

*Parole and Penitentiary Acts*

notwithstanding the fact that there were many motions moved by members of the Opposition and lengthy speeches made to those motions in an effort to slow down progress of the Bill. However, it went through committee expeditiously, bearing all that in mind.

I also participated in report stage debate when members of the New Democratic Party put forward some 33 separate amendments. They spoke to it in a very reasonable fashion and treated the amendments, as well as report stage and third reading debate, in a most responsible fashion. As we progressed from there, the Bill finally received third reading, went to the Senate, and here we are today.

We could spend a lot of time discussing and debating whose fault it was and whether someone is right and someone else is wrong. It seems clear from the remarks of all Members who have participated in the debate so far that it is quite clear everyone recognizes that the central issue in the debate is the protection of the public. All of us are interested in ensuring that the public is protected and in ensuring the passage of the Bill so that we can protect the public in every way possible.

As all of us are aware, the National Parole Board is required to release inmates who have been sentenced to prison after serving two-thirds of their sentence whether or not the board feels they are violent persons, whether or not it feels those persons will cause other problems for society or commit other crimes of a violent nature. Irrespective, the board is compelled under current legislation to release prisoners or inmates automatically after serving only two-thirds of their sentences. As the Solicitor General (Mr. Kelleher) pointed out in his remarks earlier, if a prisoner is sentenced to a six year term by a judge, automatically the prisoner is released after four years. There is no way to keep that person in prison for the remaining two years, even if he or she is a violent offender. Also the Solicitor General pointed out that at the present time we are looking at an estimated 40 prisoners who are considered to be potentially violent offenders and will be released within the next six months unless legislation is passed to give the National Parole Board the authority and power to retain them in prison, not automatically to release them.

Regardless of who did what, whether it was the Government of the day, the last Government, the Official Opposition, or the NDP Opposition, surely we all agree that it is most important, if at all possible, to avoid having one more violent offender released to commit one more violent crime. As has been said many times in the debate, there is no guarantee that somebody will not be released who will commit a violent crime. However, if by the passage of this piece of legislation we can avoid one single solitary violent crime, surely we have accomplished something today and surely we have accomplished the purpose of recalling Parliament. It seems to me that that is what the debate is all about. If we clear away all the business about who is right, who is wrong, and whether or not it is important to be here today, surely it is important to avoid just one single solitary violent crime.

Many people have asked in this debate, in the press and in other media, what is the purpose of what we are doing today, because all violent offenders are in prison for a certain length of time and will be released at some time in the future? They have said that at some stage they will be out in society and will potentially cause problems, and that there is nothing we can do about it. If we follow that theory or philosophy, surely what they are saying is that there is no point in incarcerating anyone or sending anyone to prison in the first place because eventually they will get out and cause some other problems. I do not think anyone would quarrel that that is a potential difficulty or problem; there is no doubt about it. However, the reason the Parliament of Canada and the courts in their wisdom incarcerate people is that we feel the public must be protected.

That is one way of ensuring that the public is protected, at least for a limited period of time, from people who are potentially violent and commit criminal acts. We need to protect the public from such people, and that is the whole purpose of incarceration. No one guarantees forever and a day that they will not get out and cause other problems. However, if there is pretty good evidence that there will be problems, and a judge has said that a person has been sentenced to a fixed term, then it must be incumbent upon the rest of us to ensure that the person serves the full term. That should be the case if we have really good evidence and reason to believe that the person will commit some violent offence if let out early. That is what this debate is all about.

Other people have said that it is a mistake to let out people at the end of their sentences without having some sort of supervision tagged on at the end, without having some sort of control, without having some sort of conditions, without having other regulations to govern individual offenders when they are released. That may make a good deal of sense on the surface, but we must make sure that the system in place now is working.

The present system is called mandatory supervision. Supposedly, if we listen carefully to the term "mandatory supervision", on the surface it sounds as if someone will be following the released person all the time, that if the person commits an offence, such as crossing the street against a red light, a parole officer will be there to grab the person and say: "You are in breach of your mandatory supervision and we are going to take you back". We all know that that is not the case. We all know that mandatory supervision does not work like that. In fact, it does not really work at all. I could give a good many examples of that, but I choose to refer once again to a recent case dealing with this whole issue. I am referring to a classic case which took place in Metropolitan Toronto in March of this year, the case of one Leander Chesterfield Savoury. He was 21 years old but in October, 1984 he was released on mandatory supervision after serving two years of a four-year sentence for four convictions of armed robbery. The National Parole Board did not want to let Mr. Savoury out, but it had to do so because the legislation said that after serving two-thirds of a sentence there is no alternative, and so