

Parole Act

I admire what George Street is trying to do in our society to help our parole system. He fights against innumerable odds. He does the best he can as one individual, but he receives little or no help from the government. This is why we have trouble with recidivists and all the problems we have with our inmates today. Where does the problem lie? We spend thousands and thousands of dollars keeping men in our institutions who need help on the inside for the outside.

I can tell of a situation where a young man of another race was assigned to a penal institution in this country. He was sent there at age 17 and remained until age 33. No one looked after him. He just sat there. No one taught him how to read and write. He was not given any education. He was taught to upholster chairs and chesterfields. A judge on a very routine investigation of the institution found him sitting there upholstering. He wondered why he was there. The amazing thing is he was never sent to that institution. Someone said he was a psychotic, and away he went to that institution for about 15 years. No one looked at this man to see the problem. Really, there was no problem. He had a rough beginning in life as many of these boys do. He stayed there for about 15 years. There was no trial, no judge who sentenced him to that institution. He was just put there and forgotten. This is our penal system.

Bring the matter to the courts for redress, and the magistrate says; "Do not look to me for redress; I was not on duty at that time." I think of this young man put in an institution for 15 years, with no kind of help, nothing going for him. So he is black? So what? He is a Canadian citizen—white, black, pink or purple; I don't care. Surely this is a despicable record and we can do better. We certainly need more parole officers. Why does the government not go the whole way? Of course we need more board members, but we also need more parole officers, people who would go into these institutions, talk with the prisoners and decide whether they are eligible to go back into society.

The hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) says there should be natives, or ex-convicts or ex-parolees sitting on this ad hoc group. I do not see any objection to that. I would like to see one representative of the native population on this group, and if I could believe the minister when he says he would arrange for such an appointment, I would be content. Unfortunately, with all due respect, we cannot always believe what spokesmen for the government say. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) has given so many different sets of conflicting facts and figures that his credibility leaves a lot to be desired. I am reminded of the small boy who was having difficulty with his arithmetic. His teacher asked him, "Suppose I were to lay two eggs here and three eggs over there; how many would I have laid?" The small boy looked at him and replied, "Well, teacher, I really don't think you could do it."

I feel the same way about this government. I do not think they can or will do what they promise. I should like to leave the legislation as it is, leave it up to good brains and good intentions to decide who shall form this committee. Basically, I do not like the amendment, but I am ambivalent in this respect because the government so often says one thing and does another. However, as I say,

[Mr. Morgan.]

if the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) will do what he said he would do this afternoon, I shall be content, if I can believe what they say.

Mr. Horner (Crowfoot): Can you?

Mr. Morgan: Yes, that is the question. And I am not sure of the answer. So maybe I should be inclined to go along with the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) and opt for one member from the native population. I say this because I think we have a sad story in what the people across the way have done to the Indian people. They have not done it to themselves; we must blame ourselves for the situation. They are victims of their environment and we must take full responsibility.

I look to where the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) sits across the way, and I say to him, "It has been a lousy job." It is time we made use of the abilities and skills of our native people, yet where do they end up? The government has the power to assist the Indian people, but so far it has obviously not done so. The attitude is: let them stay in jail, let them rot. That is what is happening.

Mr. Horner (Crowfoot): Twenty-five per cent.

Mr. Morgan: The hon. member for Skeena proposed that somebody on parole should be a member of the ad hoc group. I do not think it should be somebody on parole. I think it should be somebody free of parole, not subject to the sanction and the unction of penal authority. He should be free in what he says and thinks.

I was talking the other day to a young man who was on day parole. He had been found guilty of a drug offence, possession, and had been sentenced to some months in jail. The judge recommended him for day parole immediately, but day parole took about two months to arrange. That is bureaucracy, I guess. He has now become very interested in the John Howard Society and is working to help people who are in trouble as he was. He is a university graduate, a very intelligent young man. It is true he got himself into difficulty, but he is not the first to do so nor will he be the last. It is people like this who should be given an opportunity to help people through one institution or another. He knows the problems. He has been, I suppose you would say, associated with the wrong elements, though I do not much like making comparisons.

My hon. friend from Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) said we do not need expertise. Perhaps he is right; perhaps some people do lack direct experience. But I do not have the gut feeling, if I may use that term, that experts are always wrong. If there is a happy admixture of the two qualities, we shall have reached the position we are seeking. Again I say to the Solicitor General that the bill should surely have been more comprehensive, that he ought not to walk into the House waving a piece of paper as a "be all and end all" when there is so much more to be done. Let us get something done.

● (2150)

We have been here ten months, yet this is the best legislation we can produce to deal with all the problems in penal institutions throughout this country. We have ten