

*Penitentiary Act*

many figures on record. I was impressed by his statement that perhaps the economic system had a great deal to do with the increase in crime in this country. I was impressed particularly by the fact that when he gave figures he was comparing conditions in England with those in Canada, and in offering those figures he attempted to show how well off they were in the matter of crime or crime prevention as compared with our condition in Canada. May I point out however that there is no comparison whatsoever between the standard of living in this country and the conditions found here, and the conditions in Great Britain.

There is something further which I believe is lacking in our system. In my view greater attention should be paid to parents. Instead of declaring numbers of children delinquents, I suggest the parents should be termed delinquent parents.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: I believe the minister did not deal with one other matter I brought to his attention—the recommendation by the commission in 1938 that there be a revision of the criminal code. Secondly, I asked him whether anything had been done with a view to securing cooperation of the provinces, so that the penal institutions of this country, including penitentiaries and gaols, so far as possible could be brought under a uniform system of administration. The third matter was that of adult probation. This was recommended in the report of the penitentiaries commission, where it was pointed out that offenders released on suspended sentence or on ticket-of-leave would be subject to supervision for a very considerable period of time, and given the benefit of advice and assistance along the lines indicated by the hon. member for Calgary West. He pointed out that one of the reasons for the success of the Borstal system in the old country was that the people made their homes available for the purpose of welcoming these young men, and giving them the benefit of their opinions.

The minister has said that so far our system has worked out fairly well. I am not one who has any sympathy with the recidivist, or the criminal who commits crimes of violence. Rather I am referring to the man or woman who may make a mistake, who may commit one offence in a lifetime, for which he or she may reach a penitentiary. It is to prevent such as they from again, by reason of the unfairness of society, being brought to a condition where the commission of crime becomes easier.

While the minister pictured a rather favourable condition, may I on the other hand bring to the attention of the committee the words of Mr. Justice McRuer in a very recent speech

[Mr. Reid.]

when, after reviewing the situation, not of the hardened criminal or the one who commits a crime of violence, but rather of the juvenile and the youthful offender who may commit minor offences, not offences of violence. He said:

On examination criminal statistics cannot help but disturb the most complacent and forces one to the inevitable conclusion that the present system of administering penal laws of Canada operates neither to protect society nor as an effective deterrent to the commission of crimes.

I should like to hear the minister say something on this matter of segregation.

I agree with the hon. member for New Westminster that in the crime wave found in this dominion to-day many of the criminals are young men. Many of the most desperate are young men; but I am not dealing with that type. I believe it was the hon. member for Temiscouata who said yesterday that many of these crimes are committed because men have been trained to kill during the period of war. But when we look at the records of the men who are committing serious crimes to-day we find that very few of them served in the armed forces; most of them are persons who were in Canada and who, for one reason or another, failed to be in the armed forces. In that connection I make one plea, and it is this: Every time a man who has been in the armed forces finds his way into court the first reference is that he is a returned soldier or an ex-service man. That should end. Too much emphasis is being placed on the fact that a small percentage of service men are committing crimes. When people in other classes or other organizations commit crimes, no reference is made to the groups to which they may belong. If an ex-service man faces a charge, immediately undue publicity and reference is made to his military service.

I believe that the most stringent punishment, to act as a deterrent to those who are determined to flout the laws of society, must be handed out. This must be said, however, that it is those who have not served who are committing these serious crimes.

Mr. POULIOT: I said what the hon. member has just referred to, but I mentioned it as occurring on occasions.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: I did not attribute anything else to the hon. member.

Mr. POULIOT: I said that on occasions youth does wrong things; but I also added that I was surprised to find that, in spite of those numerous occasions on which wrong is done, the youth of to-day is no worse than that of yesterday.