

Release of Yves Geoffroy from Penitentiary

ber and December 1971, a total of 12,401 temporary absences were allowed. Out of this number of temporary absences there are only 90 reports of inmates failing to return. The number of crimes alleged to have been committed during these approximately 12,000 temporary absences is 15.

As a result of these statistics it might be said that the vast majority of inmates do not abuse the privilege and do behave responsibly, and that the procedures and decisions taken by officials of the Canadian Penitentiary Service are correct in over 99 per cent of cases.

The escape of Yves Geoffroy is one of the few failures of temporary absences from the penitentiaries. Its statistical significance has been overlooked in the attention it has received.

Let us however, review all the facts related to this incident.

According to the Commissioner's directives, after receipt of (a) a full report from the Institute Chaplain; (b) a report from the Institute Classification Officer; and (c) a report from a social agency; a special permission from the Commissioner or his delegate, the Chief of Chaplaincy Services of the Canadian Penitentiary Service, may be given for an inmate to marry.

On June 28, 1971 Mr. Geoffroy sought permission to marry Miss Carmen Parent with whom Mr. Geoffroy apparently had had a continuing liaison. The reason he cited to support his request was that marriage would provide a mother who would look after the needs of his three children, 3, 6 and 8 years of age. Regarding his children Mr. Geoffroy wrote:

"At present they are being looked after by my family. However, no one is legally authorized to look out for their education or to request social assistance on their behalf."

Following the receipt of Mr. Geoffroy's letter, Rev. J. A. Nickels, Chief of Chaplaincy Services of the Canadian Penitentiary Service, Ottawa wrote to the director of St. Vincent de Paul, attaching a copy of Mr. Geoffroy's letter and asking that the "institutional and community reports" required by the relevant Commissioner's directive be prepared and forwarded.

The report of the social worker was addressed to the Commissioner of Penitentiaries on August 19, 1971 and received by the director of the St. Vincent de Paul Institution. This report was prepared by Miss Micheline Cornellier of the Société d'Orientation et de Réhabilitation Sociale, and was approved by Miss Cornellier's supervisor. Her report states that she found Miss Parent fully aware of the consequences of marriage with Geoffroy, including the possibility that he could lose his appeal and might not be granted parole on his first eligibility date.

The report notes also another aspect that heavily influenced the wish of Mr. Geoffroy and Miss Parent to marry, despite the fact that Mr. Geoffroy was serving a life sentence in penitentiary. This aspect was the Geoffroy children, being cared for by two of Mr. Geoffroy's brothers.

Miss Cornellier wrote that both brothers, and I quote: "suffer from fairly serious cardiac pathology and therefore in the event of death, the children would be destitute. In this event, Miss Parent could support and take responsibility for the children, the marriage giving her the right to be their guardian."

Miss Parent also accepted the duty of reuniting the children with their father when he was released from penitentiary, Miss Cornellier stated, and appeared to have the characteristics that would make her a satisfactory mother and supervisor of the children's upbringing.

Mr. Speaker, with the consent of the House, I could table the remainder of the statement to be recorded in the proceedings of the House of Commons—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The minister is suggesting a rather unusual way of proceeding. He suggests that he will not finish his statement but will table the last part of it so that it be recorded in the proceedings of the House. This would indeed require the consent of the House and this agreement does not seem to exist. In these circumstances, the minister would perhaps finish reading his statement.

• (1120)

Mr. Goyer: Miss Cornellier's recommendation of the marriage between Mr. Geoffroy and Miss Parent was supported by Mr. Marc Gosselin, Classification officer at St. Vincent de Paul Penitentiary, in an August report, the factor of Mr. Geoffroy's children being the strong argument in support of the marriage and citing the influence that a stepmother could have on the emotional development and the stability of the three children.

The third report supporting the proposal of marriage was made on October 7, 1971 by the penitentiary chaplain, Father L. Dupuis. Father Dupuis also stressed the importance of the marriage to the children and suggested, in the event a religious ceremony could not be performed, that the couple be married in a civil ceremony.

Notice, however, that the Chancellery of the Diocese of Montreal did approve of the marriage and the date and place of the ceremony was given by Abbé Dupuis on December 18, 1971.

Director of St. Vincent de Paul Gerald Brennan submitted the three reports with his recommendation for the marriage on October 20, 1971 and received a November 3 reply from Rev. J. A. Nickels, Chief of Chaplaincy Services, noting that: "in view of the positive nature of the reports, approval is given for the marriage."

A copy of a letter dated November 24, 1971 from lawyer Raymond Denis—

[English]

Mr. Diefenbaker: A name of blessed memory.

[Translation]

Mr. Goyer: —to Henri Prévost, Protonotary of the Superior Court, St. Jérôme Courthouse, was sent to Mr. J. P. Lévesque, Visits and Correspondence officer at St. Vincent de Paul. The letter requested the Protonotary to give public notice in Montreal and St. Jérôme of Mr. Geoffroy's marriage on December 24. Public notice was given and the provincial authorities were made aware of the forthcoming marriage.

I would like to point out that, in this case, Mr. Denis acted as Mr. Geoffroy's lawyer, and from all the information that I have available, Mr. Denis never visited Mr. Geoffroy in the penitentiary.