

system entirely while making him responsible for compensating the victim—he comes face to face with the person in society he has damaged, and when he does so he begins to feel a sense of responsibility. In my view this is the beginning of the rehabilitation process. I hope such a program can be carried out in areas of serious crime among adult offenders.

Finally, might I express the view that it is not right to continue to imprison people under the Criminal Code for failing to pay fines. A person with money, a person with a position, has no trouble; another fellow, a man who does not have a job, goes to jail. There are many people presently serving sentences who did not have enough to pay a fine. Most of them are native Indians whom it was completely unnecessary to send to jail. I think it is time we amended the code to give those who cannot pay fines under the present system an alternative opportunity to compensate their victims or repay some kind of debt to society.

Again I should like to congratulate the hon. member for Egmont for introducing in this House a subject which, though unpopular, is very important to the health of our society. I hope that the bill will not be talked out; it could be amended in committee with respect to the technical objections raised by the hon. member for Lafontaine.

**Mrs. Ursula Appolloni (York South):** Madam Speaker, in discussing any matters dealing with the inmates of penitentiaries we must be careful to avoid any atavistic impulse to punish and, indeed, to overpunish offenders. In fact, in what I like to think of as a more enlightened society it is imperative to steer a course well clear of a vindictive and punitive approach to prison reform. Our main emphasis must be rehabilitation and reformation. It is also important that while aiming at these goals we do not allow ourselves to become permissive to the point of exaggeration.

We must bear in mind that these people have not been convicted because they respected the laws of this country but because they defied them. In this context I would quote the Canadian Bill of Rights which affirms that men and institutions remain free "only when freedom is founded upon the respect for moral and spiritual values and the rule of law." Our society, through the concept of parole, now gives prisoners the opportunity to prove their new respect for its values and the rule of law. Indeed, I believe those on parole are given the right to vote. This is an enlightened approach to penology and I welcome it.

The hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) raises another point with which I find myself in considerable sympathy. He refers to the degree of crime and the degree of punishment. It might well be that we ought to review the wording of that clause. I do not think, for example, that I would readily grant the privilege of voting—and it is a privilege—to anyone who committed treason, that is to say an act by which the guilty party sought to destroy our country. Then again it would seem pointless to give the vote to anyone serving a life sentence, for the reason that he is permanently removed from society and is therefore unable to improve it. I would be inclined, also, to include drug pushers in this category on the ground that, in their greed for money, they destroyed minds and in so doing the very fabric of society.

### *Prisoners' Voting Rights*

There are those, however, who are guilty of lesser crimes not so much by deliberate choice but by force of circumstances. I would use every means in our power to help these people in their rehabilitation, although I am not convinced that granting them the right to vote while still in prison would in itself facilitate the rehabilitation process.

My main objection to the Bill is, however, more ethical than legal. Clause 20 of the Canada Elections Act states that anyone who is qualified as an elector may be a candidate—I must say that if one of the people we are considering were elected I could foresee some interim difficulty in his taking his seat.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mrs. Appolloni:** We would also have to look closely at the question of the compilation of the voters' list which is, of course, a public document. I feel this could cause real hardship and embarrassment not only for the inmate but for his family, especially where publicity surrounding the initial trial has long since been forgotten.

I am also concerned as to how we would determine the residence of an inmate for voting purposes. In the absence of special procedures for determining the ordinary place of residence the results in some constituencies might well depend upon the inmate vote, and I do not believe this would be desirable.

I feel I would be remiss if I did not draw attention to another and perhaps more pressing problem. Others among us cannot exercise the right to vote because of the sheer complexity of our system of proxy voting. I refer to the elderly and to the severely disabled. I stress that these are not people who have deliberately chosen to live on the fringe of society. Indeed, all too often they have paid an inhuman price for their very contribution to our society. Yet, as I said, the very complexity of our proxy system all too often denies them their rights and always denies them their right to a secret ballot. For the sake of these people I urge the adoption of a mail ballot system.

● (1750)

In conclusion, although I agree in principle with the spirit of penal reform as expressed in this Bill, I do not agree that this Bill is suitable legislation.

**Mr. A. D. Alkenbrack (Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** Madam Speaker, I had not intended speaking in this debate but feel compelled to make a few remarks in opposing this bill. The bill before the House seeks to amend the Canada Elections Act, which is probably one of the oldest acts on our statute books. It seeks to enfranchise prisoners. I point out that a prisoner is disenfranchised because he cannot fulfil certain functions. For example, he cannot be an elector, since an elector can hold office. How can a person serving time in prison hold office and perform the duties of office? As the hon. member for Lafontaine (Mr. Lachance) asked, what would be the address of a prisoner holding office, assuming that is possible? If this bill were to pass, certain prisons could become constituencies and Madam Speaker might be called on to recognize "the hon. member for Millhaven". Millhaven happens to be in my constituency.