

*The Address—Mr. Lachance*

are well prepared, they will be easily digested. But there is a matter which unfortunately has only been touched on lightly in a most general way, and which I have particularly set my heart on for some time, that is, the rehabilitation of prisoners and former prisoners.

In the last 30 years many royal commissions have been set up both by the federal government and the various provincial governments.

Several commissions enquired into the question of rehabilitation and the problems with which penitentiaries and prisons are faced.

This year, or rather in 1965, the government created a committee on penal reform and correction ably presided over by Mr. Justice Roger Ouimet of the Superior Court of Montreal. The said committee is to present a report on the measures indicated to check criminal activities and help the rehabilitation of offenders.

The rehabilitation of prisoners is to me a challenge, and I believe every member of this house should also be interested in the problem.

What have we been doing for so long, apart from creating commissions to solve this problem?

I believe I can put forward, in a few minutes, my humble suggestions to solve some of those problems, mainly in the field of education.

I shall attempt to be as brief as possible but, unfortunately, I will also have to be a little sharp in my remarks. I shall divide my speech into well-numbered paragraphs and I start with the detention period.

My opinion is that during the detention of delinquents, whether it be before trial or after sentencing, whether it be in provincial or federal jails, in all cases there should be better co-ordination and greater co-operation between provincial and federal agencies in this field.

I think we should try as much as possible to improve the education of our prisoners, not only so as to educate them while they are in prison but to allow them to earn their living honourably and to reach the social level to which any individual and any Canadian should have a right, in order to help to improve the standard of living in Canada.

What is the use of giving a prisoner courses in, say, construction or mechanics, if when he leaves neither he nor the Canadian economy benefits from them?

[Mr. Lachance.]

To my mind, we have too long neglected the human resource that an inmate represents, just like any other Canadian as a matter of fact.

I think it is more than time that the various governments take steps so that inmates, whether in institutions under provincial or federal jurisdiction, be given courses enabling them to write civil service exams at the federal, provincial or municipal level. In my opinion, those federal, provincial and municipal organizations should make it easier for prisoners to be eligible to write such exams. They could see to it that exams were held inside penitentiaries. This, Mr. Speaker, would be for the time the person was in detention.

What about the time after detention? Obviously, after having passed Civil Service examinations, the former prisoners should be able to apply for the positions concerned.

It is incumbent upon us to do away with the barriers of fear, the barriers of shame. Let us not be content with fine words: these barriers exist and, in my opinion, society must not be allowed to continue treating these people as third or fourth rate citizens, once they have served their time and paid their debt to society.

• (9:10 p.m.)

I am not blind enough to think that we should entrust immediately former prisoners who will be employed by federal, provincial or municipal governments with all the responsibilities frequently blindly entrusted to other individuals, other citizens. But there should be a body set up permanently to guide, help, advise and control prisoners after they have paid their debt to society. I am of the opinion that the federal government should set up such an agency. By doing so, we will do away with this discrimination, this wall of shame that exists today.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to anticipate the report of the Canadian committee on penal reform and correction because I know that it will be most comprehensive, but I feel that we must take the last step, and as quickly as possible. It is very late already but it is surely possible to do so. I think that the government should take the initiative as quickly as possible to do away with judicial records.

Mr. Speaker, I am not naïve enough to say and think that judicial records must disappear as soon as the prisoners have paid their debt to society. But when the government has taken the necessary steps to create a body that will look after prisoners and help them