

Release of Yves Geoffroy from Penitentiary

The marriage was performed at St. Vincent de Paul parish church on December 24, 1971 by Father Ninkeri in the presence of Mrs. Laurence Geoffroy Amyot, sister of, and witness for, Mr. Geoffroy, and Mr. Raymond Denis, who was witness for Miss Parent.

I should add here that on January 11, 1972 the Court of Appeals of Quebec rejected Geoffroy's appeal. Hence, the question of Mr. Geoffroy's wife's inability to testify against him is unlikely to arise in the case for which Mr. Geoffroy was in penitentiary and concerning which he had lodged an appeal.

As for the question of temporary leave, according to the Commissioner's directives and to Section 26 of the Penitentiary Act, an act approved by Parliament, a temporary leave of three days or less is granted by the Director of the Institution after the request has been studied by the Inmate Classification Board of the Institution, following a recommendation by the inmate's classification officer.

On November 10, 1971 a recommendation that a temporary leave for marriage absence of three days be granted to Mr. Geoffroy was presented to the Inmate Classification Board of St. Vincent de Paul Institution, a board made up of 16 members. Eleven members studied this particular case and the unanimous decision of the board was that Mr. Geoffroy should be granted 50 hours leave to begin at 8 a.m. December 24 and to end at 10 a.m. December 26. This decision was finally approved by the director of the institution.

Mr. Geoffroy did not return to the penitentiary following the expiry of his leave period and was declared illegally at large on December 27, 1971.

The Quebec Provincial Police, the RCMP and international police forces were alerted and police investigations are underway.

A review of the known facts relating to the permission of marriage and the leave of absence granted to Mr. Geoffroy does not indicate that any employee of the Canadian Penitentiary Service violated the authority delegated to him by the Commissioner. There is no evidence of any wrongdoings by anyone to influence an employee of the Canadian Penitentiary Service in the decision to permit Mr. Geoffroy to marry Miss Parent or to give him leave of absence. I myself, or members of my staff or the Commissioner of Penitentiaries were never personally involved in this matter either directly or indirectly—

[English]

Mr. Hees: They were all just good friends.

[Translation]

Mr. Goyer: —and, contrary to reports appearing in the press, Mr. Geoffroy was never a friend, a classmate nor an acquaintance of mine.

It is regrettable that undue credence was placed on the statement that the two brothers of Mr. Geoffroy were in ill-health and that their conditions created an insecure future for the Geoffroy children. These reports were accepted in good faith by the authorities; unfortunately however, later inquiry revealed that this part of the social agency's report was based on hearsay.

In the light of the circumstances, it is clear that a more thorough and careful investigation ought to have been carried out.

[Mr. Goyer.]

I reviewed with the Commissioner and officials of the Penitentiary Service all the relevant information and on January 10, 1972 invited the media to my office to make a public statement and to answer questions.

In that statement, I said:

I have instructed my officials to refine the screening process for certain types of cases such as those serving life sentences and other inmates who may warrant special review. Furthermore, as to permission to marry, the procedures will be amended to include legal consideration along with the social, moral, and religious aspects of the question.

As a result, on January 28, 1972 Mr. Paul Faguy, Commissioner of Penitentiaries, announced changes in the guidelines pertaining to temporary leave of absence and permission to marry. The changes are as follows:

1. Temporary Leave without escort will not be considered until at least six months of sentence have been served.

2. Temporary Leave without escort will not be considered for those serving life sentences, habitual criminals, dangerous sexual offenders, and persons known by police to be connected with organized crime until three years of sentence have been served.

3. No persons convicted as dangerous sexual offenders will be granted leave of absence until psychiatric consultation has taken place and special clearance given.

4. The Regional Director must approve the first two leaves of absence granted to inmates in the four categories.

5. Recommendation for the granting of temporary absence will have to state clearly the reasons for the recommendation and must be supported by fully documented community investigation reports prepared by either a private social agency or the National Parole Service.

6. When any inmate presents a request for permission to marry, advice on legal implications of the marriage must be sought in advance from the provincial Attorney General.

However spectacular this single case may be viewed, it must be judged in perspective against the total leave program. A success rate of 99 percent should encourage the continuation of a program which is contributing to returning criminal offenders to society as better adjusted and more useful citizens.

I wish to conclude by giving hon. members the following assurances:

1. The leave and the permission to marry were approved under the authority provided by the Canadian Penitentiary Act and the procedures and delegation of authority were in accord with established instructions.

We all realize that the decision was an error, but so far as can be ascertained, it was made *bona fide*.

2. It has been suggested that there may have been some direct or indirect influence exerted on or through the Solicitor General on behalf of Mr. Geoffroy to grant him permission for special leave or an authorisation to marry. This suggestion or innuendo I reject categorically.

3. I am informed by the Commissioner of the R.C.M.P. that all appropriate action has been undertaken by the police authorities to investigate all possible criminal