

credit for that great leap forward in corrections, which was only in response to the persistent request of the natives themselves.

Honourable senators, I have in my office a reference list that runs from 1973 to 1988 of over 150 studies, reports, evaluations, statistical reviews, preliminary issues, observation profiles, opinion studies, task force reports, inventories, a longitudinal analysis—whatever that is—policy frameworks, surveys, assessments, summaries, project plans, guidelines, all of which have been dedicated to a solution to the problem of the native in custody. Over 100 were commissioned by the Correctional Service of Canada, the Parole Board and the Solicitor General's Department. Of course, the Department of Health and Welfare weighs in with seven reports. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has produced three reports dealing with the native justice system. The Department of Justice, the Justice Committee of the House of Commons, the Law Reform Commission, the Sentencing Commission, and the Canadian Bar Association—all have produced reports. The topic has become like the environment—now everyone has to have a report on the native in custody.

It seems to me that the native can be forgiven if he reaches the conclusion that the greatest benefit of his being in custody is reaped by report writers or contract consultants who are hired by the government to investigate and write these reports.

● (1640)

The principal obstacle to obtaining meaningful treatment for the aboriginal is the persistent stereotyped view of the aboriginal and our limited understanding of his lifestyle and his culture. We must change the areas of programming and treatment to be sensitive to his needs as a native offender. We should not focus on his criminality, but rather we must treat him as an individual with special needs requiring a special program.

Alternatives to prison must be developed in a meaningful way with a view to reintegrating him into his own society. The recommendations of the Daubney Committee of the House of Commons will go a long way if adopted and accepted. I hope that one of the first objectives of this new committee, when it is established, will be to undertake a review of that report and to call the officials before the committee to explain their progress in following the report, because it outlined a great deal of meaningful progress that could be made with respect to inmate training.

The final area is pre-release and parole. All of the available information from all of the studies indicates that natives have less opportunity for release on temporary absence, on day parole, or on parole. They are called upon to serve their complete sentence far more often than the white or non-native. The native offender is less likely to be released on parole. In 1987 non-natives comprised 42 per cent of the inmates released on parole, while 18 per cent were native. The fact is that they are called upon to serve a greater proportion of their sentence in custody.

[Senator Hastings.]

I called the Parole Board recently with respect to day parole, and the statistics continue to come out the same as they have always done. After an intense examination of 349 files, it was found that 48 per cent of the general population waived their right to a day-parole hearing. Fifty-eight per cent—almost 60 per cent—of the native population waived their right. They do not even want to go to the Parole Board. They are intimidated by the Parole Board. However, a more interesting fact is that, of those who did go to the Parole Board, 10 per cent of native applicants received day parole whereas 23 per cent of the non-native inmates applying received day parole. Twice as many non-natives received day parole as did natives.

You may ask why. I can only tell you it is because day parole is a procedure that is ours. It is fine for a young white offender. He can provide the Parole Board with his educational plan and say that he is going back to university or to high school. He can provide the Parole Board with a release plan that involves employment. He can provide the Parole Board with community support. How does the native boy provide the Parole Board with a logical, reasonable, release plan? That is systemic discrimination.

Honourable senators will recall passing Bill C-67, which was to protect us forever from violent offenders. Sixty-one per cent of the referrals for that detention process on the Prairies were natives. I went to Saskatchewan Penitentiary where which 18 of them were referred. Two were non-native. When I asked for an explanation, I was told that the native is much more violent. Many explanations are offered for the overrepresentation of natives in the detention referrals. First, many felt that a higher proportion of natives than non-natives are incarcerated for crimes of violence. However, if crimes of violence are defined as offences on the schedule of that act, an analysis of inmates registered in federal institutions shows that natives are not overrepresented among those inmates who have been admitted for offences on the schedule.

Someone, somewhere, decided that the native offender is much more violent and much more dangerous and, therefore, should be kept in until the end of his sentence. This is part of the systemic discrimination that prevails in the system, as I hope I have explained, from the time of exposure and arrest to the time of release. I do not believe it to be intentional, but it is becoming so ingrained that it will be close to being intentional if we do not seize the opportunity and address it—and address it quickly.

It is for that reason, Senator Watt, that I am not discouraged or sad, even though I have watched this system over the last 25 years. I have seen progress, but it is very slow. However, I say to Senator Watt and to Senator Adams that, if we seize this opportunity and move with our best efforts, we can contribute to a solution of the socioeconomic problems of natives in our Canadian society. I hope to play my part in seeking a solution to this damnable problem of the native in custody.

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc: Honourable senators, I do not intend to speak at great length, but I would like to say a few words