

*Criminal Records*

because a policeman came along and, on catching them doing something wrong, kicked them in the pants and said, "If you do that again you will be in real trouble."

Let me recount my own experience. Many years ago I was in a hurry to get to the hospital. This was in the days before power steering on cars and all the other fancy gadgets we now have. I was turning the corner more quickly than I should because the wheel was very stiff, hurrying to be on time for an operation, when a police cruiser came up on the inside. I well remember the look the policeman gave me. It was a hopeless look, the kind that you do not forget. He did not say anything to me, but I have never forgotten that look to this very day. That old police chief is still living. He is 90 years old. His look said more than a thousand words. He did not pull me into court; I would have resented it if he had.

I believe that the quality of mercy will not be strained if this bill passes. It should be said of all of us that he who is without sin should cast the first stone. I hope my fellow members of parliament will allow this bill to go to committee for further consideration.

[Translation]

**Mr. Raynald Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice):** Mr. Speaker, in view of the importance and of the extremely serious consequences of a criminal record when an accused has been found not guilty and was not sentenced or when it was only an offence punishable on summary conviction, it devolves that this person should have the right, automatically, to a pardon without having to make application for a pardon to the Parole Board, as proposed in the first supplement to clause 1 of Bill C-27 now under study.

For an individual to have to drag behind him a criminal record is the same, unquestionably, as having a second conviction for the same crime, because, in addition to having been punished the first time for the offence, he is punished a second time by carrying, as a ball and chain, a criminal record which impairs his possibilities of finding employment and which, often, prevents him from playing an active role in society.

As an example, I have now in mind the case of a well-known citizen, president of two social clubs, who must go on business trips to the United States but is unable to do so because of his criminal record resulting from being found in possession of American cigarettes two years ago. His request for pardon is under study, but let us hope that in the meantime the surrounding society will not find out about his troubles with the law, because his reputation would certainly be shot and he would not deserve this as he has since been acting as an exemplary citizen.

From these various facts, you can well imagine now in what untenable position an individual would be placed if he wanted to go into politics. It would then be absolutely impossible for him. Society has lost and will lose powerful assets simply because the Criminal Records Act is not flexible enough. With this bill we hope to remedy this unthinkable situation for an evolved society which speaks about rehabilitation and the rights of man.

Furthermore, the period of two years required after the crime before granting automatic pardon seem a reasonable

delay to me, because during this period justice has time to assess the progress and goodwill of the person found guilty if, obviously, this person is not found guilty of a new infraction during that time.

Before the end of this two year period, or in certain cases which are not included in clause 2, it seems logical to us that this case be referred to the minister for special consideration.

But to be fully in agreement with the bill, we would need the assurance that the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) had at his disposal an adequate tool which would allow him to ascertain the good conduct of the accused during this period of two years. This remains a problem if we take into account the fact that 100,000 judgments concerning minor charges are rendered each year and that it would, obviously, not be very wise to grant 100,000 pardons automatically, without really ascertaining the good behaviour of these citizens.

Thus, even if the bill seems necessary to us in principle, it would also be necessary to decide at the same time on the enforcement mechanisms of this act, which would not happen if the bill was passed immediately. I suggest that the motion of the sponsor of this bill be referred to committee for further study, because I believe its interest is obvious.

● (1610)

I know we will have many amendments to move. The Solicitor General and his department are preparing amendments—if not for this session, it will be for the next one—precisely in order that this bill be enacted as soon as possible.

[English]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Perhaps hon. members would allow the Chair to interrupt the proceedings for just a few moments in relation to a motion which was adopted unanimously by the House yesterday, a motion proposed under the terms of Standing Order 43 by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). This motion instructed that the Speaker be required to call an immediate meeting of the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group to discuss the matters referred to in the motion.

I think I should advise hon. members that I have been in touch with our colleagues in the United States and that a meeting has been arranged to take place at 12.30 in the afternoon of Tuesday. I believe there are discussions going on between representatives of the parties, and between the House and the Senate, to determine the exact numbers of representatives from both Houses who will be going to Washington, and also the representation of the different political groups in the House.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming):** Mr. Speaker, we have listened this afternoon to several debates. When we turn from one piece of legislation to another, I am impressed by the moral changes which can take place in people and the great respect they have for religion and for other people's views. I was impressed by the fact that even some of those far out religious views were being repre-