

*The Address—Mr. Lachance*

so much and after having parliament pass a very considerable number of measures that the government in this centennial year has decided to give priority to more human problems.

Constitutional reforms are required and I am surely not the only one to think so. Unemployment insurance should be amended and this project has been shelved for years. I am taking in several items, but I believe that the war in Viet Nam and the steps to be taken to bring it to an end, as well as world peace, are surely among the greatest concerns of the government. They are, by the way mentioned in the speech from the throne.

Customs tariff amendments will undoubtedly follow the Kennedy round. Then, space communications and control of water and air pollution will be dealt with; I consider this one of the most important points of the speech from the throne. I hope the government will act immediately on it. I see that the minister who is responsible for the consideration of this problem is in the house. And, finally, assistance to Canadian consumers will be dealt with.

I do not intend to list all those problems, Mr. Speaker. There is capital punishment also. I had an opportunity to refer to this at other times. I made my views known on this problem, and I do not hesitate to say that, in the last session, I voted for the retention of capital punishment. I regret to a certain extent that the government has decided to settle that matter by leaving us free to defeat or pass not a bill but a private member's bill. I, therefore, have doubts about the result of that free vote.

So far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, that problem is secondary to the rehabilitation of the inmates. The problem of capital punishment affects only—I say only and I think that I will be criticized by some people for saying it because no one is above criticism, Mr. Speaker—those who have been found guilty of first degree murder after having gone through all the stages before our courts of law up to the Supreme Court.

Mr. Speaker, I leave it to the government to decide whether or not capital punishment should be abolished. Personally, I do not intend to change my mind about it unless the government—and I think it must do it—introduces a detailed plan for the rehabilitation of the inmates in our penitentiaries.

[Mr. Lachance.]

• (4:20 p.m.)

It is much more important to look after the living than the dead. Even if we abolish capital punishment, even if we vote for life imprisonment, I still consider them as dead. Therefore, what is important is the rehabilitation of the inmates in our penitentiaries.

And among the important subjects which deal with rehabilitation, there is the suppression of the criminal record. I have had the opportunity to discuss that matter before a committee, during the last session. In my opinion, it could happen two years after the sentence has been served but no more than five years in order to give the prisoner a chance to take advantage of that measure, to make a new start in life and, in particular, to give him the hope that a new life is possible.

I know that the Canadian association of chiefs of police is not in favour of that measure, however their concerns is not rehabilitation but rather the custody of the prisoners.

I think that a planned educational program is necessary in our penitentiaries, so that the prisoners may improve their education and, if possible, obtain degrees or certificates, and become eligible to try the civil service examinations.

I do not see what organization is in a better position to help prisoners than the government. Private enterprise is surely not to be called upon to deal with that problem if the government fails to do so.

Positions in the civil service, in the public service, whether federal, provincial or municipal, should be made readily available to these people in order to encourage them to start afresh. I am not suggesting that this be done without appropriate measures being taken, for instance, through the establishment of a supervisory board, but I think that some hope should be given to prisoners. I feel it is the only way to rehabilitate that class of people or at least part of them, because, first of all, they represent an essential source of manpower for our country and, secondly, it is very costly for the government to keep those people in institutions and to maintain their families who suffer hardship. There is no doubt that I will have the opportunity to return to this.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it would be advisable to make intensive research in order to come to a realistic and efficient division of jurisdictions between the central and the provincial governments. I know the federal government and the members of the house are concerned with this matter.