

these places and that if they misbehaved in any way they would be sent to a more secure and more unpleasant prison. Prisoners were allowed to work in the community, even take box lunches and wear ordinary clothes. Even the usual prison guards were replaced with men from the community who were called correctional officers. But there were not enough in the "best" category of prisoners because the minor criminals and first offenders were in the provincial jails. It takes a two-year sentence to send you to a penitentiary. In addition, the correctional officers would not stay in their jobs because of the lack of response from inmates and because many guards were attacked or threatened by inmates. All of this happened in spite of the near luxury conditions of diet, entertainment, passes and so on.

The easy prisons in British Columbia have all been failures. Statistics have shown that escapes and failures to return from leave are so numerous that local municipal councils have asked that leaves be stopped, only to be told that they were over-reacting. Only 36 per cent of inmates in British Columbia in March, 1972, were in maximum security prisons, while over half of them were in medium security prisons. Medium security means a wire fence which can be climbed easily and minimum security means no fence at all.

The Solicitor General spoke today of the increased population of the penitentiaries and of the inability of his department to obtain another site for the 100-year old British Columbia penitentiary at New Westminster. This is a maximum security institution and New Westminster does not want it any more. Has the Solicitor General wondered why nobody else wants these institutions, either?

Let me tell you of a correctional seminar which I attended as an observer in Vancouver just two years ago. The story that unfolded was this. The city of Mission which suffered economically since it ceased to be the western terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway line, reluctantly agreed to be the home of a new federal prison. There was to be a small minimum security area, some medium security and a large maximum security building with perhaps 400 inmates. The land was cleared, the preliminary plans were prepared, and municipal services were installed at great cost to the government and to the city of Mission. In fact, the idea of the new prison came to be welcomed by Mission City as an economic shot in the arm. It must be illustrative of the government's planning that the participants in this seminar succeeded in persuading the federal government to stop construction of the Mission prison, leaving the people of Mission holding the bag. They are still holding the bag as far as I know. They had their economic hopes dashed and were left with an uncompleted eyesore upon which a few prefabricated buildings have been placed.

● (2200)

This group persuaded the federal government that increased maximum security prisons were not needed because of the new rehabilitative programs that were in effect. Now, the present Solicitor General tells us he is having difficulty handling the increase in prison population. Is it any wonder that the government is having difficulty finding a home for the prison to replace the

### *Penitentiaries*

British Columbia penitentiary at New Westminster? The government cannot be relied upon to keep its plans or its prisoners under control. In short, the government has proved that its prisons are not good neighbours and the people of British Columbia do not want bad neighbours.

It is clearly time that a proper investigation was held. I give my urgent support to this motion of my colleague, the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond-Delta (Mr. Reynolds).

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe):** Mr. Speaker, I should not like to let slip the chance to take part in such an important debate, on a subject which is causing great concern and anxiety to the population.

Earlier today, in the Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, I expressed to the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) not only our sympathy but also our compassion for the problems he is up against, but I also reminded him that, while we understand his problems, we expect a lot of him. We expect him to give an account of himself and to explain to the people what has caused this series of escapes.

I say this by way of introduction and I should like to add immediately that this series of incidents, especially considering that there have been 46, I believe, this year in the province of Quebec, 18 in the last few months, and five this week, seems to me to be a tragedy rich in implications.

It is a tragedy which can first of all expose to ridicule the administration of justice in general and, secondly, lead to scorn for public institutions and penal institutions in particular. This series of escapes has the further disadvantage of undermining the morale of the officers and guardians of the peace. Another disadvantage is that they frustrate the police who, day after day, attempt to carry out their duty in the face of opposition, and whose sole consolation sometimes is seeing those they have managed to put in prison get out as quickly as they went in.

The brunt of this tragedy is the growing concern of the public, at a time when the population of Quebec in particular sees murderers who have been condemned to life imprisonment, who have managed to escape once and commit other murders, being condemned anew, only to escape again today. Let us hope that they will commit no more crimes!

And finally, Mr. Speaker, the true meaning of this tragedy lies in the fact that there is real danger in jeopardizing positive progress achieved in the field of rehabilitation because the gravity of these developments might blur the prospects of rehabilitation held forth to the people by dedicated people who strove towards a better future for inmates.

I confess that I was not free from emotion when, a few minutes ago, I heard the hon. member for Timiskiming (Mr. Peters), as an example of rehabilitation, recall the case of the young man who appeared before me in 1963 or early in 1964 following the St. Vincent de Paul riot. I can still see him stand there, a strapping fellow with a record of armed robbery and all kinds of things, with a smashed jaw and a bruised face. He had been badly battered by the guards, and I told him that his punishment had been severe enough to preclude the court, in the name of socie-