

Measures Against Crime

do about the dangerous offender who will now spend 25 years in prison without eligibility for parole if the murder bill passes in its present form, I contend it is time we take a look at our maximum security institutions. I suggest that what we need is a super maximum security prison for that kind of prisoner, and there may be only ten of them in each of the maximum security prisons that we have. Certainly the institutions we have at the moment are not doing what they should. Morale is at rock bottom in those institutions and a war is continuing between the Solicitor General, the administration, the guards, and inmates. No one has been able to bring them together.

What is the answer to this situation? The answer is not to make the same mistakes again. First of all, in terms of morale we have to examine the question of raising the salaries of people who work in our prisons. They do a difficult and dangerous job and in British Columbia it is one that is not paid very highly, being just above British Columbia's minimum wage. I give people who go into our prisons every day full credit for doing a dangerous job and a great service to our community. But that is only part of the story, Mr. Speaker.

The rest of the story has to do with the whole civil service structuring of the operation of the prisons, and in particular with segregating the kinds of prisoners we have. For example, we should not have sexual offenders and stool pigeons in the same institution as drug traffickers and violent offenders. There is neither rhyme nor reason to that.

The minister has talked about his new program of smaller institutions. I read the Hall report when I first came to the House in 1972 and it seems I am still reading the same report; there has been no change. We do not have any crash priority program to phase out existing facilities and construct new facilities, and until we have the public are not going to be satisfied with this kind of legislation as a means of dealing with those who are in maximum security prisons.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, this legislation is not going to solve the crime problem in this country—let there be no mistake about that. There are major areas not dealt with by the bill. The only preventive legislation is that having to do with gun control. We have to get at other problems such as hard drug trafficking and native crime in Canada. These areas remain untouched. We also have to deal with disparity of income. An examination of the crime rates in urban areas reveals that that is where the highest rates are. It is also where you find the highest disparity of income. That is what breeds crime. It breeds crime through envy, through unemployment, and through child abuse. There is ample evidence of massive child abuse and this is not being controlled.

This party will support some of the sentencing changes because the public are entitled to feel secure. They have a right to be concerned about safety and rising crime rates, rates that are clearly demonstrable. But until we get to the cause of crime which, as I say, is urban poverty, drugs, and psychopathic behaviour that must be identified at an early age, we will not make a serious dent in what is essentially a cultural problem in Canada.

[Mr. Leggett.]

● (2040)

[Translation]

Mr. C.-A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-83 is aimed at protecting Canadian society from perpetrators of violent crimes and others. And the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) told us this afternoon about the different subjects dealt with in this bill. I think that bill C-83 deals with several matters. It is some kind of an omnibus bill. It deals with firearms, parole, penitentiaries, jails, correction institutions and wiretapping.

Mr. Speaker, at first we should expect a bill that would ensure to everyone the security they expect in Canada. After reading the bill more carefully, I realize that the technocrats who drafted it acted once more against common sense. This bill will allow the Minister of Justice to seize arms belonging to honest people under the pretext of protecting them while more freedom will be given to well-known criminals who are threatening the safety of all Canadian citizens. The bill should be entitled "Rifles in jail and criminals at large". This government proposes a stricter control on firearms, but who will be affected by this control, Mr. Speaker? Certainly not the criminal element which is getting larger every day. Once more the good will pay for the bad. In fact, the only group that will be directly and efficiently affected by this control is the majority of honest people owning an arm for their personal use or their pleasure. This will be one more noose around their neck, one more restriction, a control that will not improve by one half of one per cent the safety in our country.

Mr. Speaker, can we believe that this minister will be able to control all the firearms owned by criminals in Canada and elsewhere. Of course not. It would be a marvellous opportunity for criminals to operate in another field: the illegal trade of firearms that will add to that of drugs, prostitution and all other crimes that are increasingly destroying our society.

The point was made previously that the bill would reduce the number of gun accidents. I am convinced that the small percentage or real accidents caused by firearms will certainly not be reduced one tenth of one percent when there is absolute control. We never had such control since the beginning of Canada, and I believe total control as proposed in the bill before us is exaggerated. I suggest it will not reduce in any the number of simple accidents, or even suicides for that matter.

If someone wishes to commit suicide with a firearm, he will find the way to buy a gun and kill himself. But this is disturbing everybody. This is another case of restricting honest citizens' activities, without stopping in no way those who should be stopped, gangsters in other words. It is not good policy in my view to pass such general legislation. I am for a certain amount of control, or some kind of registration for certain types of firearms. I even accept an intelligent control of firearms, a restricted licence. I wish to explain this, Mr. Speaker. I am referring to businessmen, travellers, bank managers, store managers, credit union managers, managers of every other financial institutions that must handle funds day and night. Those people must own licences. In my view, everyone in an important public function should be licenced to carry an arm if he so wishes. This will put him on an equal footing with his