does demonstrate that he is ready to go back into the community, then he should be placed back in the community.

Q. Do you believe that use of parole should be expanded?

A. Here again, you have to go back to the individual cases, to make a determination whether the individual is rehabilitated to the point where he can go back into society. There's no point in turning a person out under a parole procedure if you know he's going to get a gun and hold up the first bank.

Q. Do you think young offenders should be exposed to prison life?

A. It's my basic approach to the juvenile offender that he doesn't belong in the criminal justice system at all.

We have an inter-departmental study going on to try and get at some of the answers to the juvenile offender problem, which there are not very many around, if any. And one of the instructions that I have given in connection with that is to find ways to keep the juvenile out of the criminal justice system. Approaches like that have to be found in order to keep these kids out of the penitentiary where what they didn't know before they're certainly going to learn there.

Q. The recidivism rate among younger offenders is pretty depressing, isn't it?

A. Yes it is. They become alienated from society, they become teed off against society, and, being impressionable, they do not always look at the consequences of going out to get even with society and that's what many of them do. But these are areas that should have been considered a hundred years ago or fifty years ago—but nobody's paid much attention to them.

Q. Why have prisons been so neglected over the past century?

A. Well, basically, it takes a lot of money, and it's all public money. And, of course, when you allocate the budget of the federal government or the state government or the county or city government, you go to your highest priorities. They've been the schools and transportation and highways and hospitals and so forth, and the prisons were always at the end of the road.

Now, you've had to have these crime waves where people had to be educated to the point that recidivism was a major factor in the crime wave

in order to get the public attention to do something about it.

Q. Do you believe the public now realizes that it must spend money on corrections if it wants to improve the crime situation?

A. It's a lot more informed in the past few years than it has been in the past. Whether it's adequate to support all the programs that are needed is the big question.

Q. Do you fear that the riots

at Attica, San Quentin and elsewhere may result in a backlash—that people will decide that we should be tougher on prisoners rather than improving our corrections system?

A. I don't believe so, because you have the consensus of the right-thinking people, the forward-looking people in speaking out to get improvements in prisons. Let me give you two illustrations.

There's a President, for ex-

ample, who has been tough on law and order and crime; he's been speaking out on it long before San Quentin and Attica.

And myself, for prison reform being a problem of society that has to be taken care of.

I think that you may have some rednecks that are shortsighted, that would like to take them all out and shoot them or drop them off in the ocean, but the great majority of the people realize that you have a problem

when you incarcerate men for long periods of time in the type of institution that exists—the big stone and steel bastille.

This is not to say that everybody's going to condone the militants that are the troublemakers within the institutions. They're going to have to be dealt with. But that doesn't affect the great majority of the people who are in institutions and can be led into these uprisings or riots if the circum-

stances are wrong under which they're incarcerated.

Q. You think, then, that the uprisings are the result of just a few troublemakers? Aren't about all prisoners unhappy with their conditions?

A. No, it's certainly not all of the prisoners because you're talking, first, about a limited number of institutions of literally hundreds that you have in the country. And I don't think you can categorize the situation

in any number of institutions and put them all together. I think it varies.

I think it's quite analagous to the college campuses, where you had a hard core on a campus because of the conditions there, whatever they were, that would be able to attract to that hard core in their activities some of the other people of milder disposition. I think that is what has happened in some of these institutions.

The upshot of it is that it is a small hard core and if you change the conditions under which the greater majority of them function, you won't have these problems on the massive scales that you have had in a couple of these institutions.

A Senate Commerce Committee reports that cars produce 85 per cent of smog in cities and 90 per cent of all carbon monoxide pollution.