

Criminal Records

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order. The hon. member is now asking a question. He rose on a point of order, and he is asking a question. I would ask the hon. member to state his point of privilege as briefly as possible.

Mr. MacInnis: As I said before, Mr. Speaker, my question of privilege is that I am entitled to explain certain of my remarks which were misunderstood. At the same time, I take exception to the remarks of the minister in answering me, which remarks were far removed from the fact.

In this meeting in the minister's office to which he referred, the minister was informed in the presence of the UMW executive, or one of the mine union locals, and the municipal authorities that the 77 per cent he referred to was a false figure and that many of the men had accepted pre-retirement on the basis of fear. I ask the minister to tell us if that is not so. Isn't that the truth? Isn't that the representation that was made in your office? He cannot deny it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Regional Development.

CRIMINAL RECORDS**PROVISION FOR RELIEF OF CONVICTED PERSONS**

The House resumed, from Friday, January 30, consideration of the motion of Mr. McIlraith that Bill C-5, to provide for the relief of persons who have been convicted of offences and have subsequently rehabilitated themselves, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that when we adjourned the debate the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) had the floor—the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) had the floor.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I believe he had concluded his remarks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Peters: I am willing.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is always willing.

[Translation]

I believe that the hon. member for Portneuf wishes to take part in the debate, so I now give him the floor.

Mr. Roland Godin (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, this small bill made up of eight clauses, running to four pages only and entitled the Criminal Records Act is of great interest to me. I hope that this piece of legislation will bring peace and some hope to those who have an undeserved criminal record or one which results from an extremely unfortunate situation.

Since it is quite easy nowadays, in our society, to have such a record, I think that this bill which provides for the expunging of records after five years have elapsed, is most welcome and I wonder why it has not been brought forward sooner.

Moreover, if this act is fairly applied, irrespective of race, language, religion or political affiliation, we can expect very good results from it.

A small enquiry is enough to show that, at the present time, there are too many people who, after having been charged, wind up with a record. Many people in my riding, from all walks of life, have had an opportunity to realize that cases of miscarriage of justice are more numerous than reported by the media. The victims resign themselves to their lot, often for lack of money, or because they just cannot pursue the matter further. This is often caused by a lack of confidence in the courts and because they are sure right from the start that they would lose their case. Whether it be in municipal, provincial or federal courts, I suggest that there are not enough judges, that they use obsolete methods and that they have to examine too many cases at the same time and also to pass judgments without having enough information on the case.

Another abnormal situation is that judges have not all been chosen wisely. Unfortunately, they are appointed to those positions as a reward for political or other services. That some persons whose behaviour has never been exemplary should be in a position to pass judgment on the behaviour of others, that is a puzzle to most people.

I have before me an article published on December 5, 1969, in *La Presse*, one of the most important dailies in America. It reads:

For shoplifting of goods worth \$37.21: seven days; For stealing and receiving a value of \$160,000: seven days.