

*Organized Crime*

he wants. Oh, sure, he is going to be penalized, all he has to do is post bail and he simply gets out, right in the street. What about the National Parole Board? It is the same thing with them, everything is fine; it is almost a vacation board for some prisoners, this one comes back, the other gets out and that other one is travelling.

We are about to see on the roads a new type of signs: Warning—Prisoners crossing. Yes, they are about to do it. When I was a little boy, I could see warning signs that read! Caution—Animals crossing. But now what we will see is this: Caution—Prisoners crossing. Yes, they get in, they get out and they move around. No wonder Canadians are generally preoccupied with this matter. The hon. member for Richmond (Mr. Beaudoin) sat on the committee that reviewed penitentiaries and he visited some. Take a look at the recommendations of that committee. They were unanimous and quite positive. Mark my words: Within three or five years from now, this very subject will again be debated in the House. We will only find out that the results will have been almost zilch just as what came out of all previous royal inquiry commission. This is why I say that in principle I cannot disagree with the proposition of the New Democratic Party concerning the establishment of a royal commission. But this proposition is not enough to show that we really want to fight organized crime.

Mr. Speaker, we have an alternative: If we want law and order, we will adopt mechanisms and legislation proving that we are serious and consequently we will punish those who violate the law and encourage those who abide the law. I think that is essential. The government must think twice before offhandedly dismissing this proposition. On the other hand, I invite my colleagues of the NDP to specify what will be the extended terms of reference they wish to give this commission.

● (1700)

[English]

**Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Justice):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Solicitor General (Mr. Fox), as the minister to whom the RCMP reports, has given a full and comprehensive statement on behalf of the government on the motion before the House. However, I want to cover very briefly a few points that result from the statement of the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt).

First, I want to say to him that he asked us to be non-political and then he proceeded himself to be immensely political, as did the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams). Surely there is no disagreement in the House, on either side, that we must search continuously to find in this country the most effective means of combatting organized crime. Little is achieved in the search for the most effective method by trying to turn this into a political argument or trying to attack the motives of this or that party. I am saddened by the political approach that the hon. member for New Westminster took to this whole issue. Our objectives in the House have been, and continue to be, to find the most effective way to deal with organized crime. Its influence in Canada is pervasive, it is vicious, and it is costing our economy millions of dollars and

countless lives. Its addition to the crime picture in Canada is frightening to all of us involved.

The CBC, in its program, has brought to a wider public some knowledge and recognition of the problems in this country relating to organized crime. But I want to make it clear, as did the Solicitor General, that that program brought forward nothing that was new—most of it was already public knowledge—and certainly nothing that was not already known to law enforcement officers across the country. The hon. member for New Westminster seemed to think that that program has suddenly put a new light on organized crime in law enforcement circles. That is without foundation.

It would seem to me that the most important thing in debating this motion is that we want, and it seems to me that the people of Canada want, not inquiries but action. They want to see people investigated, charged, prosecuted effectively, and incarcerated in our penitentiaries. As the *Globe and Mail*, with which I often disagree, said the other day in an editorial on this issue—they were referring to an attorney general—“He talks of an inquiry. We have had inquiries. What we need is prosecutions”. I totally agree with that.

The Solicitor General has pointed out in his statement the methods that Canadian police forces are using by joint force operations to get prosecutions. To bring an air of reality to this debate I would like to read into the record a statement that was issued a few moments ago in Toronto by three of this country's major police forces, the metropolitan police force, the Ontario provincial police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It reads:

The metropolitan police force, the Ontario provincial police and the RCMP have been aware from the beginning that the CBC was involved in a research program in order to produce a documentary exposing some aspects of organized crime in Canada. We have all viewed the program and we will comment on it as it pertains to Ontario. We make no comment on the factual accuracy of what was shown on this program. However, as far as we are concerned there were no new facts of any investigative evidentiary value that were disclosed.

We recognized for some time that organized crime is active in Ontario. The three forces represented have been continually working to prosecute those persons involved in such criminal activities. These investigations have been carried out independently as well as in combined force operations. In respect of a number of people mentioned in the documentary, in so far as Ontario is concerned, there have been prosecutions and convictions and charges are pending against others.

For example, Papalia along with Sheldon Swartz was recently convicted of extortion and sentenced to six years in prison. Cotroni and Violi were also convicted of extortion and while the convictions have been quashed by the Ontario Court of Appeal, leave to appeal that decision to the Supreme Court of Canada is currently being sought by the attorney general's department. Paul Volpe has been charged with conspiracy to defraud. This case is currently before the courts.

In the past five months, combined force operations have charged in excess of 60 people whom we have identified as being involved in organized crime in Ontario. Charges have been laid ranging from extortion in connection with loansharking, counterfeiting, fraud, gambling, offensive weapons and drugs. The three forces are also continuing to enhance their efforts towards prosecuting persons involved in organized crime. This approach is in accordance with the public statement made by the solicitor general of Ontario, the hon. Mr. MacBeth, on April 19, 1977. The province of Ontario has provided the OPP with additional resources and the attorney general, the hon. Mr. McMurtry, has assigned prosecutorial staff from his ministry to handle the prosecution and to provide legal advice to the police during the investigation.