

Parole Act

Vancouver, any urban centre that attracts people from outside—he invariably lives or finds his associates in a certain part of town. He finds that he has to live on the periphery of society. He finds he has to live on the fringe and does not fully become part of the community. Again he feels left out. He lives in an urban area where drugs and booze are most easily and readily available.

● (2040)

I am not talking in straight terms of native people; I am talking about human beings. History has shown that in times when a person or a group of persons feels rejected, despondent and not wanted, they develop a sharp sense of inferiority, following which it is very easy for them to turn to ways of easing or lessening their internal sorrow. Most often they turn to the use of alcohol, but very often they turn to drugs of various sorts.

I have heard an expression very often from native people in my home area. I do not repeat this in any sense to do harm to the native people, but very often one says to another, "Let's get drunk and be somebody." In other words, what is being suggested is that they use alcohol to rid themselves of their inhibitions. They turn to alcohol as an anaesthetic. They wipe out their misery in this way. I suggest this misery has developed as a result of the relationship these people have with society. That is a pretty sad commentary on what our society has done to the Indian people.

From the easy accessibility of alcohol or drugs, or a combination of the two, it is a very short step to jail. These people wind up in our penal institutions because of their use of alcohol or drugs, or because of what they do as a result of being intoxicated from the use of one or the other. This is probably one reason there are so many Indian peoples in our jails. The percentage of the total Indian population is much higher than the percentage of others in our society. Indian people are not more criminal-minded than others. In fact, I think they are less so. Most of them that I know are more honest than a lot of white people. They suffer a great deal of misery and torment in trying to feel their way and find their place, much more so than other individuals in this country.

We are talking now in terms of sociology. We must change our social values. We must give these people a deliberate and conscious respect for themselves in terms of our society. We are talking about life, we are talking about building up respect, and we are talking about family life. This is all-important to the meaningful existence of these people. These are the things we must do in a sociological sense. We must cut down the difficulties faced by these people, many of whom are not able to cope with the everyday strains and difficulties we all must face. As a result, they end up in our jails and penitentiaries.

I think the appointment of native Indian people to our Parole Board would be a wonderful thing. I suggest this in the hope that these people will give the Parole Board some understanding of the difficulties which exist in our penitentiaries: they would impart a great deal of knowledge to such a Parole Board in respect of the discrimination suffered by these and many others of various ethnic origins. As a result, the native people might be given equitable advantages in respect of their parole applications. This

[Mr. Howard.]

would be advantageous whether these paroled natives go from jail to remote communities or return simply to the urban area from which they came. The whole point is that these people would be returned to society as a result of tenderness and affection, with an opportunity to make good out of prison.

The minister has said on one or two occasions that he would like to appoint Indians to the Parole Board. I have referred to the appointment of two in the motion, but that is an arbitrary figure. No matter what number one hits upon, it is arbitrary. I have always had the feeling that when someone suggests the appointment of one native person to a board, there is tokenism involved. I suspect that is what is happening in this case. I hope the minister is not guilty of that approach to the problem. I remember when Ellen Fairclough was made the minister of citizenship and immigration. That was in the government of the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker). That appointment was extolled as the most dramatic and wonderful thing that could happen in Canadian society. She was the first woman appointed as a minister in a Canadian government. The fact that she was incompetent did not matter—it was democratic, and extolled as such. I suggest that we should move as far as possible from that approach.

The other thing I have in mind in respect of the selection of one person is that perhaps the minister has a person in mind already. I am not sure that this is the case, but I suspect that the minister has in mind an individual who has an attachment to the Liberal Party. Such action seems to be typical of the record of the Liberal Party. That may be what is being done, because following the next election the hon. member for Kamloops-Cariboo may not be here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I regret having to interrupt the hon. member, but his allotted time has expired. He may continue with the unanimous consent of the House.

Some hon. Members: Go ahead.

An hon. Member: Don't take as much time as Jack Horner.

Mr. Howard: I apologize, Mr. Speaker, for not realizing that my time was limited to 20 minutes. I will not transgress on the generosity of hon. members of the House. I am inclined to think that the minister has one individual in mind and that individual has had some attachment to the Liberal Party. It is my suggestion that such an appointment might not be the best one.

The number of people to be appointed is, I repeat, arbitrary. Some hon. members might suggest that three or four should be appointed. I picked the number two because of considerations for regional and geographic factors. I do not intend any sort of division, but there are two basic groups of Indian people in Canada. There are Indians who come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Indian Act. These Indians are registered as such on band lists as treaty Indians. Then there is the other group which does not fall within the jurisdiction of the federal authority or