

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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TREATMENT OF THE CONVICTED CRIMINAL

An address delivered by General R.B. Gibson,  
Commissioner of Penitentiaries, to the  
Rotary Club in Hull, Quebec, on February 2,  
1950.

....The subject of crime has always had an important place in public interest -- many thousands of books, many of them best sellers, have described how crimes were committed and criminals detected, and have played up the mystery and drama of criminal activities. No other news item hits the headlines faster than some sensational crime and the story of crime has even pervaded our young people's reading in the Crime Comics which have recently been banned in this country.

But all this mass of literature and newspaper interest is concerned with the commission and detection of crime, and when the criminal has been detected, brought to justice, and found guilty, public interest fades very quickly and not many people are concerned about what happens to him after sentence has been duly passed upon him.

So to-day I would like you to consider with me what can be done with the person who has been duly convicted of a criminal offence, and to outline to you some of the methods coming into use in Canada to deal with such persons. I think you will agree with me that this is a matter that should have our very serious consideration as citizens and taxpayers. Every year in Canada some 50,000 persons are convicted of indictable offences and the cost of dealing with these offenders runs into staggering figures. The present budget for the Federal penitentiaries alone exceeds \$6,000,000. When to this is added the amounts spent by the provinces and the municipalities all across Canada for the upkeep of jails and reformatories, it is obvious that the total cost of maintaining prisoners in custodial institutions imposes a very heavy burden on the taxpayers. In addition, there is a very large cost of all our law enforcement agencies and the Criminal Courts, to say nothing of the financial losses that result from criminal activities themselves. Surely this is a problem in which all of us as taxpayers should take a very keen interest and to which much greater public concern should be directed.

Of course, the most effective way of reducing the cost of crime is by initial prevention -- by removing in so far as it is possible to do so the causes that contribute to the development of a criminal career -- broken homes, failure of parental discipline, truancy and lack of interest in school, economic insecurity, personal maladjustment, neglect of religious training