

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

COURTNEY, B.C.—RECENT SUICIDES BY PRISONERS

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General. I gave him notice of it, but I am sorry it was so late in coming. The minister is aware that three people have committed suicide in the Courtney lock-up in Courtney, British Columbia. Two of them were teenagers, and the most recent case of suicide had been arrested on a mischief charge. The major problem would appear to be a lack of adequate supervision of prisoners in the lock-up and that the lock-up is a completely inadequate facility. The lock-up has been talked about since 1972 and a new one promised since 1977, but it seems to have been held back for restraint reasons.

Would the minister investigate the details of these recent deaths? Would he also ensure that prisoners in the Courtney lock-up receive constant supervision and would he further undertake to give us a date on which construction of the new facilities will begin?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for giving me a chance to check the facts following the unfortunate death of this 18-year-old youth. I concede that the cells are not in an ideal condition. In fact, a coroner's jury made recommendations for improving the cells, and I am glad to report to the House that every one of the recommendations that were made I am told has been implemented. There is a construction program in place; it has not been delayed by restraint. The target for completion of the new facilities is the end of 1982, and they will be completed on schedule.

● (1500)

Mr. Skelly: Madam Speaker, the stories that I have heard indicate the problem has been there for some time. Is the minister aware that the problem is not just the lock-up conditions, but the fact they are located in a blind spot and the supervisor is locked outside and cannot see in? With previous deaths in that particular area, one involving a 15-year-old girl and another an adult, there was a problem of supervision. Will the minister undertake that there will be no delay in bringing this matter before Treasury Board quickly, because I understand it is still pending? Will he also undertake to look carefully at the problem of supervision by civilian guards who work in that area?

Mr. Kaplan: I will do that, Madam Speaker. I want to repeat that the understanding I have is that all of the recommendations made by the coroner's jury have been put into effect. I will look into the situation to see if some temporary improvement can be made that will carry the present cells to the completion of the new facilities, which have been approved by Treasury Board and will be completed by the end of 1982.

Point of Order—Mr. McKnight

POINTS OF ORDER

MR. TOWERS—PROCEDURE RESPECTING S.O. 43 MOTION

Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I recognize that it is not given to members of Parliament to reflect on decisions of the Chair, but with regard to a motion I moved under Standing Order 43 today, I believe there is a misunderstanding between the Chair and myself. After looking at the "blues", perhaps the Chair might give a decision on that tomorrow. My motion was not a congratulatory message, but rather called on the communities of Canada to give support to police forces and police associations so that our country will be a better place in which to live.

Madam Speaker: It is often difficult at first glance to see whether a motion is in order. I had the feeling that it was a congratulatory message, or a message of encouragement. I was afraid that if I accepted the motion of the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers), tomorrow and on following days I may be in the position of having to accept motions with regard to nurses, doctors, and other members of the community without whom our life would not be the same. I will look at the hon. member's motion. If I have been unfair, I will certainly allow him to bring it forward on another day.

MR. NIELSEN—NOTICE OF INTENTION TO RAISE POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Madam Speaker, I rise on a different point of order. While the Chair is looking at the motion under Standing Order 43 of the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers), she might at the same time look at the motion under Standing Order 43 moved by the hon. member for Sarnia (Mr. Cullen) which might commend itself for a comparison between the urgency of both.

I rise now to give notice of a point of order that I intend to raise tomorrow. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) made extensive references to and citations from a letter from Prime Minister Thatcher to himself. Extensive references to and citations from the letter have been made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan), both in the public media and in this House. I wish to correlate all those three sources of statements to the rules. I am now simply giving notice that I intend to raise the matter on a point of order tomorrow and give the Table officers an opportunity to advise the Chair in advance as to the precedents, and to offer the government House leader the same advantage.

MR. MCKNIGHT—A PROBLEM IN MATHEMATICS

Mr. Bill McKnight (Kindersley-Lloydminster): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I will be very brief. I wish to bring to the attention of the House the courtesy which the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) extended to those on this side by supplying us with 125 apples from the province of Quebec. However, in order to be fair, we received more cards than apples from the Minister of Agriculture. Knowing his