

*Criminal Code*

crime rate is increasing six times faster in the United States and very little less in Canada than the population growth.

We need improvement in the methods of crime detection and improved police training. We need a national royal commission on crime. I would like to see a national crime information centre such as has been established in the United States which would have computers to compile data. All the police would have to do would be to ask the machine. I would like to see a system such as has been established in Chicago, called the Citizen Stop Crime card system. More than half a million of these cards have been distributed, and if a citizen sees a crime being committed he calls a number. In two years a great number of crimes have been stopped.

Why are we not taking action? I am not pointing at the government in this regard. Why do Canadians and the parliament of Canada not control the deadly weapons which can be picked up with the greatest of ease? Why do we not take action to prevent these falling into the hands of potential delinquents and the mentally disturbed? How can we meet the upsurge in crime if our police officers are occupied with traffic violations and their time is taken up there? They are chasing parking tickets when they should be chasing criminals.

Sir, what is the alternative? I do not offer the course taken in the United Kingdom of having exceptions made. I already have mentioned those—except a person who murders a prison guard, except a person who murders in the course of furtherance of theft and except any person who murders by shooting or causing an explosion.

• (4:50 p.m.)

All those exceptions were considered in the United Kingdom but were not accepted. I think we have been too lax in letting convicted murderers out of penitentiaries. Some say the average time spent in prison is nine years. I remember one individual who was convicted and spent 18 years behind bars and there certainly was not very much of a case against him. I came into that case after the man had been convicted. He had a low mentality and was not let out at the usual time.

We will have to build safeguards if we abolish capital punishment. Perhaps we should try it for a period of five years. At the same time, our judges should be empowered to recommend a minimum number of years

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

imprisonment at the time of a murder conviction. I know this is a harsh thing to say, but society must be protected. I think there have been about four cases in Canada in the last 20 years where murderers have repeated the crime of murder.

There was a Manitoba case in which a man was convicted of murder. He was finally released after ten years and then he murdered again. There was another case here in Ottawa involving a man by the name of Bertrand who allegedly killed one wife and then killed a second wife before his life came to an end. There was another case in Saskatchewan of a man by the name of Carter who was convicted of murder, released from prison and went to the United Kingdom and there committed another murder. Another case which has been drawn to my attention involved a strangler by the name of Nelson, from Winnipeg who allegedly committed a similar offence in the United States.

I believe that the government should consider providing that following a life imprisonment conviction for murder, a sentence must be at least 20 years. One might consider that as being a denial of reformation but no one can tell me there can be no reformation in a sentence of 20 years.

I once defended a man who was charged with killing his father. I will not mention his name because today he is one of Canada's good citizens. He ended up with a life sentence. He went into prison in 1929 with an I.Q. of about 81. He had only completed grade 3 but while he was in prison he completed grade 12 and became the main operator of the commissariat in a Saskatchewan penitentiary, thereby saving the Canadian Government many thousands of dollars.

After he had been in prison for about 13 years he expressed the desire to join the armed forces. One night during the time we used to sit in opposition indefinitely in this house I went across the chamber and spoke with Mr. St. Laurent about this case. Within a few days he came to me and said that he would have to explain the circumstances. He told me that this man was of low mentality. However, he was examined and he joined the army and rose to the rank of sergeant.

When the war was over he returned, and I will never forget his arrival home in 1946. I went to the doorway and he was standing there. We had some friends in that evening including a judge and a sheriff. This fine chap came in and helped to serve tea and so on and as he left he said, "You have always