

Supply—Solicitor General

arises when a person travelling from Canada to the United States is confronted with the question, "Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence?" There is nothing we can do in respect of having the pardon contain words which would permit the person concerned to go to the United States. However, the Solicitor General and the Minister of Justice could speak to United States authorities about reciprocal legislation permitting these people to travel without any restriction. One of the things I should like the Solicitor General to do would be to take the initiative with regard to consulting with the United States authorities, to see whether it would be possible to have reciprocal legislation which would overcome this problem.

Another matter which I should like to bring to the attention of the Solicitor General is that which has to do with recidivism. Mr. Kirkpatrick stated that 44 per cent of recidivism is committed within the first six months of the release of a prisoner, that from 44 to 75 per cent is committed within the first year, and that from 75 per cent to 97 per cent is committed within the first two years. After a two year period recidivism almost passes out of the picture. This is the reason it is so important for us to grapple with and solve the problem within the first two years of the release of the prisoner.

I should like to ask the Solicitor General to comment first on the problem of juvenile delinquency and, second, to tell us what his attitude is concerning the expungement of criminal records and what recommendations he has in mind in this regard.

• (8:20 p.m.)

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, there is only one matter I should like to raise this evening one that was discussed at length this afternoon. I am speaking of the matter of parole and the activities of the National Parole Board. I am sure we all realize the task that is faced by the National Parole Board in making decisions with respect to the cases brought before them. Some of these cases are probably more difficult than others, but I suppose that even the easiest case is not too easy to deal with. They all have their own particular problems and situations, and we can sympathize with the National Parole Board in the work it is attempting to do. There is considerable talk these days about "going soft" on criminals. Other people think society is hard on criminals. However, Mr. Chairman, I shall not discuss that particular aspect of the matter at this time.

[Mr. Roxburgh.]

I wish to bring just one matter to the attention of the minister. I believe this case emphasizes the importance of considering the human element in these problems and perhaps giving the benefit of the doubt in certain cases. I have here a brief that has been built up through correspondence. It concerns the work of the Mennonite central committee, an organization that is doing very fine work in various fields of activity. This organization is working in my own constituency and has established what is called a halfway house project. The objective of the project is to rehabilitate those who have broken the law; to provide means whereby they can be rehabilitated and assist in their own rehabilitation.

The case to which I refer concerns one of the Sons of Freedom who was incarcerated in Mountain Prison at Agassiz, British Columbia. I understand that about five brothers were sentenced. The youngest of them was paroled some time ago. The Mennonite central committee, in an endeavour to assist, contacted the family of one of these men and persuaded them to leave the camp which had been established just outside Mountain Prison. The committee persuaded the family to live in the community of Yarrow, British Columbia, in a home that had been provided by them. The family was looked after by the Mennonite central committee.

Representations were then made to try to effect the parole of the husband and father of this family. For some reason or other the parole board decided against the application. This took place back in August of last year, and I understand this man is still incarcerated. I believe this is a case that should receive very careful and special consideration. Here is an organization that on its own initiative went ahead and provided facilities for this family. They felt it would help to get the family away from the main body of this particular group, the Sons of Freedom, so they persuaded them to live elsewhere and endeavoured to reunite the family and provide the man with a job and proper supervision. They were prepared to assist in his rehabilitation. As I have pointed out, the National Parole Board ruled against the application and apparently it will not be renewed until 1968.

I bring this matter to the attention of the minister because I believe organizations such as this ought to be encouraged in this type of work. I believe also that if we can bring these families together, away from the ordinary environment in which they find themselves, it will assist tremendously in rehabilitation. I