

Parole and Penitentiary Acts

is asking today why we do not slow down the process and not do anything until we have improved the mandatory supervision system.

Mr. Keeper: Why is the Hon. Member—

Mr. Redway: Will the Hon. Member just hold his horses and let me answer the question. I will be pleased to do that. Hopefully there will be a little more time and he can ask another question if he wants. As the Hon. Member knows, improving the system is not going to happen just like that. To the best of my knowledge, there has been nothing in the way of formal studies conducted other than perhaps by a professor of criminology here or a professor of criminology there, but there has been very little in the way of formal studies done in relation to our supervision system.

There is, as the Hon. Member knows, a sentencing commission that was put in place by the former Government. It was asked to examine the whole field of judicial sentences and asked to make recommendations so that the House could look at those recommendations and, hopefully, act on them. I hope it does. The Hon. Member knows that that commission was set up some years ago and it has not reported yet. Unfortunately, if we set up today some sort of a study to look at the mandatory release system, it would be a number of years down the line before there were any recommendations made or any improvements made.

• (1640)

What the Hon. Member is asking for in this House, as I understand it, is action and speed. That is what we are doing today. We are putting in place a protection mechanism that will protect the system until there is a chance to examine the entire system and allow these recommendations to come forth from the sentencing commission and wherever else so that we can make those changes that the Hon. Member would like to see. Hopefully they will be the same changes that I would like to see in the system, changes that would tighten it up so that at the same time that we are protecting individual rights we are also protecting society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdedo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, we are here today to discuss the procedures by which mandatory supervision can be withheld from inmates. It is important to recognize that this is the basis of the debate, not necessarily the quality of the Bill which was passed by the House of Commons in June. While we believe that there were some inadequacies in the Bill, it was passed and assumed to be adequate by the House of Commons. In the process of considering this legislation, the Senate proposed an amendment.

By recalling the House to consider this Bill, the Government should recognize that this legislation could be passed just as quickly with the amendment in place as it would if this amendment were rejected. Therefore, it makes good sense not

to consider the pros and cons or the quality of the Bill, but only to consider the pros and cons of the amendment.

The fundamental question is how we can successfully rehabilitate a truly violent offender at the same time that we provide adequate protection to the public. When the Bill was before the House we contended that it failed adequately to rehabilitate inmates who were moving out into society and at the same time failed in the attempt to protect society. Regardless of what the Member for York East (Mr. Redway) suggests, there have been numerous studies of the correctional system, all of which have highlighted the problem of supervision and training, not only within the institution but in the parole and mandatory supervision process after inmates have left the institution. The lack of meaningful training, educational treatment programs for prisoners, and the shortage of post-release assistance have been established by a number of studies as the basis for the inadequacy of our correctional system.

Therefore, today I am speaking not necessarily to the inadequacy of the Bill but to the inadequacy of the system as a whole. If such meaningful post-release assistance for mandatory supervision is not in place, then the mandatory supervision itself becomes inadequate. While the value of mandatory supervision can be easily demonstrated intellectually, it becomes very inadequate if nothing is done to make the program work.

When a judge sentences an individual to 15 years, the judge knows that five of those years will be under mandatory supervision and that the inmate will spend five years under some kind of meaningful program that will help him become a free member of society. In other words, the judge gives the correctional system five years in which to help the inmate adjust. The point which has been made many times today and has been repeated by all of those who work closely with the correctional system is that the parole supervision programs that are in place are inadequate.

Every time someone is released on parole or mandatory supervision, we save a considerable amount of money because that person is not in an institution. Therefore, it would be a much better expenditure of money to establish a supervisory or parole program that would give greater assurance that people who are released, either on mandatory supervision or at the end of their sentence, are given an even chance of making it in society.

I live in a constituency which has two correctional institutions that are run by the federal Government. There are a number of people who come through those institutions who have no recognition of what society is when they are released. They feel totally alienated, and the first thing they do is to return to the institution as quickly as possible. This can only be blamed on the inadequacy of the supervision and parole programs that are in place.

I suggest that we, as parliamentarians, have a responsibility not only to consider seriously this amendment before us today, but to consider whether it improves the Bill. I am surprised