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The Kent State Indictments

In moving to dismiss the remaining indictments that grew out of the Kent State tragedy of May, 1970, the Attorney General of Ohio has taken a first step toward redeeming the state's system of justice. Setting aside the question whether individual National Guardsmen should have been indicted for the killing of the four students who lost their lives, the plain fact is that there was never any ground whatever for most of the charges which a grand jury was induced to bring against participants and onlookers at the time of the disorder on the college campus.

One student was convicted of interfering with a fireman, a misdemeanor, but the petit jury trying him could not reach verdicts on three felony charges. A 20-year-old girl was acquitted of the charge of interfering with a fireman. Charges against another student were dropped for lack of

evidence. Two other defendants pleaded guilty to first-degree riot. And now the attorney general, acknowledging "we just didn't have enough to go on," has asked that charges be dropped against the remaining 20 defendants. They never should have been charged in the first place; and the charges should have been dismissed by the state more than a year ago as their insubstantiality became evident.

Glen Olds, the president of Kent State, remarked on learning that the indictments had been dismissed: "The trials which have hung like a cloud over the community are over. Now, hopefully, we can look to a more positive future." There are lessons to be learned from the experience at Kent State. One of them, to be sure, is that rioting is not the road to reform. Another, no less important, is that prejudice and passion are inconsonant with the administration of justice.