

with recommendations that we should have a different system, that we should have fewer people in jail, that we should have more probation and parole, and that we should segregate first offenders from hardened criminals. The public assumes that because the commissions have recommended these things, we have in fact done them, and that since we have done these things and since crime continues to increase, these recommendations have not worked and will not work. The public is misinformed; the public misunderstands. We have never done most of the things which have been recommended by these committees and commissions which governments have appointed.

Our prisons are overcrowded because our parole officers carry case loads which are so big that they cannot possibly do a good job or as a good a job as they should do in deciding who should get parole and who should not. We do not segregate first offenders who if they were not sent to jail would probably never commit a second crime. We have not really examined the problem of how to deal with the native people who are in our jails and who in western Canada at least make up substantially more than 50 per cent of the jail population. I think with regard to women the figure is probably over 60 per cent of the jail population. We have not really examined the reasons native people commit crimes for which they are sent to jail, almost all of which crimes are associated with the misuse of alcohol. We have not really thought through a method of dealing with native offenders as compared with white offenders who are in jail for entirely different reasons.

It is for all these reasons that our system is not working, and because our system is not working people are asking for tougher and tougher sentencing, which has not worked in the past and which will not work in the future. We need to change our whole approach, and in the two bills introduced—this one and the one dealing with capital punishment—there is no indication that the government has any real intention of changing its approach in a fundamental way other than just changing words and phrases. Because I believe that is so, I do not foresee any real reduction in the number of people who commit crimes and the number of people who will be sent to jail in the near future.

● (1600)

I want to spend some time dealing with two or three specific matters dealt with in this bill. First of all, there is the question of gun control. Let me begin by saying that I doubt if there is a member in the House who has had less experience in the use of guns than I have. So I make it clear that I do not speak as an expert. I speak because it is an important question, and because such a large number of my constituents have written, telephoned or seen me to discuss this matter, mostly to register their objection to the proposal which the government is making. I find it interesting that I am frequently advised by the people who speak to me on these two questions that I should vote for capital punishment—although I disagree with capital punishment—because 80 per cent or more of the people shown in the Gallup poll have been for capital punishment.

People who urge me to vote against the proposals to license guns do not tell me that 83 per cent of the people in the Gallup poll have indicated that they are for some form of gun registration. I will vote for this bill on second reading, and for the licensing of guns, although I believe a

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large number of questions must be answered in committee before I can be certain that I will vote for this measure on third reading. I will vote for it because I cannot help but be appalled by the large, continuing increase in the number of deaths and injuries as a result of the deliberate or accidental use of guns. Figures given to us in the material prepared by the government are pretty startling. Murders committed with firearms increased from 178 in 1970 to 272 in 1974. There are now probably 10 million long-guns such as rifles and shotguns in the possession of Canadian citizens. More and more guns have been used in the commission of violent crimes. I am appalled by those figures, and if licensing of guns will tend to reduce their use, I have to vote for this bill.

I listened very carefully to the hon. member for St. Paul's (Mr. Roberts) who spoke before me. He put on the record some very interesting statistics showing that the number of deaths as the result of the use of hand-guns is very much lower in Canada than it is in the United States. He said that this was because—and I have to agree with him—for years we have required the registration of hand-guns and therefore we have a much smaller percentage of hand-guns in the possession of Canadian citizens than they have in the United States.

I will not repeat his statistics, but I want to put on the record the comments of the chief of police in Detroit whom I heard on a CBC radio program some ten years ago. Ten years ago Detroit was, as it is now, the murder city in the United States. There are more murders committed in Detroit in one year than there are in all of Canada. The chief of police said, during that radio interview some ten years ago, that thousands of people in Detroit are buying revolvers because they say they want to protect themselves and their families in case there is a race riot. He said that they had had very few race riots and even less deaths in Detroit, but people have the guns. What happens is that some Saturday night, two couples are playing bridge and have had too much to drink: the wife makes a particularly bad bid, and the husband—who in the old days, before he had a gun, might have reached over and hit her across the chin—gets angry, takes the gun and shoots and kills her. That is what is happening with the use of guns in Detroit.

We have avoided that in Canada, and I hope we can avoid it by what they have had in the United States, that is, by licensing guns which it is proposed should be licensed, and therefore cutting down on the use of guns, particularly the use of guns by people who have had no experience and who do not know how to use them. When I say that, I automatically exclude people who belong to game and fish clubs and people who belong to gun clubs. I am not worried about them, because they have had experience and training in the use of guns. Having said I intend to vote for the basic principle of this bill, and particularly this section, I want to raise a number of questions which I think are quite legitimate and have to be answered either in this debate or in committee before I can feel 100 per cent certain that I can vote for the bill on third reading.

I am thankful to the game and fish clubs and to the gun clubs which have raised questions and objections to this bill. Many of their objections and questions are quite legitimate—I will put some on the record—but many, I believe, are exaggerated and have been brought forward by