

Saxbe Sees Prospect of U.S. Police

By Joel Weisman

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CHICAGO, Aug. 27—Attorney General William B. Saxbe warned big city police chiefs today that if they do not regain the initiative in the war against crime there may be mounting pressure to create a national police force.

Admitting that "we have lost the initiative in the war against crime," Saxbe declared:

"The options are very limited as we face the future. If we go on as we are, there is every possibility that crime will inundate us. The nation then would be faced with the prospect of falling apart or devising a national police force in one final effort to restore domestic order."

Such a force, he warned, would be the first step in "total control over our lives."

While shunning the idea of a national force, Saxbe proposed that local police departments concentrate their efforts on preventing violent crime and apprehending and prosecuting what he called "career criminals."

He announced a new \$3 million Law Enforcement Assistance Administration grant program to 10—yet to be named—pilot cities to develop "a career criminal impact program." Such a program would focus on ferreting out criminal repeaters, both in police files and on the street; carefully collecting evidence against them; then swiftly prosecuting them with close teamwork between police and prosecutors.

A similar program has been in operation since 1971 in Washington, D.C., Police Chief Jerry Wilson said, and has led to reduced recidivism and a greater conviction rate for hard-core criminals. However, he declined to release any statistics.

While strongly advocating new programs aimed at chronic offenders, Saxbe warned that no single program is a panacea.

"I have at one time or another supported nearly all of the panaceas offered for crime reduction: more policemen, more prosecutors, more judges, more rehabilitation of offenders, and if all else fails, paying them to be good," said Saxbe, who ran a strong law-and-order campaign when he won a Senate seat from Ohio in 1968.

"Yet after years of struggle
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and billions of dollars, it should be clear to everyone there is no touchstone that can be evoked in crime control," he said.

"There are no rabbits to be pulled out of the hat. We have to admit now there never were."

Concluding that the nation has now "lost the initiative and gone on the defensive" against crime, Saxbe noted that after a brief drop in 1972, crime statistics went up 16 per cent in the final quarter of 1973 and 15 per cent in the first quarter of 1974, according to the FBI. He added, "It will soon be my sad duty to revise the total crime increase of 1973 from 5 to 6 per cent."

Saxbe warned that the increases could result in unreasonable demands for "more police, tougher police, more judges, more prosecutors, and more prisons." He said if such a "massive buildup should occur, we will see basic freedoms begin to dissipate," leading to demands for a national police force.

"History teaches us that freedoms willingly surrendered for any reason are never returned."

Saxbe reviewed sociological causes of crime, ranging from poverty and discrimination to inflation and poor examples by public officials, but he argued, "Criminals alone are responsible for crime."

Many offenders commit crimes merely "because they want [to]," Saxbe said. "A

great many feel the chances of apprehension are low — and the risk of going to prison, even if caught, are lower. Some commit crime for gain, others for personal satisfaction, thrill, adventure — or general hell raising."

For these reasons, Saxbe said it is "beating around the bush to think removing conditions we have come to accept as root causes of crime will end it."

Through better training and perhaps some additional manpower, Saxbe predicted, many serious crimes — rape, robbery and murder — can be reduced, and he recommended that enforcement officials concentrate on these crimes. He added that the criminal justice system also must be improved.

Saxbe also reiterated that he has ordered a full evaluation of the results of \$3.2 billion spent on law enforcement programs over the past six years by LEAA, an arm of the Justice Department.

He conceded that "there have been too many grandiose promises and too much patchwork performance in Washington," as his audience of police chiefs from 29 major cities nodded in agreement. "Piecemeal solutions aid only the criminal," he asserted.

The police chiefs met today as members of the Major Cities Police Chiefs Committee of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Besides Washington, other cities represented at the meeting were Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Columbus, Dallas, Denver, Cleveland, Detroit, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Memphis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, San Antonio, San Francisco, San Jose, Seattle, and Jacksonville.