

*Measures Against Crime*

● (1640)

Another new measure related to the custody of inmates repeals statutory remission. Those sentenced to a penitentiary after the new legislation comes into force will no longer be automatically credited with one quarter of their sentence. Instead, they must earn all remission. An inmate will earn one day for every two days served during which he applies himself industriously. In other words, the inmate will be able to earn remission to a maximum of one-third of his sentence. The new amendments stipulate that earned remission is subject to forfeiture in the same way that statutory remission is at present. Once forfeited, however, it cannot be restored, nor can remission withheld at any given point be restored at a later date.

With the best possible conduct and industriousness, an inmate who is not granted parole can be released after approximately two-thirds of his sentence has been served. The fact that all remission will be earned, that none will be automatic, and that it will be subject to forfeiture for misconduct, will place a greater onus on the inmate to earn the earliest release date possible. This should promote better conditions within institutions, including greater participation in programs.

Under the proposed changes, the Commissioner of Penitentiaries will become the commissioner of corrections and the control and management of the national parole service will be transferred from the National Parole Board to the commissioner of corrections. Subject to the direction of the Solicitor General, the commissioner will become responsible for the preparation of cases for all types of release and the supervision of inmates on temporary absence, day parole, full parole and mandatory supervision. This will relieve the National Parole Board of its management responsibility for the parole service and, therefore, allow it to maintain its independence in its decision-making role. This action will also result in better co-ordination of programs and services between the Canadian penitentiary service and the National Parole Service. At the same time, the National Parole Service will obtain additional staff to increase supervision for inmates on temporary absence, day parole and mandatory supervision. The parole service will also be responsible for monitoring temporary release plans both for individual inmates and the program in general.

In addition to the above legislative proposals, the government intends to initiate the following administrative measures to provide a greater degree of security in penitentiaries. First, additional training in the techniques of security and in the behavioural sciences for correctional officers. Second, establishing emergency response teams or "crisis" units to react immediately to potential danger or actual trouble such as prison disturbances and hostage-taking incidents. Members of the unit will also be trained in negotiation techniques.

Third, extending the "team" concept of deployment of staff in maximum security institutions. This involves the grouping of staff in units of manageable size under permanently assigned supervisors. In addition to providing improved security, this team concept results in more effective programming through increased involvement of staff in the daily lives of prisoners, and also facilitates communication between staff members. At present, the team

[Mr. Allmand.]

concept, in the form of the "living unit" program, has been employed almost exclusively in minimum and medium security facilities. The concept has proven to be of sufficient value to warrant its expansion into the maximum security area.

Fourth, an accelerated prison construction program which will involve phasing out some old, obsolete institutions and replacing them with smaller facilities of the type recommended by the Mohr committee, better suited to the rehabilitation and control of specific groups of inmates. We are currently completing construction of such an institution in Mission, B.C., and have received approval for sites in B.C., Alberta and New Brunswick. Fifth, we are also moving ahead with the construction of regional psychiatric centres in the Saskatoon, Kingston, and Halifax areas.

The government recognizes the need for, and is committed to, the gradual release of inmates through an effective parole system involving temporary absence, day parole, full parole and mandatory supervision. The hon. member for Calgary North intimated that the parole and temporary absence problems had led to a large number of failures. In reply I would like to stress the overwhelmingly successful record of parole and temporary absences and the important role these programs play in the rehabilitative process within the criminal justice system.

Hon. members should bear in mind, Mr. Speaker, that fully 95 per cent of our inmates are sentenced to definite terms, which means that one day, inevitably, they must be released into society. Only a very small percentage are in prison on life sentence. If no efforts are made to smooth that return by a program of gradual, supervised release, then the chances of successful reintegration into the outside world are much smaller.

The temporary absence program has a success rate of over 99 per cent. The 15-year average success rate of parole is between 75 per cent and 80 per cent. I must, of course, agree that there have been failures in our system and that some of these failures have had tragic consequences. Because of such failures in the past, we have tightened up our selection process and we are introducing further legislative, regulatory and administrative improvements at this time.

In this peace and security program, a number of further amendments to existing parole legislation and regulations are proposed in order to achieve greater control over the release of inmates who are prone to violence, while at the same time providing fairness and equity in decisions which affect the release of all inmates, including those on parole.

Many of the measures affect the organization and jurisdiction of the National Parole Board. The number of parole board members will be increased from 19 to 26. New members will be appointed for a period not exceeding ten years. These additional appointments will allow the board to assume further responsibilities, such as the authority to grant unescorted temporary absences and to conduct internal review hearings, and will allow for an improved selection process on the part of the board members by reducing the caseload on each member, which is extremely burdensome in Ontario, Quebec and the prairies.