

Criminal Records

shown evidence of good character, to whom the National Parole Board, upon application, would grant a pardon and cancel the conviction and, in addition, provide the withdrawal of criminal records.

Personally, I wish to congratulate the Solicitor General for introducing a bill which will enable the National Parole Board to consider deserving applicants for pardon.

I am also certain that the principle of relief for rehabilitated offenders will be supported by members of all parties and by the vast majority of the public. Punishment is the easiest but not necessarily the most successful way to deal with criminals. They are put behind bars, confined within walls of dreary rooms like so much surplus humanity. We are confident that while they are there they will not commit the same offences and hopefully believe that others warned by their punishment will avoid engaging in similar offences. The trouble is that it does not seem to deter crime. In the Middle Ages convicts were branded with hot irons, or their heads were cut off, but in spite of these and other punishments crime continued to flourish, especially in the slums of big cities.

The government of Canada is to be commended for introducing a policy which may well reduce the crime rate and at the same time save the nation millions of dollars a year. A few months ago the chairman of the National Parole Board made a statement to the effect that allowing a prisoner to return to a productive life produces savings in two ways: the state is no longer responsible for his maintenance and he is usually able to support himself, his wife and family.

He also gave us a very interesting report on paroled offenders. For one month it showed that 2,284, or 86 per cent, were gainfully employed. Their gross earnings for the month were over \$673,000 and they were supporting 2,514 dependants. Multiply these earnings by 12, and the total income is over \$8 million for the full year, with the parolees subject to normal income tax and other taxes that all Canadians must pay.

The cost of keeping an inmate in a federal penal institution ranges from \$3,600 to nearly \$5,000 a year, while the cost of keeping a man on parole is only \$300 to \$500. Money is a big factor, but not necessarily the most important one. It is also reassuring that almost 90 per cent of paroled men complete their parole periods satisfactorily.

Therefore, it is quite evident that parole is not only effective in rehabilitation but repre-

sents a tremendous saving to the taxpayer. But what is even more important is that in the year 1968, for which I have the figures, 3,689 paroles were granted and of this number only 480 paroles were revoked.

It may not be generally known that the Parole Board consults judges about prisoners whom they have sentenced. It is impossible to have a parole system unless we release persons from prison. Mr. Justice Ouimet once stated in a report:

Parole is a treatment-oriented correctional measure, not a sentence-correcting method. It is in no way aimed at reviewing the sentence of the court... As part of the correctional process, its function is rather to determine the portion of the sentence which is to be spent in the community and the kind of control and supervision which will be needed...

At the same time, for the offender, parole is an opportunity and a test of his self control and ability to get along in the community. For society it offers immediate protection through a degree of surveillance and control over offender behaviour and long term protection through a reduced likelihood of recidivism.

There will always be individuals who cannot be trusted as members of society because of problems which make them dangerous at all time. They must be kept segregated. On the other hand, this bill is a move to long overdue, more humane and more sensible treatment of the average person who breaks the law.

• (10:00 p.m.)

Some years ago Sir Winston Churchill, writing about crime and brutality, wrote these words:

The mood and temper of the public with regard to the treatment of crime and criminals is one of the most unfailing tests of the civilization of any country. A calm dispassionate recognition of the rights of the accused, and even of the convicted criminal against the state; a constant heart searching by all charged with the duty of punishment; a desire and an eagerness to rehabilitate... tireless efforts, unflinching faith that there is a treasure, if you can find it, in the heart of every man. These are the symbols which... mark and measure the stored up strength of a nation... proof of the living virtue in it.

The substance of this bill is a heartwarming decision on the part of the government. The changes will depend largely on fuller use of probation and parole services.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but it is approximately ten o'clock. Has the hon. member unanimous consent to complete his remarks?