

*Criminal Code*

satisfied that life imprisonment has the same effect.

Basically, in the three examples given, the change takes place because of the personality of the offender. Consideration given not only to the crime committed but also to the offender and the circumstances under which the crime was committed. Why? Because the criminal is more sympathetic? Not necessarily, but it is felt that society must first of all consider him as an unbalanced or sick person or, as the case may be, merely deprive him of his freedom.

Are we aware that in those three cases we are relying, rightly or wrongly, on our penal system? In any case, unconsciously, we are. Unconsciously, because once again we concentrate on this one question: is it advisable to hang this particular criminal not? If the answer is no, then he goes to jail and we forget about him. We forget about him until special circumstances come up such as those which occurred in the past few years. Those past few years, it has dawned on the public that jails were actually schools for crime, which granted degrees in criminal science, instead of institutions devoted to the rehabilitation of the inmates. For too long—and such is the case even today—jails have been considered as places where murderers should be punished, when they are places where they should be rehabilitated.

Even today, much too few of our inmates are given rehabilitation courses. And what do they teach in our jails? Trades are still being taught that have just about vanished from our society. Handicrafts are taught, for instance shoemaking. I think such trades are things of the past. We should apply modern methods like they do in France, for example, where we find one out of five inmates taking courses that will lead him even to a diploma or a master's degree in law. Recent statistics show that inmates often are more successful than regular students.

At the present time, at St. Vincent de Paul, there are two psychologists for 1,700 inmates. That is asking two persons to perform miracles. It is putting them in an impossible situation where they cannot meet the needs and really achieve something lasting. There are still being built in our prisons maximum security cells, or holes, where a dog would not be sent to rot for fear it might become rabid.

[Mr. Goyer.]

• (7:30 p.m.)

Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been appropriated out of public funds to build such holes in St. Vincent de Paul.

In contrast with this amazing policy, a penitentiary meeting modern requirements is being built in Valleyfield.

What is the Canadian policy with regard to penitentiaries? The prisoner is no longer considered as an animal and subjected to conditions which society abhors today, but rather as a man who like any other, is entitled to respect in his sad plight. Guards are inadequately paid. It is acknowledged by our courts that guards connive at prisoners' rackets, supply them with goof balls and even help them to escape from the penitentiary. Is this acceptable?

There are outstanding experts today in the field of mental disease. Mental hospitals are staffed with all the required specialists; budgets have been increased. What is provided in our prisons? Less than nothing. As members of parliament, we are all responsible for this untenable situation. Academic speeches are in order, but the administration must also provide for required needs, so as to bring up to date our penitentiary system and explain to the people that Canada is lagging behind in this field more than any other country in the western world.

Does this mean, Mr. Speaker, that we should wait until reforms are carried out before substituting life imprisonment for the death penalty? No, and here is why.

(1) Abolition exists in fact or is recognized in practice for several types of crimes, whatever the present conditions of our penitentiaries, and the public accepts this.

(2) It is true that the public does not feel secure under the present system of probation. And, here again, I question the qualifications of the people in charge of the system of probation. And what is more, and this is more serious, they are not given the staff required to develop a coherent policy to follow up the person sent back to society, after his sentence is commuted. But, on the other hand, this is corrected by the resolution now before the house, which operates a drastic change by giving the right of parole to the governor in council in last resort.

(3) The conditions in our penitentiaries is not a danger for the safety of society, for once again, it is in all cases maximum security penitentiaries, but rather a serious barrier to the rehabilitation of the individual.