

individuals, leave it up to the judges to decide whether or not these people should have to serve one-half their sentences”.

At the very least, it should be mandatory. Rather than giving more discretion to judges when it comes to parole eligibility, there should be less discretion and as a matter of law, if that is the direction we are going, then people who commit certain violent offences and serious drug offences, should be denied parole automatically until they have served at least one-half of their sentence.

We will be proposing a number of other amendments at committee. Some of the provisions in this bill are provisions that we have been pressing for the last seven years, and we will support those provisions. We will be insisting that this government take a comprehensive approach to the problem of criminal law reform. We will want to have all the legislation, all the different aspects of the criminal justice system considered at the same time in order to show that we are serious about what we are doing. We will ask, for example, for a single streamlined system when it comes to corrections in Canada.

Right now there are two systems of penitentiaries, or prison systems, in Canada. If one is sentenced for a crime and the sentence is two years or less, then one serves the time in a provincial penitentiary. If the sentence is two years or more, the time is served in a federal penitentiary. It makes absolutely no sense at all. It is time that the federal and provincial governments get together to introduce a streamlined system so there is a single penitentiary system in Canada. It is an area that has not been dealt with by this government in this bill and we believe that there should be some further co-operation in that regard.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, criminal law is a federal responsibility. The administration of justice is a provincial responsibility. Again we believe that in certain areas there can be some streamlining in order to better deliver criminal justice in Canada.

In conclusion, let me say that the Liberal Party intends to support, in principle, this legislation, not because we support the details of this legislation but because we believe that it is high time this government moves ahead with criminal law reform. A great number of us will be

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participating at committee. We will be participating in second reading debate. A number of my colleagues will also be speaking. We will be introducing amendments which we believe will make this bill better. We will be introducing amendments which we believe will go a long way in allowing the Canadian public to once again have some confidence and respect and support for the criminal justice system.

• (1310)

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to participate in this debate today at second reading of Bill C-36 known as the corrections and conditional release act.

I hope I can present a more positive critique of this bill than the previous speaker and I will try not to indulge in the cynicism to which we just listened.

The criminal justice system in this country certainly is not perfect but then again it is not perfect in any jurisdiction of which I am aware. When we are dealing with the criminal elements in our society, particularly the violent criminal elements, it is extremely difficult to balance what is fair, what constitutes, first of all, safety to society and what also provides rehabilitation of those who have committed the offences.

We have to take a long, hard look at what we are attempting to do. There are no fast fixes. There are no easy solutions. The previous speaker made reference to the fact that in the United States they have done away with parole and mandatory supervision.

Let us look briefly at the situation in the United States of America which is statistically the most violent country in the western industrialized world. It is manifestly clear to me, and I think most experts—and I am not one—that the problem of crime in society cannot be solved by simply extending sentences or denying parole or mandatory supervision. If that was the case, the United States should have one of the lowest crime rates in the western world. Instead its prisons are bulging and it has just introduced a bill in Congress which will cost the American taxpayers \$25 billion to build new penitentiaries. Yet the crime rate, the murder rate, the rate of rape and violent assault in that country is going up and up and up as the prisons get bigger and bigger and bigger.