

Supply—Solicitor General

way to meet this situation would be for a person whose record had been erased to answer the question in the negative. It was argued he would have legal grounds for doing so.

I feel strongly that this is a wrong approach. I do not think there is any legislative way in which a lie can be made into the truth or the truth made into a lie. Regardless of what has been done in the meantime, if a man is asked whether he has ever been convicted of a criminal offence, and he has been so convicted, he must answer, yes.

I suggest to the Solicitor General, who I understand will be bringing in this legislation, that the only question which ought to be allowed should be one like this "Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence for which no certificate of rehabilitation has been granted?" In such a situation the person concerned can properly answer that question in the negative without committing perjury, either with legal justification or without.

I trust the minister, when he replies, will answer some of the questions I have raised, particularly those concerning minimum security.

Mr. Winch: I welcome the opportunity of making a few comments on some of the matters which fall within the jurisdiction of the Solicitor General.

May I say, first of all, how much I regret the fact that the special joint committee of the House of Commons and the Senate on penitentiaries was not reappointed immediately this new session began. I fully realize that there is no hope of its being appointed now, and that even if it were it would have little opportunity to get down to work before the summer recess, if there is to be one. The matters which were in the minds of the members of that committee will therefore have to wait until the fall.

As the previous speaker pointed out, the committee was never able to get down to a real study of many of the problems of our penitentiary service. This work is important and it still remains to be done.

I particularly regret the failure to reappoint this committee because it has denied us the opportunity to look more closely into the situation at the women's prison. Had the committee been able to meet some two or three weeks ago I feel it would have been in a position to make a report expressing its views on this situation before the summer recess. I for one, as a member of the committee, was

[Mr. Aiken.]

absolutely amazed at the position taken and the statements made by the acting superintendent. Mr. Clark. I could hardly believe my ears when he told the committee that at the time he took over the place was filthy, the inmates were disrespectful, the program was poor, the discipline lax, and so on. I was not the only one who was amazed. Other members of this house, and Senators who have visited the institution time after time, could not believe what was being said about it. It was of course an indictment of Miss Macneill, the former superintendent. I am sure that the penitentiary service itself must have been amazed at these statements. I only wish they, as the penitentiary service, had come out and refuted the indictment of Miss Macneill, and refuted the allegations. It was within their power and knowledge to do so.

• (8:40 p.m.)

I would like to place on the record the views and remarks of the deputy commissioner of penitentiaries following his visit to the women's prison. I find that he reported in November, 1965, when Miss Macneill was there, and this is what he said:

The most notable feature in the prison for women was that all inmates, except three who are dissociated, were fully employed.

The institution generally was clean and tidy and, particularly, the rooms in the new part of the institution were beautifully kept.

The school program is outstanding and I was most pleased to see the Indian women improving their educational standards.

A visit to the home economics building, where I was entertained at tea with the inmates, was most enlightening. This type of program is excellent for female inmates and certainly should be continued.

He went on to say:

Regardless of the administrative problems that may have arisen in the past in relation to the operation of the prison for women, I must say that the superintendent has an excellent program in operation and, from what I could see from my half-day visit, the inmates were being given every opportunity and encouragement to make the best use of their time in prison.

This is the report of the deputy commissioner, yet we have these statements made by the new acting superintendent. Because of the conflict, because of the situation, I am most sorry that the committee has not been given an opportunity of meeting now, so as to bring in its views and recommendations as to the policies that should appertain in a women's penitentiary.

The Solicitor General pointed out that crime in Canada is on the upswing and that we are facing a critical situation. He also pointed to