

Supply—Solicitor General

goodness the person in charge of the camp should be able to make minor decisions as to where his men will work without referring the matter elsewhere.

With these few additional remarks, which were prompted by the minister's comments and concern about the performance of work in competition with private industry, I will conclude. If I may repeat, I do hope that the minister will not cut back the policy he has been developing of giving inmates good, healthy occupations both inside and outside the institution as well some pride in production, and if there is to be a review I hope it will focus upon an increase in training rather than a decrease.

Mr. Pennell: Mr. Chairman, may I briefly answer one of the questions raised by the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka. I should like to bring to his attention the fact that an organizational study has commenced or is about to commence within the department, and I hope that as a result of that study we will have some answers on the regional set-up which may satisfy the hon. member.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Chairman, I should like to ask the minister a question about the prospective timetable for realizing one of the objectives of the penal reform program. I am sure the minister will be familiar with the fact that at the conference of provincial attorneys general and reform institution ministers in 1958, at which conference there was unanimous agreement in principle on a penal reform program, it was agreed that the federal institutions would receive and be responsible for all persons sentenced to terms of six months or more. As a matter of sentencing practice it was decided that ultimately an amendment would be introduced to the Criminal Code to do away with sentences of between six months and two years. The agreement in principle that federal institutions would be enlarged and the federal program revised so as ultimately to lead to the housing of all persons sentenced to six months or more in a federal institution was a matter of great interest to most of the provinces, though a matter of considerably greater urgency to some than to others. It was of particular interest to the maritime provinces.

In subsequent years, Mr. Chairman, while I had responsibility for the department we were not able to complete the reform of our institutions and the implementation of the federal program to the point where it was possible to give effect to the understanding or

agreement in principle reached with the provinces. But more than four years have now passed since that time, and although I am aware of the difficulties that remain—construction is involved; the fact that the inmate population is increasing is also a factor:—nevertheless, I would ask the minister whether he can say if he has yet been able to set a target date when he thinks he might commence to take over this additional responsibility for inmates in provincial institutions? If he cannot give me an over-all target date, is there any indication he can give that the transfer of responsibility can be made in phases? It would be of great assistance to the maritime provinces if an early start could be made in the transfer of responsibility.

• (4:00 p.m.)

Mr. Pennell: Mr. Chairman, I am grateful to the hon. member for raising this point, which perhaps I should have raised in my opening statement on the estimates. I recognize not only the interest of the hon. gentleman but also the action he took in the field of penal reform. As I have said on other occasions, we are building on the foundation that was laid when the hon. gentleman was the responsible minister. In our defence, if I may put it that way, the department is now asking for perhaps the largest appropriation ever made to construct buildings since the ten-year plan was proposed, and the ten-year plan evolved out of the conference that was arranged by the hon. gentleman. I do not foresee the full implementation of the 1958 recommendation, but I have had discussions with the attorneys general of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland with a view to implementing the suggestion of the hon. member for Kamloops. There is a strong possibility that later this year, when we open the new medium security institution at Springhill, we may begin to absorb some of the long-term county jail inmates in the maritimes. That is as far as I am able to go at this time.

Mr. Orlikow: I read with considerable interest, Mr. Chairman, the opening remarks of the minister on June 6. I was struck by the pedestrian and circumscribed report the minister made compared with that which the former minister of justice, who has just resigned, made two or three years ago on the future activities and plans of the government. It seems to me that in a pedestrian fashion we are continuing to replace buildings. They are among the worst correctional buildings in the western world. In fact, it would be an insult