

Powell Faults U.S. For Self-Criticism

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SAN FRANCISCO, Aug. 13—Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr. said today that "persistent and often destructive selfcriticism" may be a cause of the alienation felt by many Americans.

Speaking at a prayer breakfast at the American Bar Association convention, Powell said the time has come to stress the positive in American society and values.

"Excessive preoccupation with our own faults can weaken—or even destroy—the ties that bind a people together," Powell said.

The associate justice, a former ABA president who has completed his first term on the Supreme Court, delivered the lay sermon before 1,300 lawyers, judges and their families at the San Francisco Hilton.

His sermon, deploring disrespect for authority, struck a note similar to that expressed in the opinions of all four court appointees of President Nixon—that individual rights have been overemphasized at the expense of citizen responsibility.

Powell said he was not urging subservience to govern-

ment authority or the suppression of dissent. But he said he wished for "better balance and a higher level of responsibility in the criticism" of American institutions such as family, religion and community.

"It has become increasingly fashionable," Powell said, "to question and attack the most basic elements of our society. It is said that religion is irrelevant, our democracy is a shame, the free enterprise system has failed, and that somehow America has become a wholly selfish, materialistic, racist society with unworthy goals and warped priorities."

Lawyers and judges have been criticized on grounds that American justice is "repressive," he said, adding, "if these criticisms are accepted, there is little wonder that our institutions are no longer respected."

Justice Powell's sermon said the work ethic was "in many ways the cornerstone of a viable society" but it was being scorned by many—"by some who simply think society owes them a living and by others who equate dedication to work with a materialism which they wish to repudiate."