

Purely as a result of observation and from what I have heard, I wish to mention three ways in which the parole board can make its work more effective. First, it may be that the board is operating too much by rule of thumb; sometimes this can lead to inconsistent results and bring about resentment. It is undoubtedly true that every individual must be dealt with separately. There are instances, though in which it is most difficult to make consistent decisions. There has been criticism on this score. Perhaps those applying for parole ought to be made aware of what is being done and what is involved.

Second, the parole board should give reasons for its decisions more readily, especially to those directly involved. There has been much criticism about this and I do not know why in most instances the board's reasons cannot be given. The argument advanced here is similar to that which has been advanced in connection with immigration cases, and others. It has been said that it would not be in the best interests of the public or the applicant to give reasons. On the other hand there is a strong feeling that sometimes the reasons for refusing are not valid, or that the board has been misinformed, as has happened in some instances.

Finally, I think the parole board should try to be less susceptible to public opinion in cases of accident; I am referring, of course, to the Dion case. It was suggested from time to time that, in certain aspects of its work the board had been making good progress until the Dion case came up. We all recognize that what happened was a tragedy. All the same I believe the parole board should not permit itself to be too much affected by such an accident. Perhaps it should be a little more cautious and make somewhat better inquiries, but it should proceed with the plan of parole that it had.

I realize that the board was criticised in this house by members who are no longer here; it was publicly criticized for its decision in the Dion case, which was a tragedy, and in other, similar cases. Yet if there is a case where the board is convinced that it is right and where it is convinced that it is following the right course, so far as I am concerned it would have support.

● (8:30 p.m.)

A final word about the R.C.M.P. In the course of his introductory remarks the minister gave us a very useful picture of the work the police forces are doing in Canada at every level of government. He told us that the use

*Supply—Solicitor General*

of parole had increased and that the failure rate had not risen. The R.C.M.P. has had some troubles during the last two or three years. The Canadian people are proud of this force—proud of its quiet efficiency and its excellent public image. They are proud of the musical ride and of the mounted police uniforms. However, the security branch of the force has had large holes torn in its image during the last couple of years because of investigations which have led to the revelation of some of its methods and decisions. I do not think this is necessarily bad. In this type of work it is very easy to take decisions based on rumour, on previous cases or on unproven connections with other persons. There have been many instances in which apparently, the wrong person, was identified to the force.

I do not think too much stress should be laid on individual happenings in the past but I do believe the R.C.M.P., particularly the security investigation branch, must reconsider its position from time to time in connection with such cases. At this very moment we as members of parliament are considering the possibility of passing legislation which would wipe out a criminal record after a certain period of time had elapsed, perhaps ten or 12 years. The committee on justice and legal affairs has considered this question, a report has been made and the Solicitor General is, I understand, contemplating legislation. If this legislation is passed, with the result that after ten years a record of conviction is wiped out, why should the R.C.M.P. keep on its files information about unproven connections 25 or 30 years ago—the activities at that time of people who were connected in their youth with communist organizations?

I do not speak from definite knowledge, but there certainly seems to be a general opinion that this is what happens. I believe reconsideration should be given to these security procedures, and especially to the retention of records relating to incidents of ancient vintage. I am sure both the public and the police would benefit if such an examination were made.

I should like to conclude with a word about this proposed legislation concerning the wiping out of criminal records. The committee hearings were most useful, but the real problem was this: What would happen in the case of a person who was asked, in connection with an application for employment, for example, whether he had ever been convicted of a criminal offence? Even if the record of the offence had been wiped out, an answer is required—yes, or no. It was suggested that the