

*Parole Act*

too discriminatory in respect of the appointment of these members to the board.

● (1610)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The minister wishes to rise on a point of order.

**Mr. Lalonde:** A few questions have been asked of me by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen). If hon. members were to agree, I could give him the answers now.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** If the minister, who has already taken part in the debate, is to be given the opportunity to reply unanimous consent would be required. I could put the question now, or perhaps I could put it after other hon. members have spoken. Is it agreed that the minister have the right to reply now?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** I will only take a few seconds, Mr. Speaker, and I thank hon. members for allowing me to put on the record answers to some of the questions raised by the hon. member for Yukon.

First of all, he asked whether the changes that are proposed in this bill will allow the reinstatement of face to face interviews. The answer is, yes. This would mean a significant improvement in the services provided by the board to the inmates. We certainly hope also that there will be a significant improvement in the assessment of the various cases that come before the board.

Second, the hon. member asked whether there would be decentralization by regional panels pursuant to this amendment. There again the answer is, yes. Our intention is to set up a series of two man teams who would sit in the various regions and who would be responsible for the inmate population in the territory to which they have been assigned. This again would allow for a much greater contact with the inmate population and would give opportunity for gaining greater personal knowledge of the cases by the members of the board who would be present in the various regions in the country.

The third question deals with increasing the number of parole officers. I am advised that there has been an increase this year but the problem, it is felt, really lies with the Parole Board itself, in the sense that the members of the board were overworked and, because of their limited number, they could not cope with the type of service they would have wished to provide to the inmate population. Also, there has been an increase in the number of probation officers, and although one can expect a normal increase, it is not planned that there should be a substantial addition to the number of probation officers in proportion to the number of people on the Parole Board.

**Mr. Nielsen:** How many are there?

**Mr. Lalonde:** I am afraid I could not give the hon. member the exact information. He will have to ask the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand).

So far as the effect of this proposal on temporary absences is concerned, this matter is being reviewed. At present it is under the jurisdiction of the penitentiary

[Mr. Gilbert.]

services. We hope that the Parole Board, in its new form, will be again in a better position to have personal contacts with both the inmates and the prison administrators in each region and will be in a better position to perform its duties.

The fourth point had to do with Parole Board activities, and the take-over by the provinces in this field. Discussions are taking place on this very subject at present, and I suspect that the Solicitor General is discussing this matter in Victoria this afternoon. Some provinces have shown interest in this respect, others have not. This subject will be on the agenda of the federal-provincial conference which is to take place between the 12th and 14th of December in Ottawa. So, we will have to await the results of that conference to find out exactly what the situation will be.

The last question concerned when we would release—

**Mr. Nielsen:** I was reading old notes.

**Mr. Lalonde:** The report was released on June 22. I could not believe my ears when I heard the hon. member and realized how well acquainted he was with what goes on in the House.

**Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North):** Mr. Speaker, I should like the minister to clarify one point in his answer. He referred to two members of the Parole Board sitting in various regions. Will the decisions which they make at the local or regional level be binding on the whole board? I could put it more clearly. For example, a panel of board members sits at the Drumheller institute or at Prince Albert and makes a decision there. Does that decision need to be reviewed again in Ottawa? That is one of the problems. Everything will be moving smoothly if those decisions are binding on the board.

**Mr. Lalonde:** I am subject to correction in this respect but I remember having discussed this matter with my colleague and his intention, if I remember well, was that those decisions at the regional level would be final. However, the Solicitor General might contradict me when he comes back. So far as I can remember, the intention was to decentralize the operations of the board and to make sure that decisions are made by the people who know the inmates and who know the local conditions. However, once more I would like to stress that the Solicitor General might say that I was wrong and that I misinterpreted the situation.

**Mr. Don Blenkarn (Peel South):** Mr. Speaker, I am not so sure that the addition of ad hoc members to this Parole Board will solve the concerns of the people of Canada. Indeed, the whole question of people being allowed out of the institutions only to commit further crimes and further damage to lives and to property, is of concern to all Canadians. The hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) mentioned the fact that a person on parole who comes from my area had twice committed the crime of rape. I want to mention another one to you. It is the case of a man on parole, again from my constituency, who was previously charged with drug offences. He was out on a nice weekend pass, and was again picked up for drug offences.