

*Parole Act*

and, unfortunately, a significant proportion of that population is made up of Indians.

The Drumheller Institution lies within the constituency I represent. We have heard examples of what takes place in institutions from other hon. members of this House. Let me say that I am pleased to be able to report that the Drumheller Institution has not given the Solicitor General or law enforcement officers in this country very much trouble. Surely, this institution could be cited as an example of a well-run and effective penal reform institution in Canada. A significant number of Indians are imprisoned in this institution. I feel that these Indian people should have representation on our National Parole Board, and I would like to hear the views of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) in this regard. I think the efforts of our Parole Board could be improved by such representation. This would certainly be true of the population of the Drumheller Institution, and I am sure the same would apply to the Prince Albert penitentiary and other penitentiaries in this country.

Having regard to the appointment of convicts or ex-convicts on the Parole Board, I do not adopt the same point of view expressed by other hon. members because this is a little too close to the Alice in Wonderland approach. That approach is quite common in respect of some problems dealt with by members in this House, but I think it is unacceptable. Apart from the principle of tokenism, I do not think convicts or ex-convicts have demonstrated an ability to serve as effective members of the Parole Board. I do not intend to belabour that suggestion, but I must say I have no sympathy toward this amendment of the hon. member for Skeena.

● (1730)

I think it is useful at this stage to ask a question or two about what is happening in our society to produce such a rapid increase in the prison population. We find it going up and up. We also find that the cost of maintaining prisoners in these institutions is rising at an ever-increasing rate. We find, as well, that there are people who feel that the treatment meted out at these institutions is so desirable that on occasion they have made special efforts to be caught after committing an offence, in order that they may be sentenced to a term of imprisonment; particularly during the winter months in certain parts of our country.

**Mr. Horner (Crowfoot):** Would the hon. member permit a question?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Does the hon. member agree?

**Mr. Schumacher:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Horner (Crowfoot):** In view of the fact that the hon. member represents the riding in which Drumheller penitentiary is located, I wonder if he could give the House some idea of the percentage of Indians and Metis who now occupy the cells in that penitentiary?

**Mr. Schumacher:** I believe it is about 25 per cent, which is a significant number when you consider that there are between 450 and 500 inmates in that penitentiary.

[Mr. Schumacher.]

**Mr. Horner (Crowfoot):** Would the hon. member permit another question?

**Mr. Danson:** Did you rehearse this, Jack?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Does the hon. member agree?

**Mr. Schumacher:** Yes.

**Mr. Horner (Crowfoot):** In view of the fact that 25 per cent of the inmates in the Drumheller penitentiary are Indians or Metis, and that most of the inmates in that penitentiary come from what may be called the southern half of Alberta—and also from other parts of Alberta—could the hon. member give the House an idea as to the percentage of the population of Alberta that is Indian or Metis?

**Mr. Schumacher:** I am afraid I cannot give the hon. member that information. Perhaps he will be able to dredge it up before he participates in the debate. In fact, I do not know whether the answer to his question can be given accurately, because the Drumheller institution, as I noted before, is an unusual one. It does not create many problems for the penitentiary service or for the Solicitor General. Also, it is unusual in the fact that it does not draw its population from one particular part of the country. Although located in Alberta, it is populated by inmates who come from the four western provinces primarily, and it is mainly reserved for young offenders who have committed their first offence. So I do not know whether that percentage could be applied with relevance to the population of Alberta.

In any event, we now have a problem with the prison population. I think that every hon. member who has any connection with penal institutions knows that far too many people are coming in and there is far too high a rate of recidivism. The situation reached a critical stage at Drumheller in the past summer and a number of mobile houses, or modular type buildings, have had to be erected outside the fence of the Drumheller institution. There are now 50 or more inmates who reside outside the institution's fence. The fact is that the prisoners at that institution are better behaved than others and they do not present much of a security problem. I do not know whether it says anything for the quality of everyday life at that institution when you realize that the inmates do not have to be behind the fence, let alone behind bars, in order to stay there.

I think the House would be better employed trying to attack some of the root problems instead of trying to streamline the parole procedures to see whether we cannot get more people out quicker, particularly in view of the rising population in such institutions. It is interesting to note that the Solicitor General is at present attending a federal-provincial conference on the subject. I believe there will be a continuation of that conference, or another federal-provincial conference held here in Ottawa next week, and it will be interesting to see if any solutions are brought forth at those meetings.

Reference was made in the debate this afternoon to a possible connection between the sentencing judge and the Parole Board. I think there has not been enough communi-