

*St. Vincent de Paul Penitentiary*

are being made in a physical sense in the psychiatric ward in that complex. A new psychiatric hospital is being built at Ste. Anne des Plaines. This will end the need for such a facility at St. Vincent de Paul.

Without describing the physical changes proposed at the present time in the psychiatric ward in St. Vincent de Paul, I can say that they will be completed by the end of this month. These changes have been under way for approximately a month.

In addition a committee has been dealing with treatment and conferences are being held with the warden and the institutional officers. Some have taken place but there is continuing activity to try to raise the morale of the officers working in this particular wing and to develop leadership qualities in the officers and staff of that wing. I am referring to both the custodial officers and the nursing officials in the psychiatric area. Five additional hospital officers with psychiatric training are being recruited for that area. We are also rearranging the staff in that wing and supplementing it in a way that there can be increased deployment of the hospital officers mixing with the inmates during the program periods, especially in public places during leisure and evening hours.

● (11.40 a.m.)

We have a preliminary report that I would prefer not to table at this stage regarding some additional changes. We are supplying additional staff by way of full-time psychiatrists as well as the additional part-time officers of whom I spoke. Perhaps for the moment this is a sufficient indication of the position at this time, but I would be glad to report to the House subsequently as matters develop.

**Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants):** Mr. Speaker, the House has listened to the minister's statement with extra attention because of the particular nature of the problem that has arisen at this institution. Perhaps it is a commentary on our proceedings that the other day the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs went into a fair amount of depth in dealing with the problem raised this morning by my colleague and on which the minister has made a statement. If the committees ever had a running *Hansard* the people of Canada would be much more aware of the important work done and the important statements and important information given in committees, but as it is now two or three weeks elapse before the proceedings are published.

The problem mentioned by the minister is not one encountered generally in the Canadian penitentiary system but is restricted largely to this one particular institution. The fact is that the problem can be fairly and squarely attributed to lack of proper manpower for psychiatric and psychological treatment. There is no other explanation for it. Indeed, by announcing his recruiting policy this morning the minister has acknowledged that more specialists are needed to examine these unfortunates who enter St. Vincent de Paul. However, this is not a problem that has arisen during the last few days; it has been kicking around for a fair amount of time.

I suggest that the minister has to take further steps to deal with this situation. He must reassess the whole method of admission to this institution—perhaps to others as well but particularly to St. Vincent de Paul. Second, he must bear in mind that the prisoners confined to the mental branch of the institution are less prone to suicide than those who are in other sections. In other words, we again come back to the fact that trained manpower—psychiatrists and psychologists—is the answer. This point was made a few months ago by Dr. Bruno Cormier of McGill University who does some part-time work at St. Vincent de Paul.

**Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview):** Mr. Speaker, the most disturbing aspect of the minister's statement is his attitude and approach toward the high suicide rate that we are experiencing in our prisons today. He has the "tight little island" approach and wants to maintain the problem unto himself and his officials. However, the problem has far exceeded such bounds and it is about time that a public inquiry was held into all aspects of the high suicide rate in penitentiaries prevalent in Canada today. The minister talked of a committee having studied the physical aspects of this problem; surely it is time a committee studied the psychological and psychiatric aspects as well.

More important, I have been advised that a group of eight psychiatrists and psychologists in Montreal would have been more than happy to study this problem but were not given the opportunity to do so and had to go to the United States to carry on their studies. If there is a shortage of trained personnel, this may be the result of the attitude of the minister and his officials to employing these people and putting them to work on this serious problem. If the minister is not satisfied