

from year to year, and this is understandable because of the different inmate populations. In some cases there was an automatic review of parole cases, in other instances individuals applied, and so on. So without relating the year to year fluctuations to the numbers of people granted or applying for parole and the percentage of success or failure—whichever way one looks at it—there is a fairly consistent pattern.

The number of people who applied for parole over that period of time had a general ratio to the total inmate population in the country. It ranged around 6,000 to 7,000 with an average—by looking quickly at the figures—of probably 7,000 plus applications for parole. Of those who applied over that period, the number granted ranged around 2,000; it fluctuates from year to year. The annual reports of the parole board relate figures in two ways. They relate them in terms of success and sometimes in terms of the failure rate. Later on the board became more euphemistic about it and called it a success rate. It can be stated either way, it does not matter.

● (2040)

In those years, as today, the failure rate was 8 per cent, 9 per cent, 10 per cent or something of that sort. When they changed the reference and called it the success rate, we find there was 88.8 per cent or 90 per cent success, with a 10 per cent failure rate. Generally speaking, that ratio was standard over those years.

In 1969 somebody concluded that five members on the parole board was not sufficient, so the number was increased to nine. Parliament endorsed this change and I was one of those who supported it. One of the arguments given to support the increase to nine was that the chairman of the parole board had the authority to divide the members into panels or committees of not less than two and the panels would have the authority to grant parole on the spot. The theory was that they would meet in the institutions, review the applications, consider the records, listen to the opinions of the warden and the RCM Police, check over the fellow's history of attempts to present himself favourably to the institutional authorities, and then have an interview with the inmate.

Quite frankly, I think these interviews were nothing more than window-dressing. I do not see how two people could sit down for 15 minutes with somebody they had never seen before, but who had been preparing himself for weeks for the occasion, and come up with an assessment as to whether he would be a good prospect, or otherwise, for parole. Such an individual would indicate what he hoped and planned to do, giving an indication that he had a job and perhaps even name the employer. In any event, that was the reasoning behind it.

There was some value in that idea in that decisions could be, and were, made on the spot. There was a bit of an increase in the number of people who applied for parole under that arrangement, and a substantial increase in the number of paroles granted. The success rate remained about the same, 90 per cent, and the failure rate was about the same, being 10 per cent or something of that nature.

I understand that the chairman of the parole board has discontinued this panel system, or perhaps it was the minister who did so. It is my information that it was the

Parole Act

chairman. For the sake of those who may eventually read this debate, those words were in response to the nodding and shaking of the head by the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand). The chairman of the parole board discontinued the panel system and said to the two-member committees or panels that were out visiting inmates in institutions that they should come back to Ottawa, consolidate and centralize, and he would then go to the minister and tell him the workload was too heavy. I suppose he expected then to have more members to divide into groups of two under the panel system and would thus be able to increase the staff surrounding the additional members, thereby increasing his kingdom or the size of his bureaucracy. That is what is happening.

As I stand here the percentage of paroles granted to those who have applied will not be any greater than it was in previous years, and the success or failure rate will not be any different. The rehabilitation prospects will remain identical. What has happened to our concern for what happens to the individual once he gets out on the street? I know quite a number of people in my own area who have been or are now out on parole.

Somewhere in one of the annual reports of the parole board there is a graph that indicates the location of various parole officers. There is one in the city of Prince George who has the responsibility of looking after about 250,000 square miles of territory. That is an area within which you could put the four Atlantic provinces two or three times over. That man has no relationship whatever with the people on parole. If a man on parole has a difficulty or some emotional uptightness and does not know what to do about it, who does he turn to? Does he phone 400 or 600 miles to talk to the parole officer in Prince George? He might just as well have a tape-recorder with him that he can turn on when he wants to talk to somebody. The parole officer's voice might come out of it telling him that everything is fine.

A man in that situation does not have any measure of assistance, help or guidance from the parole officer. He is on his own. I am not the least bit disposed to support the idea of increasing the number of members of the parole board just for the convenience or the desire of the chairman to increase this bureaucratic entity. There should be some effort to find probation officers and people in the community who will work on a voluntary basis—and they are there—and sit down with these people on parole and talk over their emotional problems. This would do a great deal toward reducing the 10 per cent failure rate.

There is another disadvantage to the parole officer structure. As I understand it, under the Parole Act a parole officer is a police officer. Many people who are on parole just do not want to sit down and talk with a policeman when they have an emotional problem. They look at their parole officer as someone who might turn them in if he thinks they have done something wrong. These people feel a parole officer is someone who might turn them over to the authorities if he thinks they are associating with the wrong people, that they are drinking too much, or if he thinks an individual is suffering some emotional turmoil and might crack and commit another crime. They think he is someone who might turn them into the authorities if, as is the case in respect of 40 per cent or