

Mitchell Planning a National Corrections Academy

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WILLIAMSBURG, Va., Dec. 6—Attorney General John N. Mitchell announced today a series of steps that, he said, will help the country prisons go beyond merely detaining prisoners toward actually rehabilitating them.

The steps range from the creation of a national corrections academy for training prison personnel to the hiring of more minority members as guards. They are especially necessary now because improved law enforcement is going to bring "a new wave of offenders" into the country's prisons, Mr. Mitchell said.

The Attorney General spoke to 350 delegates at a national conference on corrections that was assembled here at his request. He painted a grim picture of the present state of most American prisons, using a brief recorded message by President Nixon to summarize his views.

"Our prisons are still colleges of crime," said the message, which was played in the midst of Mr. Mitchell's speech.

Reply to Criticism

One part of Mr. Mitchell's talk caused some dispute. This was his glowing report of the Nixon Administration's program in prison reform. One of the convention speakers complained to the delegates later about "tokenism," saying that the Federal contributions, however important, should not be "exaggerated."

As a result of the comments

of the critic—Norval Morris, director of the Center for Studies in Criminal Justice at the University of Illinois—a Justice Department official held a "background briefing" at midday to document the Administration record.

As Mr. Mitchell described it to the 350 penal experts, President Nixon set in motion in 1969 "the most determined and comprehensive approach to corrections ever made in this country."

He said that Mr. Nixon had directed his staff to pursue reform in 13 specific ways and had appointed a task force on prisoner rehabilitation that came up with a set of recommendations. These two steps by the President, Mr. Mitchell said, were the "Magna Carta of prison reform."

There followed, Mr. Mitchell said, an increase in Congressional funding for corrections through the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, a part of the Justice Department set up under the Safe Streets Act, and a 10-year master plan

for improving the Federal prison system.

Now, he said, as a result of the "concerned and enlightened leadership" of Mr. Nixon, the Congressional funding, and the current public interest in prisons—the nation has "the best opportunity in this century for genuine reform."

Mr. Mitchell said that the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration had just funded a national clearing house for criminal justice architecture at the University of Illinois. He said he was directing the agency available funds to set up a national clearing house for correctional education.

He said he was directing the Federal Bureau of Prisons and law enforcement agency to work with the states and localities to establish a national corrections academy, to "serve as a national center for correction learning, research, executive seminars and development of correctional policy recommendations."

The Attorney General also called upon the states and lo-

calities to increase hiring of minority group members for corrections jobs, noting that the Federal prisons had already been instructed to "work toward" one-third minority employment.

Finally, he said he was directing Justice Department officials to study whether it was possible to expand the now limited and largely experimental programs in which a defendant is placed in a community program rather than being prosecuted.

Mr. Morris, the Nixon critic, who spoke later in the morning, said that the Federal effort through the law enforcement agency, was of "great importance." But, he said, the agency's funds were only a "small part" of the total state and local expenditures on corrections—amounting, he said, to less than 3 per cent in each of the states involved.

Mr. Mitchell was asked during the day about the figure

to Train Prison Employes

of 3 per cent. He said it was wrong and that the Administration's efforts were having a "very definite impact."

After Mr. Morris's speech, Richard W. Velde, associate director of the law enforcement agency appeared in the press room to refute Mr. Morris'

figure with figures of his own. For the fiscal year ending last summer, he said, total state and local corrections expenditures were about \$1.7-billion; and all of the agency's expenditures on corrections were "10 or 11 per cent," or \$177.6-million.