

Solicitor General to think that I came here today only to criticize and complain about the way he is trying to do a difficult job. My purpose is neither to bury nor to praise him, and just to show that I do have a warm spot in my heart for the minister I would like to conclude by throwing him a bouquet.

I am in wholehearted agreement with his proposal to restructure the parole service on a regional basis, and to attempt to restore the practice of having parole officers interview applicants on a face-to-face basis. I might recommend also that the parole service attempt to get some input from family members, police officials who are knowledgeable about the applicants, and any other sources of useful background data. In conclusion, may I say that this return to a personal approach to assessment of parole applicants is the best move that has so far been proposed. But I wonder if we are realistic in proposing the addition of only ten more members to the board. Will this be enough to allow the board to clear up the enormous backlog in applications for parole and for temporary absences, and at the same time do justice to the new applications that will be forthcoming?

This is a question that we should be answering now rather than later, along with such questions as whether the National Parole Board should also be dealing with provincial prisoners, whether the board should be empowered to overturn sentences by a court, and whether or not the board should try to cope with the separate problems of temporary absences as well as parole of sentence. These should be worked out in more detail. In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I express the hope that the minister will have answers ready for my questions, as well as other questions that are being asked today.

● (1720)

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. Before I recognize the hon. member it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House of the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment as follows: The hon. member for Palliser (Mr. Schumacher)—inquiry of the ministry; the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Knight)—external affairs—Garrison dam diversion, North Dakota—further action by Canadian government—consideration by International Joint Commission; and the hon. member for Peel South (Mr. Blenkarn)—Public Service—amount of increases offered by government to those at lower levels.

Parole Act GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PAROLE ACT

APPOINTMENT OF ADDITIONAL AD HOC MEMBERS TO NATIONAL PAROLE BOARD

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-191, to amend the Parole Act, as reported (with an amendment) from the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs and motions Nos. 1 and 2.

Mr. Stan Schumacher (Palliser): Mr. Speaker, I will try to do my part to keep these motions before the House until the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) arrives to support them. I am not that favourably disposed to his amendments, but I think he should be given an opportunity to support them if at all possible. The purport of the hon. member's amendments is to establish a quota system in respect of appointments to our National Parole Board.

At the outset, I must say that I am opposed to artificial quotas in respect of any judicial board or, for that matter, any other organization associated with the day to day activities of our penal system. The best example of the application of a quota system to an organization, and how it can hurt such an operation, is to be found in the experience of the Democratic party in the United States in 1972. Following the 1968 national convention of that party in the city of Chicago, a so-called group of reformers captured control and decided to open participation in that party to a number of formerly outside groups. This covered black people, young people, females and all sorts of others who were from that point on recognized as official working members. Then, we saw what happened in 1972 when that very effective campaigner, Senator George S. McGovern, was nominated as the presidential candidate. I think it is well recognized that the operations of that so-called reform party were not too effective.

I think we should have some second thoughts in respect of the imposition of quotas as related to our native people and ex-convicts. This is a bad principle, and I do not think it could fail but to have a bad result on the parole system of this country. I have no objection to the appointment of two people of native origin to our National Parole Board, but surely the criterion to be followed should relate to the qualifications, educational or otherwise, of the people involved. Surely this should be the first consideration in respect of whether individuals should be appointed to this national board, regardless of their ethnic background. The Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) should certainly select qualified people for appointment to this board, and I am sure there are many people available who would serve with effectiveness.

Reference was made by the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) to the work done by the Chairman, Mr. George Street. I should like to associate myself with the remarks of that hon. member. Mr. Street has been a very good chairman, and, with the exception of one or two decisions made by that parole board, we have seen an excellent job of administration. When considering the appointment of people to this board, we must consider the people with whom they will be dealing. The prison population of this country has been growing by leaps and bounds