

*Penitentiaries*

thing to do if the proposal were to be accepted. This annual report would be submitted to Parliament by the Solicitor General, and this would also seem the normal thing to do. I believe that what the Hon. Member for Oxford wants is something of a wish that can be entertained by both sides of the House. I think we agree that the management of the Correctional Service now lacks, if I may say so, originality occasionally. Increased public input might be desirable wherever it meets the objectives of a responsible government. Of course, needless to say, we do not have the same political system as in the United States, where the ministers are selected by the President; in Canada they are elected and are part of a responsible government, which means that they are eventually held accountable to the public for their actions.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member for Oxford has said, this recommendation was contained in the report of the 1977 Parliamentary Subcommittee. Since then, the Hon. Member and other Members have urged implementation of this recommendation, which was Recommendation No. 24. However, as indicated by the Hon. Member for Oxford, in spite of his persistence and perseverance, it seems that there are major obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation which is, at first glance, quite interesting since, as stated by the Hon. Member, it calls for greater accountability and an increasing participation by the public, which we would all appreciate.

The Parliamentary Subcommittee came under the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. I remember that, at the time, while having to attend other committee meetings, I had attended some of the meetings of the sub-committee and found its proceedings quite interesting. I would say that this sub-committee displayed a single-mindedness devoid of political partisanship, and this was quite pleasant. I think that, as a result, its members felt that their responsibility was committed, not as party affiliates, but as parliamentarians faced with a serious problem, that of prisoners and their sometimes perplexing actions, whether they are riots, suicides or internal problems. We often look for solutions by increasing public involvement. However, I respectfully submit to the Hon. Member for Oxford that this might not necessarily be the best overall solution. The sub-committee was made up of members from both sides of the House and they submitted their report.

Following its investigation, the sub-committee made 65 recommendations, as mentioned by the Hon. Member for Oxford, aimed at improving the Canadian penitentiary system, which was in need of new ideas and adjustments. As of January 1, 1984, of these 65 recommendations, 47 had been accepted and implemented as submitted or in an amended form; nine had been accepted but called for implementation at a later date; seven had been rejected including, unfortunately for the Hon. Member for Oxford, Recommendation 24; and the last two belonged to a special category over which the Correctional Service did not have full jurisdiction, but which

the Service still considered as these recommendations were nevertheless interesting. I am sure that the Hon. Member for Oxford, who is a reasonable man, realizes that the report as a whole was not only the subject of a study but that, unlike other reports, it was not simply shelved. Many of its important and essential recommendations have been implemented, but not all of them—for reasons we deem fair and reasonable—and the debate continues. I am sure that the door is not completely closed since the problem has not been solved and one should never definitively exclude any solution.

The point to remember, Mr. Speaker, is that 56 of the 65 recommendations made by the parliamentary subcommittee have been accepted and implemented unchanged or in a modified form by the Correctional Service since 1977.

As much as possible, the Solicitor General of Canada and the Correctional Service have tried—and I think that their effort deserves praise—to implement all the recommendations of the parliamentary subcommittee but, as I said, recommendation No. 24 which the Hon. Member for Oxford is raising today in his motion was among those that were rejected. In his response to the parliamentary sub-committee report in August 1977, and it may be important to mention that response of which the Hon. Member may be aware but which I draw to his attention in any event, the then Solicitor General of Canada pointed out that this recommendation was one of the most significant changes advocated by the subcommittee and that its implications were so wide-ranging and difficult to assess that he had asked for time to consider that recommendation more thoroughly. However, he did raise a few questions after reviewing the recommendation for the first time. I would like to recall some of them to show that on such important issues we do make serious studies, and this question has to be considered quite carefully because it is very important, as the Solicitor General of Canada pointed out. For one thing, the then Solicitor General indicated that, if the recommendation was aimed at a greater participation by senior officials in the policy-making process, steps had already been taken to have the staff play a more active role in policy planning. Still, the means suggested by the subcommittee to do that had to be considered more carefully. In other words, the idea itself was accepted, but at the time the ways and means did raise a few questions. According to him, a five-member commission responsible for drafting policies, without full support nor its own analysis and research facilities, would be seriously hindered in its approach. It is a debatable argument, but I think it has some merit and that we ought to speak to that issue in this debate.

● (1730)

On the other hand, the Minister had pointed out that the federal Government wanted to set up commissions and Crown agencies that would be more responsible to the Minister and therefore to Parliament. This recommendation seems to point