

Penitentiaries Committee

embrace a wider perspective. I say this because it will provide an opportunity to bring before this committee of special interest people and groups in Canada who themselves for a long period of time have had a special interest in the question of modern penology. I refer, for example, to the representatives of the John Howard Society who have had broad experience in this subject. I think it would be almost imperative that they have the chance to present their views to the committee. As a result of their close contact with the problem I am sure they would give some advice on the structural or bricks and mortar aspects of the problem as well as on the sociological and psychological aspects.

My own experience, which goes back 25 years, was in connection with the Salvation Army's interest in penal matters. I think it is another organization which would have something helpful and useful to say to the committee.

During the past 30 years, ever since the Archambault report was brought down, there has been a tremendous improvement, I would say, in the attitude of the general public toward the group in society to whom we refer as criminals. My good friend from Medicine Hat indicated that he hopes there will not be a tendency—I am paraphrasing what he said—to be soft toward those who find themselves embroiled with the law. In another day and finds itself behind bars—I think it was by age reference was made to the group which John Wesley—in these words: "There, but for the grace of God, go I".

I associated with and personally was in touch with many of these men when I was active as what used to be called a prison worker but is now called a correctional officer, which indicates a shifting emphasis in our attitude toward the handling of these problems. I found very little difference in attitudes between those who often find themselves behind bars and those who find themselves outside bars. Indeed, even were it not so, we must protect society from the criminal element, but in almost every case, in fact, in every case involving a penal or criminal offence eventually the person concerned will have to return to society. If that particular person has not been prepared for this return by a process of training, education, rehabilitation and all the other services now available to deal with problems of human behaviour, it means that eventually he will fall afoul of the law once again and the problem of recidivism, which has been one of the

chronic difficulties in Canada's penal system, will remain with us.

● (7:30 p.m.)

It is not necessary at this stage to quote statistics. I am sure they will be brought out during the course of the committee's hearings. I commend the government for bringing forward this resolution at this time and I hope the committee will interpret the terms of reference relating to its functions to make it possible to deal with all aspects of the problem. After a delay of 30 years or more, in the history of coming to grips with the matter, I think this is our opportunity at last to get some concrete legislation on the subject. I do not say that nothing has occurred in the intervening years. Indeed the minister in his statement said that we are now in the midst of a ten-year plan to improve our penal facilities. The hon. member for Kamloops, when he was the minister responsible, endeavoured to come to grips with this matter. No doubt he will be representing this party on that committee, and will of course be a worthy spokesman.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, it is not my intention to delay or oppose this measure before the committee. As I said when we discussed this question last year, I think we are approaching the problem from the wrong direction. I emphatically disagree with my good friend the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Olson), with whom I so often agree when issues are discussed in this house, when he expresses the view, the view of many people in Canada and of many members of parliament, namely that because people have committed crimes, have been brought to trial and been found guilty, the answer is to lock them up.

We have not done much to find better ways of dealing with offenders. Locking a person up does not do much for that person, nor help him in the future. When a person is sentenced to a penitentiary in Canada, he is really being sent to a university of crime.

Some time ago when the son of one of my constituents was sent to a provincial jail for stealing a car, she said to me, "When my son first went to jail he only knew how to start one type of car without a key. When he came out of jail, he could start any car without a key". That is the value of what happened to that boy in jail, and that is the sort of thing that happens to most people whom we send to our penitentiaries. They come out, and then go back a second and third time.