

Minister's Statement on Penitentiaries

the new Millhaven and others. Whether the institutions are new or old certain things are common to all. First, there is too much stone and steel in the construction, giving one a feeling of separation and rejection. Many of the institutions are too large, indicating a depersonalization of the inmates. Many of them are located too far from major cities, thereby denying inmates proper treatment facilities and personnel and making their reorientation within the community very difficult upon release. We found that there is an excessive use of prisons in Canada. It is only now that the minister has said that the parole system is of great value. May I suggest to the Solicitor General that we should start at the probation service stage. If this were improved within the court system, perhaps the large populations at present in the prisons would not be necessary.

Another thing we found was a too heavy concentration on maximum security prisons across the country. I am delighted that the minister told us that he has halted construction of the Mission Correction Centre. In Canada maximum security prisons are populated to the extent of 35 per cent whereas in Great Britain the figure is 15 per cent. Something must, therefore, be basically wrong with regard to classifying the inmates in institutions.

We also found that the classification centres are not adequate to diagnose the problems of inmates and set forth a proper treatment and evaluation program. The industrial training courses are also inadequate and do not equip inmates to accept their responsibilities within the community upon release. Finally, we were struck by the absence of a team approach by the staff and the inmates of the institutions.

The Ouimet report set forth two principles with regard to prisoners. The first requirement was custody of the inmate for the period of his sentence subject to remission and/or parole. The second requirement was to prepare the individual for permanent return to the community so he could live as a law-abiding and contributing citizen. Our prisons in the past have not achieved these goals nor are they doing so at present. This is one of the reasons for the high rate of recidivism. In the past, control was through containment rather than through involvement. If these reforms are fully implemented we may find a change in the emphasis with regard to prisoners.

May I add, Mr. Speaker, that some changes are still necessary. For example, the design, size and function of prisons must be blended toward preparing individuals for their return to society as law-abiding citizens. Prison programs and services must also provide adequate training and treatment both within and without the institutions. The best example of this need is the absence of treatment for many of the drug addicts within society today. Matsqui is the only centre where treatment is available. I am sure the Solicitor General looks forward to the day when treatment centres for addicts will be closely attached to the prisons.

I thought the minister showed a particular interest in inmate committees. I am sure one of the reasons for so much trouble in prisons in the past was the absence of any participation by inmates with regard to conditions of discipline and treatment. If the minister is really serious about inmate committees I would recommend to him that some of those inmate committees appear before the

Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs when the estimates come before it in order to set forth their ideas on what a prison should contain with regard to design, size and programs regarding their treatment.

In fairness, Mr. Speaker, I think the reforms are a step in the right direction and we shall await their implementation and evaluation. Finally, I suggest to the minister that, if he does not want to see prisons in the future populated with young people, he withdraw the Young Offenders Act and replace it with modern penology concepts. This would be the greatest contribution the minister could make to this Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, more than ever we can truthfully say that we live in a mad world and are governed by the most outstanding of the mad.

Seeking to correct the effects of causes one is unwilling to change is, in my opinion, just standing still, which is absolutely no way to solve a problem which does call for a solution, but an intelligent one.

Rehabilitation of offenders, according to the Solicitor General's statement, has become more important than the protection of society. The Solicitor General does not, for instance, mention that there are causes for our having offenders and criminals, stemming from within society itself. Therefore, so long as we tolerate those causes, poverty in the midst of affluence, and insecurity, we evidently will have criminals to cope with. To try to rehabilitate them in hostile society is the solution the Solicitor General has to offer. Indeed, according to his statements, unemployed and welfare recipients would be better protected in jail than if they were free.

Please note that I am for the rehabilitation of prisoners, but in a society that will allow it, which is impossible in the present system. We want them to be rehabilitated. We now promise them university degrees or CEGEP diplomas. Therefore, our young people of 18, 19 or 20 years of age, who are honest and anxious to complete their studies and graduate will have no other choice but to commit an offence, be sentenced to prison where they will be sure to get a university degree or CEGEP diploma.

• (2:50 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, we agree on emphasizing rehabilitation but, as I say, as long as we tolerate insecurity among prisoners—and the government very well knows it—they will be incited to return to prison and that, on several occasions.

Mr. Speaker, it does not seem to me a step in the right direction. That might please the prisoner, but once he is released, if he is rehabilitated he will be returned to society where he has no place. What purpose will be served by prison or penitentiary reforms? Let us begin by reforming what must be reformed in Canada: the economic system, which allows the eventual prisoners to remain in society and take part in its activities. But no, the government prefers to come to grips with problems caused by the present situation, and not with the causes themselves.

Mr. Speaker, the minister told us that it costs \$10,400 yearly to keep an individual behind bars. In my opinion it would cost less to provide for his needs or give him a job

[Mr. Gilbert.]