

I say no to capital punishment. I say no to throwing away the key. I say no to any kinds of schemes with similar results. I say yes to reform of our penal system. I say there is a better way. But the ultimate objective of that better way is surely not to dispose of human beings, it is to make them more worthwhile. It is to make things more meaningful for them and eventually for all of society.

That is the extent of my remarks. They are brief but they are heartfelt. I do wish that all Members of this House would consider the signal and the objective of a resolution such as this.

**Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby):** Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak to the motion put forward by the Hon. Member for Oxford (Mr. Halliday), I want first to pay tribute to the Hon. Member for the outstanding record he has in this area. I have had the privilege of working with the Member as a member of the Justice Committee for the last five years. I know that before that time, my colleague, the former Member for New Westminster-Coquitlam, the former justice critic for my Party, Stuart Leggatt, worked very closely with the Hon. Member for Oxford and always spoke very highly of him.

In his capacity as justice critic, Mr. Leggatt had an opportunity to serve on the subcommittee on penitentiaries, which has already been referred to by the Hon. Member for Oxford. I think it is important in addressing the substance of the motion today that we examine the content of that subcommittee report and also look at what has happened to the report since it was tabled in 1977.

That report arose from the work of the unanimous and non-partisan work of a group of Members of Parliament who were appointed to look into conditions in the Canadian penitentiary system because of some very serious incidents of violence in the system. These incidents occurred in a variety of areas whether Kingston, Laval or other areas. The subcommittee found that the penitentiary system was in a state of crisis at the time they reported. The sub-committee said that unless its recommendations were acted upon and acted upon urgently, that state of crisis would continue.

I think the Member for Oxford has clearly documented the fact that unfortunately a succession of Solicitors General did not act upon those fundamental recommendations. I will mention Attorneys General as well. I refer to Attorneys General because surely one of the most fundamental recommendations made by that subcommittee was a recommendation that first and foremost in the Canadian criminal justice system we must look at alternatives to imprisonment. That recommendation has been shown to be so very true. The recommendation which that committee made six or seven years ago has been clearly brought out by the experience we have seen since that time. I deeply regret that governments, and I must say governments both Liberal and Conservative, have failed to respond to that very fundamental recommendation.

If we are going to be serious about reform of the criminal justice system and reform of the penal system, we must recognize that our prisons are far too crowded. There are

### *Maximum Security Prison*

literally thousands of people in the Canadian prison system. Instead of serving time behind walls, they should be repaying their debt to society in other non-custodial ways. There are many reasons for that. One can look solely at it from an economic perspective and note that last year the statistics show that in the most recent year for which there were comprehensive statistics, that is 1980 to 1981, governments collectively spent some \$845 million on the delivery of adult correctional services.

What is the comparative cost of imprisonment as opposed to non-custodial forms of supervision, community supervision, for example? The per capita cost to Canadians was nine times as high for imprisonment as it was for non-custodial forms of supervision. These alternatives to imprisonment could include fine options, fines geared to income, and community work service. Instead of the community being required to pay some \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year to incarcerate an individual, he is repaying his debt to society. It can include restitution to the victim of the crime.

• (1730)

There are a variety of other options to imprisonment. We have seen in the country partly as a result of the mandatory 25-year provisions, the compromise made at the time of the debate on capital punishment, prisons which are rapidly becoming overcrowded institutions; indeed, they already are far too crowded. We will have to come to grips with the reality that 25-year minimum sentences will have to be re-examined. If they are not, I predict that we will see serious problems in the very near future.

Overcrowding has a devastating impact on the prison system. We have already looked at the implications of double-bunking within the prison system. We have seen a dramatic rise in violence within the prison system over the last couple of years, whether it be suicides, violence by prisoner against prisoner or indeed violence by prisoner against guard. We have seen the tragedy of Archambault where a number of guards were killed. The level of that violence will surely increase unless we in this Parliament come to grips with the fact that the prison system in Canada has failed.

In the future, in 10 or 20 or 30 years, Canadians will look back on the prison system as one of the most dramatic failures in the criminal justice system. We will ask ourselves as citizens how it was that we could possibly tolerate a system which so demonstrably failed to meet its objectives. We know all too well that there is no serious attempt to rehabilitate in many institutions.

Another critical recommendation of the subcommittee was that there should be meaningful opportunities for work in institutions. I believe a national prison industries program was suggested. That recommendation has not been implemented by a succession of governments. Instead of incarcerating people for lengthy terms without any possibility of rehabilitation, we should be looking at the opportunity for meaningful and effective work for people who are in fact imprisoned.