

the Indian Act. These are the non-status Indian people; the Métis, as referred to by certain people.

There are these two groups, and I mention two appointees in the hope of taking both groups into account. An individual might be selected from each of these groups to be appointed as a member of the Parole Board. Some hon. members will argue that this is a good or an excellent idea. In fact, I came into the House just before the bells rang at eight o'clock, and a couple of hon. members from a particular party said to me, "It's a good idea, an excellent idea; but I do not think we will vote for it. We don't think we should spell out that sort of thing in the law. We should leave it to the intricate mentality of the minister who may be making the appointment as to whether or not at any given time he will or will not appoint someone of native Indian extraction to the board." To me it is such an important question, such a necessity, that I think this parliament is almost duty bound to try to write it into the law and to spell out that that will be such a guarantee.

● (2050)

This is an ad hoc addition that we are talking about anyway. These members would not be permanent members of the board, as are the other board members. They will come and go as the minister determines at any given time. They are temporary. The hope in my mind is that a sense of responsibility about native Indian people in jail can be imparted to the board so that it deals with parole applications by native people on an equitable basis.

I also hope that we will be able to generate within society a sense of respect for people that has not heretofore been very prevalent, so that the population of native Indians in our jails decreases and eventually disappears. As we approach that time, the necessity of having people selected for membership on this board because they are of particular racial extraction or origin will likewise disappear. But until we reach that time, we should nail it down and say that it is necessary to have this type of concern reflected in the laws that we pass, in the hope that it will generate some sense of good feeling in the nation on the part of the board about people in jail who are of native Indian origin, and that the numbers of these people in jail will be cut down eventually to the point of elimination.

There is another motion that deals with people who are ex-convicts. I do not want to make any extended comments about them because of the time factor. I should like to say simply that in another sense, people on the board who have had some experience of having gone through jail, who have been rehabilitated or who may be on parole—because that is what the motion says—should also be appointed to the board and thereby bring to the board a sense of experience that the members of that board do not have right now.

This does not necessarily bring with it greater leniency on the part of the board by proposing to put ex-convicts on it. In fact, the reverse may well be true. We know of a situation in Matsqui prison where a pilot treatment unit that was in existence for drug offenders was presented with two temporary absence passes by the medical director, who received them from the warden and who was told to distribute them as he saw fit among the people in the unit.

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The inmates in the pilot treatment unit were undergoing group therapy. The medical director said to them, "I have two weekend temporary absence passes for you people. You decide who will get them". Their first response was, "We can't do that; that is not our responsibility. We don't want to touch that; that is for you to decide". He said, "No, siree. You inmates decide. Start taking some kind of responsibility toward other human beings. And remember this, that if those whom you pick blow it, that's the end of the temporary absence possibilities for a long period of time". The group of inmates wrestled with that problem for some weeks. They were very cautious and careful about their choice because they were dealing with themselves. The two men who received the temporary passes came back on time after the two or three days. Nothing serious occurred, and the system progressed from there on not too badly.

I think the same thing could prevail on the Parole Board if we could get some ex-convicts on it and as parole supervisors and working on the staff. They would have a much better rapport and relationship with and consideration for the person who leaves the jail on parole than is the case now. I think I should conclude my comments on that aspect at this time and again express my appreciation to hon. members for having accorded me a few extra moments.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great attention to the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) speaking in favour of the presence of Indian members within the Parole Board, as well as ex-convicts who would, according to him, bring new knowledge on the matter of parole.

In any event, Bill C-191, an Act to amend the Parole Act, has been reported with an amendment by the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, by the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand).

Mr. Speaker, the reason I somewhat dislike the present composition of the Parole Board is that they take ages to give us results. We ask them for information, they are not ready to provide it.

If we recommend and not for political purposes, the release of an inmate because we are satisfied that he can find a job, fulfill normal tasks, the Parole Board takes so much time that when we get the answer, the prisoner has usually been released after serving his sentence. This means that the Parole Board is not very fast and does not give proper answers whenever we ask questions or write letters. Often, we write a letter and we get an answer one month and a half later. They always take recommendations into consideration and the stamp of Mr. Street or somebody else is always there. It takes ages to get results.

Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to say that, as proposed in this amendment, we must show discrimination and say: the Parole Board should include two former inmates, two Indian people, two English-speaking Canadians, two French-speaking Canadians, two Ukrainians, two Italians, two French people—

Mr. La Salle: We have enough Canadians—