

*Government Orders*

As well, particular public attention is directed to the plight of victims who are perceived as being victimized twice, once by the offender and then by an uncaring system.

This bill seeks to address these perceptions by dealing clearly and forcefully with the issue of public safety. We have made public safety the number one principle in this bill.

[*Translation*]

The interpretation of this one important principle is this—if the release of an offender threatens society, the offender will not be released. The government wants to get a message to two groups. First of all, the government wants to assure the public that from this point forward, they, instead of offenders, will get the benefit of the doubt. The government also wants to send a strong message to all those who work in the parole and prison system that law-abiding citizens come first and that at no time should public safety be put in jeopardy.

Now having said all that, I want to turn briefly, for the record, to explain who is responsible for what in this complex and huge process known as the criminal justice system.

First of all, as Solicitor General, I am the minister responsible for a number of federal agencies but most important and of direct relevance to this bill and the criminal justice system, I am the minister responsible for the Correctional Service of Canada and the National Parole Board. To make the point, I am responsible for criminals after they have been sentenced by a court, and my colleague, the Minister of Justice, is responsible for the Criminal Code and the development of sentencing procedures, both of which are administered by the provinces through the provincial court system.

Members will realize that a great many of the proposals which are in Bill C-36 were put forward last year in the consultation document or Green Paper that was widely distributed called "Directions for Reform".

This document was jointly released in July 1990 by the then Solicitor General, Pierre Cadieux, and by the Minister of Justice, Kim Campbell.

[*English*]

As well, the bill reflects the recommendations of the June 1991 report of the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General on Bill C-67.

[*Translation*]

This bill contains significant changes concerning parole.

It may come as a surprise to many members—because it certainly surprised me—to learn that this bill represents the first comprehensive review of correctional legislation since the Penitentiary Act was passed 123 years ago.

[*English*]

The proposals set down in this bill come at the end of a prolonged period of study, evaluation and consultation. They are the product of experience. Some of that experience, tragically, is the result of miscalculation, misadventure and the slow widening of deep cracks between components of the criminal justice system.

Historically we have turned away, as we have had to turn away, from prison regimes that produced riots, unending bitterness and an inmate code of permanent non-co-operation. A prison system that represents neither justice nor humanity will not transmit our values to inmates and therefore cannot protect the public.

While we have placed a properly needed emphasis on rehabilitation, we have also seen the development of some very serious deficiencies which have led to some horrific and tragic results. Much work has been done to correct this and we believe the bill has achieved the right balance. Now is the time to act with resolve and dispatch and to take the very best the present system has to offer and mix it with these necessary reforms.

We will put into place a corrections system that will not only protect the public but will serve to rehabilitate and assist those who can be helped. It is a tall order and we think we have it right.

Let me briefly explain the bill, which I concede is complex and not an easily understood piece of work.

Bill C-36 is in three parts.

Part I sets out correctional legislation and is a modernization and a replacement of the Penitentiary Act. In