

*Inquiries of the Ministry***PENITENTIARIES****ST. VINCENT DE PAUL—ASSAULT OF INMATE
BY GUARDS**

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Minister of Justice): Yesterday at the request of the hon. member for Vancouver East, as well as in answer to a question which was posed by the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi and I think one other hon. member, I agreed, with the unanimous consent of the house, to table a statement with reference to the Gunn case. I do so now.

Mr. Fisher: May we have it in *Hansard*?

Mr. Chevrier: If that is the wish of the house I have no objection.

Mr. Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[*Editor's note: The statement referred to above is as follows:*]

In consequence of the newspaper publicity concerning the alleged beating of Alvin Gunn, an inmate of St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary, I requested the commissioner of penitentiaries to cause an inquiry to be made into the facts of the case. He reports to me as follows:

In January 1962 Alvin Gunn was transferred from Kingston penitentiary to St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary. He is described as a boxer and an aggressive individual. During the riot at St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary in June 1962, he was identified by nine different witnesses as a ringleader of the rioters. He struck a senior keeper on the neck with sufficient force to cause his mouth to bleed. He appeared for trial this month, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to one day's imprisonment concurrent with his present sentence. During the proceedings of the trial, he described the brutal beating that he alleges was given to him by penitentiary guards following the riot.

On June 22, 1962, 70 inmates of St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary were reported as being prominent among those rioting. They were dissociated from the main prison population. Gunn was taken to the dissociation area by five officers who, at this time, cannot be positively identified.

On June 24, 1962, Warden LeCorre heard that Gunn was in hospital and visited him there. Gunn answered the warden's question as follows: "I have been beaten up, Mr. LeCorre, look at me; but I gave them quite a good fight."

Warden LeCorre had been appointed to St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary only two weeks before the riot broke out. He knew few of the officers and he was forced to follow

[Mr. Pearson.]

the procedure laid down by his predecessor. He had heard rumours of "goon squad" and "muscle men" in the institution, but had not time, prior to the riot, to investigate.

After his interview with Gunn, he attempted to find those responsible for beating him up, but was not helped by the staff and Gunn could not name his assailants. As his inquiry was getting nowhere, he issued, on June 28, 1962, a directive to the staff, in which he stated, in concise terms, that brutality would not be tolerated. The directive stated, *inter alia*:

[*Translation*]

"It is not a matter of settling personal scores or of brutalizing those who took part in the riot. I do not want any unfortunate incident on the part of officials. Those who make abusive use of force, especially when it is not necessary, lower themselves morally in the eyes of all. To punish or harm anyone in any way will not solve any problem and, on the contrary, will create new difficulties we certainly do not need. Let justice take its course, even if sometimes you find it too slow or too lenient. Not only is it not your responsibility to solve that problem, but you will only interfere with it if you act unwisely.

It is a matter of restoring order as well as fair and equal discipline in the institution, and we start immediately."

[*Text*]

In July 1962 an official inquiry was held at St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary to inquire into the circumstances surrounding the riot. Gunn volunteered as a witness and appeared before the board on July 25, 1962. He gave approximately 2,000 words of testimony and the only reference he made to a beating is as follows: "I was not a victim of that 'goon squad'. A few days after that 'bingo' I was the No. 1 victim." He did not pursue the point and the board of inquiry, being more interested in the causes of the riot, did not question him further on it. It should be noted that Gunn appeared before the board on July 25, 1962 and, except for a skin abrasion on his face, seemed in good physical condition.

The warden interviewed Gunn on other occasions between July 1962 and October 1963 and never was the beating mentioned.

The commissioner, in his report to me, repeats a report made to him by the regional director of penitentiaries for Quebec:

"It is my impression the officers guilty of unlawful and excessive use of force in the case of inmate Gunn (and possibly other inmates) during the critical period which