

Parole Act

referred to the Committee of the Whole House so it can be completed and we can appoint the ten additional ad hoc members to the board and begin developing the structure that we hope to develop.

The Canadian Criminology and Corrections Association, in a brief on the parole system, set out the value of parole. I shall read some paragraphs from the brief as follows:

Parole offers many advantages to both society and the offender:

- 1) The offender is released from prison when he is psychologically and socially ready; this increases the chances of his successful adaptation to the free community. If this period is allowed to pass without his release he may deteriorate and his chances of success diminish.
- 2) The knowledge that parole may be available gives the inmate a sense of hope, and encourages him to make the adjustments in his attitudes and patterns of behaviour that are necessary if he is to be successful after release. Such a positive stance on his part will help him and also contribute to a better prison program.
- 3) The fact that society has expressed confidence in him and the fact that he has agreed to the conditions of his parole give him maximum encouragement in his efforts to re-establish himself in the free community.
- 4) The offender is enabled to reassume his family and community responsibilities with a minimum of separation. The longer the period of separation, the more difficult the roles of parent and citizen become.
- 5) The assistance given by the parole supervisor aids the offender's chances of successful adjustment in the free community.
- 6) Parole offers considerable financial saving over incarceration.

The brief continues:

There are, of course, risks in releasing offenders on parole. However, there are risks in any program for offenders. The short-term risks of parole are calculated risks over which there is some measure of control. The risks involved in keeping the offender in prison too long, thus robbing him of hope, self-confidence and initiative before turning him free without assistance in making the adjustment, are greater in most cases.

The association is saying, I think, that we must exercise more control over the matter of parole. As well, we must help the parolee to adjust to living in the community, help him with employment and help him to change his attitude not only toward himself but toward other people. I heard the hon. member for Scarborough East (Mr. Stackhouse) speak this afternoon on this bill on behalf of the Conservative Party. I thought he took a negative approach and I came to the conclusion that in many ways he would like to see people incarcerated and the key thrown away. That may have been the sixteenth century approach but it does not fulfil the needs of the twentieth century.

An hon. Member: He is a clergyman, too.

Mr. Gilbert: I certainly hope that the attitude of the Conservative Party changes in this regard. In presenting his argument, the hon. member for Scarborough East referred to a long list of unsuccessful cases and thereby tried to create an emotion of fear rather than one of confidence in people. It is also necessary, I submit, to set out a list of successful cases in the field of parole. After all, we are dealing with human beings and human beings must be treated humanly if we expect them to take their rightful place in society.

[Mr. Gilbert.]

● (2010)

I wish to point out to the minister the necessity of dealing in a proper manner with young offenders. The young offenders bill was presented to this House but it was defeated in committee. Many members, both on this side and on the government side, were happy to see it defeated because it did not embrace the necessary philosophy with regard to the treatment of young offenders.

Mr. Allmand: There will be a new bill soon.

Mr. Gilbert: Since that bill was defeated there has been very little action by the government in drafting a bill which would meet the requirements of the situation.

Mr. Allmand: The new bill is almost ready.

Mr. Gilbert: I am happy to hear the minister say that the new bill is almost ready. Whether we have a new bill or not, I think the minister will agree that we need the necessary psychiatric, psychological and related services for the treatment of young offenders. This is the requirement of a successful piece of legislation concerning young offenders. We must change the attitudes and ways of persons when they are young if we are to avoid problems when they are older.

The record of convictions and incarcerations up until 1970 showed a decreasing trend in the number of persons committed to institutions. Since 1970 there has been an increase in the number of inmates, without the necessary institutions and facilities to handle the increase. The Ouimet report pointed out that Canada makes excessive use of the present system for the treatment of offenders. We now have one of the highest prison populations we have ever experienced. Therefore, it is necessary that we use the instrument of parole with regard to the treatment of these offenders.

The hon. member for New Westminster capably pointed out this afternoon that it is a myth to think we are going to reform and rehabilitate men in prison. The high rate of recidivism points in the opposite direction. This is sad and disappointing. That does not mean our institutions should be places of mere incarceration. We should continue to attempt to provide training and educational facilities in these institutions, but we should place greater emphasis on parole.

European countries have used with great success the parole approach to the treatment of offenders. We have only begun to do this in Canada. We have had the usual setbacks of a new system. I hope we will have a twofold approach, not only to improve the situation with regard to rehabilitation and reformation within the institutions but to improve and strengthen the parole system. There are many comments and criticisms with regard to parole because we have to make humane decisions when dealing with human beings. We shall make mistakes; however, I hope this will never stop the trend toward reformation and rehabilitation. To go back to mere incarceration, putting people in prison and throwing away the key, certainly is not the right approach.

We agree that the ad hoc members should be appointed on a regional basis. Setting up regional boards is a good idea. For the past few years, applications have been dealt