

Saxbe Hits Failure to Cut Crime

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By Ronald J. Ostrow

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Outgoing Attorney General William B. Saxbe yesterday assailed the nation's efforts in crime reduction as "a dismal failure."

Citing "the incredible increase in crime statistics in recent years," Saxbe said: "They keep going up despite billions in federal aid."

Saxbe's criticism came in his last official speech as Attorney General, which he made to the Dade County (Fla.) Bar Association in Miami. Copies of the speech were made available here. He is scheduled to assume the post of ambassador to India next month.

Saxbe urged "a prompt, relentless and in-depth study" of the wisdom of Law Enforcement Assistance Administration spending. LEAA is the Justice Department arm that has invested \$3.2 billion since it was created in 1968 to reduce crime by upgrading state and local police, courts and prisons. The study should develop administrative changes and recommendations for changes in the LEAA law as well, Saxbe said.

"I take scant comfort from the estimate that crime might have been even worse without LEAA—since it already is awful beyond description," Saxbe said.

Noting that serious crime spurted 16 per cent in the first nine months of 1974, Saxbe said control of crime, which he rated as the nation's "worst social problem," must be the Justice Department's first priority.

As a means of coping with rising crime, Saxbe urged judges to begin imposing "appropriate sentences" and end "the destructive practice of freeing dangerous offenders who are awaiting trial."

He said prosecution is "inadequate in too much of the country, and dangerous felons are often allowed to plea-bargain their way to freedom."

The Attorney General coupled his denunciation of the anti-crime drive with a call for the White House and Congress to develop safeguards governing "the entire intelligence community of the federal government."

He said the most effective control would be a joint congressional and executive-branch oversight program. In addition to House and Senate members, the President would name ex-officio members from the executive branch or from outside the government.

Apparently referring to reports of rivalry and lack of cooperation between such intelligence units as the FBI and the Central Intelligence Agency, Saxbe said the organizations should not compete or duplicate one another's work.

While asserting that the Justice Department's intelligence functions "are now properly limited and controlled," Saxbe proposed establishment of "a permanent watchdog committee in Congress to provide the eternal vigilance necessary to truly guard against abuse."

He said the department also should be required to inform Congress as often as twice a year of "any directives, suggestions or inquiries" it receives from the White House or Congress relating to pending or possible cases or investigations.

He said Congress also should forbid all of the department's presidential appointees from taking part in any political activities.

Saxbe rejected proposals for making the department an agency independent of the White House and for creating a permanent special prosecutor. But he did endorse suggestions that a person enmeshed in politics should not be named Attorney General.

"It probably would be better not to appoint anyone as attorney general who had been ankle-deep in campaigning," Saxbe said.