

Parole Act

we could have been given some reason why the Hugessen recommendation was not being adopted.

The report also recommended the appointment of five regional boards of a much greater strength and significance than the one proposed in Bill C-191. Bill C-191 simply proposes that we add 10 ad hoc members to the National Parole Board. These are to be distributed among five regions. However, the Hugessen report states we should have five regional boards, each with eight members. The members would reflect the following backgrounds; one would be an informed and interested citizen, one would be a judge, one would be a senior police officer, one would be a psychiatrist or a psychologist, one would be a criminologist or sociologist, one would be a person with responsibility for programs in correctional institutions and one would be a person with responsibility for the supervision of offenders in a community. What we find, instead, is a diluted, pallid, anaemic, shadowy substitution for this strong and effective recommendation. Had the minister been prepared to show sufficient confidence and imagination I would have expected a recommendation to the House along those lines, or, if not, I would at least have expected an explanation of the decision he appears to have made.

● (1540)

The Hugessen report went on to recommend that provincial boards should continue where desired; second, that a national commissioner for parole be appointed to coordinate local and provincial boards, and, last, that a national parole institute be formed for the purpose of gathering information upon the basis of which the various parole agencies could act. The need for such an institution cannot be overlooked. Before we can hope to deal adequately with the subject of parole, certain fundamental questions need to be answered with respect to the facilities now available to the board.

The report called, as well, for certain other major changes including the abolition of the program providing for temporary absences without escort. The regulations of June 1, positive though many of them were, do not meet the requirements which should have been met in order to ensure the adequate reform of the system. For one thing, the decision to discontinue temporary back-to-back absences does not involve any change in the statute law. A penitentiary can still operate the old system upon which the department has acted in the past and to which the minister could at any time return; the change is dependent simply upon ministerial decision. Penitentiary authorities can still grant three-day leaves of absence should they wish to do so, so it is still possible for another Geoffrey incident to occur. We are continuing what the Hugessen report calls the inefficient duplication of operations of the penitentiary service and the national parole service. Thus, there is a need for a much more fundamental reform of the present parole system and we should take the necessary steps to bring this about in the light of the well thought out and well researched recommendations contained in the Hugessen report.

In spite of certain indications that the thinking of the minister differs from that of his predecessor, we are not satisfied that the parole service, along with branches of the penitentiary service, is adequately responding to the

[Mr. Stackhouse.]

challenge implied in that statement in the report which draws attention to the need for much more effective liaison between the parole board and the various police agencies:

The protection of society against illegal behaviour by parolees might be improved by strengthening the surveillance and control aspects of the parole process.

There needs to be much closer integration of the parole board program with the whole of the police process throughout the country. I wish to refer to this aspect in some detail because I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that to a large degree the present system is failing in this respect. In practice, it is failing to provide adequate protection for the public.

It is true that officials often say they are taking all the steps necessary to ensure the protection of society but one must recognize the seriousness of the judgment—and again I quote from the Hugessen report—that “few of their activities are really directed toward this objective.” What is the basis of this judgment? I believe it is accepted by responsible people across the country that parole is good in principle. Indeed, I am convinced that every party represented in this House and every section of our society supports the principle of parole and would support a healthy, positive parole program. What concerns us is the way in which the parole system has been so mismanaged that its benefits have been granted to people who could not and would not use them as intended but who, instead, regarded parole as a means of continuing their actions against society.

Just a few years ago, one citizen in British Columbia, Judge A. L. Bewley put together a collection of case histories of 62 persons with extensive criminal records who had been granted parole and who had committed serious offences while on parole. One such person had a record of breaking and entering, robbery with violence, kidnapping and escaping custody. He was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment in 1968 and released on parole in 1970. In 1971 he was re-arrested for robbery. He escaped jail and shot the RCMP constable who was attempting to arrest him.

A second offender was sentenced to four years and six months for attempted murder. He was granted parole in 1970 and was re-arrested for a second attempted murder. There is a third case of a man who had a record of armed robbery and forcible confinement of a person. He was granted parole in 1970, and while he was on parole police reported him on 22 occasions as being seen in the company of known criminals. Those reports were sent to the National Parole Board but the offender's parole was not cancelled.

A fourth case concerns an offender sentenced to life imprisonment as an habitual offender in 1965, although 22 convictions were recorded against him, including armed robbery. His parole was suspended after one month but renewed in 1968. In 1969 he was arrested and convicted of robbery and false pretenses.

In the fifth case I wish to draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker, the offender had been convicted of 105 offences between 1945 and 1962. In the latter year he was sentenced to a ten-year term. Between 1968 and 1971 he was granted parole on three occasions. Three months after being given