

Penitentiaries

about rehabilitation programs within our penitentiary system but by and large that is not the place in which they will work. Generally speaking, inmates participate in chaplain's groups, therapy groups or rehabilitation groups and talk with their counsellors in great detail, but their prime objective is to get out of jail and therefore they will use those mechanisms, those systems and those structures that are set up supposedly for rehabilitation for the prime purpose of getting out on the street.

● (2:30 p.m.)

Rehabilitation means parole and the proper and full use of the parole and probation systems. We could probably release tomorrow on parole one-third to half the inmate population of our federal penitentiaries and not a single additional criminal offence would take place while those inmates were on parole. It would be in that period of time while they are on parole that rehabilitation would work to the full. In 1956 we had eight federal penitentiaries; today we have approximately 35 to 40. I do not know the exact number. If we had spent even half of the millions and millions of dollars on parole and probation that we have poured into building bigger and more glamorous institutions, surely we would have done something more worth while and realized more of the benefits of rehabilitation than we have until now. We have to try to establish a relationship with outside voluntary private groups such as the St. Leonard Society, the X-Kalay Foundation in Vancouver and others of a similar nature which have worked wonders in the rehabilitative field in helping to get people back on the straight and narrow and off that merry-go-round which repeatedly puts them back into the penitentiary system.

I noted that a couple of weeks ago the minister appointed a working group. I gather that he has not yet named the personnel of that group. I wonder whether it will really be a worth-while functioning group because many studies and examinations have been made in the past of rehabilitation both in maximum security institutions and in other parts of the system. However, if the minister is going to proceed and really thinks it will be a worth-while working group that will come up with something valuable, I suggest he should appoint to that group some ex-convicts, people who have gone through the mill, who know what rehabilitation is all about and who have worked at it, people who, for instance, participate in organizations, such as the St. Leonard's Society and the X-Kalay Foundation, people such as Mr. Earl Allard who is associated with the X-Kalay Foundation and who could tell the minister and the government more about rehabilitation and the necessity for it than all the professional working groups one could find both in the Public Service and outside it.

We need to be concerned about the damage that was done, the loss of life and the injuries to individuals, all of which are important, but above all we need to take instances of this nature and look upon them as revolts against the judicial and penological systems and structures and learn by them to develop something beneficial and helpful in the future for the individual. Our concern must be with the salvation and rehabilitation of the

individual, and that will not be achieved by constructing bigger, more elaborate and more modern buildings and the like. We have had riots in the past and undoubtedly we will have them again, but I think our best guarantee of keeping riots to a minimum is to treat inmates as human beings and to work for their salvation and not for the continuance of an antiquated penological system which brings about frustration and riots.

[Translation]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, we wish first to thank the officials of the Kingston penitentiary and each member of the citizens committee for their efficiency in seeking an immediate solution to last week's disorders and for remaining calm despite the seriousness of the situation.

Mr. Speaker, this was certainly not an easy situation and the deeper causes of the problem which created this unrest in the Kingston penitentiary baffle us, at least from the minister's statement. Be it as it may, the government certainly acted in good faith and we are willing to commend it.

But there is one point that I should like to raise immediately, namely the fact that one inmate was killed and several others injured, and that hostages were held by inmates, the Canadian Armed Forces were called in and damages amounting to thousands of dollars were caused to the premises.

Mr. Speaker, this is violence and as far as we are concerned, violence cannot be accepted under any circumstances. It is hard to justify an act of violence so long as there is a chance of a dialogue between the differing parties. I wonder whether the federal authorities responsible for penitentiaries across Canada could have avoided this riot through frequent and regular contact with penitentiary officials, and representatives from the inmates and the general public.

In his statement the minister repeatedly said that the government intends to undertake a thorough reform in this field provided that they can get the co-operation of the public, of the inmates and of the authorities concerned.

Mr. Speaker, no doubt the government can depend on the support and co-operation of the people, of all those concerned or skilled in this field. There is no doubt, the most interested of all, the inmates, those who can be recuperated or rehabilitated, are ready to co-operate in order to improve the situation.

Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the government has made all the necessary efforts to promote continuous consideration—not only at a critical time,—of problems that could be foreseen. Violence should never be allowed, and the troubles that occurred in Kingston are most regrettable and sadden all Canadians, particularly in the case of the dead and injured inmates and in respect of the damages that have thus been done.

Mr. Speaker, if on one hand, violence cannot be approved, on the other, we can ask ourselves to what extent the methods put forward by the government will be effective, especially the establishment of a work group

[Mr. Howard (Skeena).]