

### *Parole Act*

It seems to me we would be far wiser, both from a social point of view and from a financial point of view, to prescribe that in the case of a first offence or, indeed, of a second and third offence in minor matters, culprits should be sentenced not to incarceration in an institution, but to a period of restricted conduct; they would have to report to a probation officer on a regular basis for a determined period. To my mind, it is a downright shame that so many of our statutes, so many of the offences under the Criminal Code should call for a prison sentence. No wonder so many young men and women continue in a life of crime. No wonder the percentage of recidivism is so high. I am no expert in prison administration or penology, but one has simply to be aware of what goes on, to read what appears in the press, and to listen to what is said in this House from time to time to know that this is not the answer.

It seems to me the Parole Board should be allowed wider scope, that increased personnel should be made available for its work. People who have done time in a corrective institution, and native people, certainly, because we know our prisons and penitentiaries contain an altogether disproportionate number of inmates who are of native origin, can certainly make a valuable contribution to its work. Why not a ticket of leave system, a system of probationary sentences whereby an individual must show by his own good conduct and prove by his good behaviour that he merits a return to the full freedoms of society. In this way he would be left outside an institution and not be subject to the very severe restrictions of a corrective institution where all kinds of negative influences are at work. Frankly, the man who can go straight after having served time in a prison or in a provincial jail does so in spite of the system, not because of the system.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** In these circumstances, I think the personal criticisms that are often made of the chairman of the Parole Board by the hon. member for Skeena, personal and bitter charges against the chairman, are totally without foundation. I am sure the chairman himself would be the first to say that the board is not perfect and that all their decisions are not correct. But they do what is humanly possible, and that is all we can ask them to do. The same could be said of the courts. If we impose upon them a greater burden than that, then let the individual who does so himself adopt that course of conduct. I think we would then hear a lot less criticism of individuals by others who are engaged in much less onerous tasks.

Having said this, let me turn to one area in which I believe there could be improvement. I refer to the degree of liaison between the Parole Board representatives in the various provinces and the local penal administration authorities in provincial jails. As the House knows, many times the Parole Board is quite prepared to entertain an application for day parole in certain cases.

● (1550)

I had a case a while back that was a combination of bureaucratic idiocy which translated itself into the thinking of the magistrate who sentenced a barber to some 60 days in jail, without the option of a fine, because the man

[Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]

had wrongfully taken benefits under the Unemployment Insurance Act. He had entered into a scheme of repayment, the whole thing having been done with the connivance with his employer. The individual had a wife, two children and another on the way. The magistrate, in a spirit of zeal to try to enforce an unenforceable and unworkable Unemployment Insurance Act, sentenced the man to 60 days. His employer said that if day parole could be arranged they could keep the man's job open for him.

This man's wife got in touch with me and the whole thing was arranged without any difficulty with the Parole Board. She had seen the Parole Board to start with and the Parole Board worked very expeditiously on the matter. However, once the decision had been made by the Parole Board, it took three to four days for the provincial jail authorities in Edmonton to process the decision and to have the man transferred from the provincial jail to a detention centre where he would be granted day parole. He almost lost his job, notwithstanding the fact that as far as his employer could do so he was going to try to keep his employment open for him. The alternative as far as society was concerned was that the wife and two children would go on welfare and the man would have been without a job.

I think the original decision of a mandatory jail sentence under the Unemployment Insurance Act for an offence of wrongfully drawing benefits to the tune of just over \$200 was totally wrong. It is ridiculous to send the man to jail for that. He is the type of individual who should be on probation, and it seems to me this is the sort of thing for which we should strive. In the city of Edmonton, the former RCMP divisional barracks or administrative offices have been taken over and turned into a day detention centre where parolees can report, some to carry on their jobs, some to attend school and university while technically serving the remainder of their sentences for relatively minor offences. These people are those who have already indicated they are well on the road to rehabilitation. I think this is the natural and progressive step forward.

I should like to see the duties and the scope of the Parole Board expanded, with less people being sent to jail and more being put on probation. As I indicated earlier in my remarks, I do not propose to support these two amendments.

**Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) has brought us face to face with the problem of discrimination. Most of his speeches in this House have usually been speeches about discrimination against Indians and other groups in our society, but now the hon. member for Skeena is himself practising discrimination. He is saying that we should not discriminate against the Indian, we should discriminate for the Indian. The reason I say that is that he is well aware of the evidence that has been set forth in the Ouimet report, and also in the report on the status of women, which detailed acts of discrimination against the Indian people across the country. As a result of this discrimination, there is a very high ratio of Indians in our prisons today and this is rather unfortunate.

We have before us Bill C-191, the provisions of which add ten additional ad hoc members to the Parole Board. The hon. member for Skeena has said that if we are going