

Penitentiaries

accept this? Are we willing to accept the idea that such people are non-persons who cannot be accorded the privileges of a decent citizen of society?

We talk about the cost of the prison system. That cost will not be any less if we continue on this road and treat these people the way this girl was treated. But I must say I was very happy tonight, after talking to her mother over the telephone, to learn that she has just been accepted on the staff of the non-status Indians in British Columbia. Maybe these people who have suffered for so many years understand her plight and are willing to accept her. Are we so sanctimonious that we are unwilling to forgive? Are we willing to give these people the chance that they want? Criminals are not all hardened criminals. Many inmates of jails have been peaceful citizens. The fact is that it is quite possible for many of us to land in jail some time or other, because at one time or another we have broken laws. In fact, we may find ourselves in the prison system that we are investigating right now and, if we do, when we get out of that system we may find ourselves in the same position as that girl in British Columbia found herself.

● (2310)

Criminals are not born, they are victims of the environment. As victims of the environment they find themselves formed according to how the environment wishes them to be formed. It is unfortunate that so many of us look within the prison walls and are not willing to look outside the prison walls that are so much a part of the whole system. There are many organizations that are willing to help but cannot because of lack of money or staff to handle the cases brought to their attention. I have spoken to personnel of the Elizabeth Fry Society in Vancouver and was impressed by what the lady in charge and the society is doing. If we are going to investigate the prison society, let us confer with those who have worked through the Elizabeth Fry Society and the John Howard Society and find out how we can help them through financing and by every means at our disposal.

We must teach society to accept those who were once convicted and have served their time. We must have within our law the means to encourage employers to accept those who have served their time and are willing to be productive. We must put our Christian principles into operation if we believe in Christian principles.

An hon. Member: We all believe in them.

Mr. Olausen: I am sure there are many who do. However, words alone are not enough; there must be action. We need action. We must have this investigation. In order to have a complete investigation, let us not do it only within the prison walls but outside as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I am anxious to say a few words in this important debate concerning the many escapes from penitentiaries, particularly in the last few months.

Living about 13 miles from the Drummondville penitentiary, I have been witness to the alarm and fear in which the population of my town and region have lived following many escapes from Cowansville. One of the escaped pris-

[*Mr. Olausen.*]

oners, for example, a notorious crook, spent the first night after his escape in a house three doors away from where I live. That shows to what extent, in our supposedly well-protected society, we are placed in a very serious and dangerous position by a prison system in which disorder reigns, authority has lost all its power, and criminals draw up their own rules, make threats and command those who represent the law.

Propagandists of all hues, for example, politicologists or sociologists, are allowed into the penitentiaries to distribute all sorts of literature aimed at indoctrinating the inmates and causing uprisings.

Here is a very good example. In March 1973, a supposedly eminent Montreal criminologist, Mr. André Normandeau, Ph.D. went to the Cowansville penitentiary to hand out literature about the Parti Quebecois, give a lecture, and distribute a document entitled: "The manifesto of a candidate for the Parti Quebecois political convention in the constituency of Mount Royal", the constituency of the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). Clause C of this manifesto includes the following: The Parti Quebecois leadership's criminal justice program. Inmates were allowed to print and distribute this manifesto, organize teach-ins, discuss, meditate and make propaganda about the Parti Quebecois manifesto by Mr. André Normandeau.

Mr. Speaker, this strikes me particularly since I know very well the problems of the Cowansville penitentiary. It is because the penitentiary authorities have no moral or other support from the Canadian justice or the Solicitor General of Canada (Mr. Allmand). Last night again, not 24 hours ago, at the Cowansville penitentiary, during a meeting of penitentiary officers, they were informed that if any one of them wounds or kills an inmate while exercising his duties, the government does not hold itself responsible for any legal procedures against the officer, damages caused or costs incurred to defend himself before the courts. In fact, the officer will have to get help from friends or relatives or defend himself alone against the procedures which may be taken by the inmate or his parents. On the other hand, the government will assume the costs of legal assistance to help the criminal defend himself against the officer who represents justice.

Before such risks, Mr. Speaker, the officers have refrained from doing their work for fear of losing their jobs and through fear of threats from the inmates to the officers or members of their families.

Mr. Speaker, I know personally some officials whose life is hell among murderers because the law does not give them any protection.

The authority of penitentiary officials over inmates is not recognized by the government; for instance, they can throw their supposedly badly done steaks at the officials who can only smell those steaks which the inmates refuse to eat and which the officials cannot afford for themselves or for their family.

Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) has also misled the House or he is not aware of what is going on at Cowansville. Out of about 400 inmates, 100 should be kept in maximum security penitentiaries while the minister told the House that 25 or 30 inmates should be held there.