

Furthermore: society's reaction to parole. Here, a different approach might be attempted. I feel that the average person in society is relatively ignorant as to what occurs regarding parole. Newspapers propagandize foolishness regarding parole releases—some of which are quite shocking and do no justice to neither the National Parole Board, nor to the offender himself—but tend rather to darken the picture. This occurs particularly among smaller newspapers, and I know that in Montreal we have a few that are printed weekly. At a given time, for no apparent reason, invariably is always an article appearing whenever a former inmate has been paroled—he may be a serious offender—who for reasons I ignore—has been released, and so on, with no apparent reasons. Should the parolee have relapsed into crime, I agree that it ought to be made known publicly. However, there are times when he has done nothing, and by such reporting tactics as: "It is said that", "we have heard of him"—such things are printed in newspapers. However, the "*Montreal Star*" daily has published factual and well-edited articles concerning the parole activities in institutions, and I feel that this should be kept up—but it seldom materializes.

It seems to us that the public, nevertheless, ought to be aware of what occurs, what is being done at the institution level, regarding parole; it ought to know. The public is ignorant of what takes place, and oftentimes it is being subjected to lies stained of sentimentalism.

One solution might be to say: listen, let's openly expose these goings-on. This does not appear to be a prudent course. However, in my estimation, a prudent course would be—by means of serious newspapers and such communications media as television—regular contacts occur, changes take place, and situations, or, I feel—should we have the courage to say: take note; this is the situation that we have to contend with. Oftentimes, I think the public might more easily understand why, at given times, we make certain requests—that errors are being made. I say this with prudence, since, as you know, they may easily get carried away and become reprehensible, refusing to understand.

I feel that should we inform the newspapers,—there have been interesting television programs related to parole releases. One in particular was broadcast during the month of February and which was re-run on the day before yesterday; it was very interesting. In that case, a general approach was used, but there nevertheless exists many specific problems regarding parolees; these may involve officers, services, ... that might duly be made publicly known. There is also the possibility that citizens,

The Acting Chairman: Are you just about finished?

Mr. Thomas: There is also visiting volunteers. May we note that visiting volunteers are quite important, and that, frequently, they have stronger ties with the released offenders than does the parole officer. Furthermore, they may help him, and more easily anticipate a given critical moment.

I have perhaps spoken too long.

The Acting Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Thomas.

Senator Laird: First, I wish to thank you most sincerely, you and your colleagues, for your interesting report. Let

me say that I am not in complete agreement, however, my command of our country's other language is so limited, that I prefer to ask my questions in English.

[English]

The role that you would envisage for the Parole Board is one that would certainly reduce their importance greatly. Have you any statistics showing how many times you have recommended release and the Parole Board has refused to follow your recommendation?

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas: No, we have no statistics on that matter.

Now, I realize that each and every one of us have such cases. There are certain memorable cases, where, for instance, we had been counseling a certain prisoner—and there were five of us—and the Board refused, even after talks concerning his release. Others have occurred at given times.

[English]

Senator Laird: I see also that you propose the integration of temporary absence and parole, and, as I read in your brief, the whole thing would be left to the Penitentiary Service. What is wrong with doing it the other way, and leaving it all to the Parole Board?

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas: Temporary leaves are presently granted by the institutions. Should parole releases be integrated as part of the responsibilities of the institution—in such a way as to assemble a mixed committee comprising institutional officers and parole officers—there will be no further need to separate these two services regarding the formulation of decisions. The people are there, a joint decision is arrived at, and the recommendation is made. The recommendation is made by people, and parole employees make a joint recommendation along with institutional employees.

Mr. Belanger: As a reply to your first question: the whole idea for this is not to finally reduce the role of parole officers—but rather to increase their involvement as part of a combined-services team, in order to participate at what might be called the decision-making process. For example, this occurs in hospitals whenever patients are being observed by a medical team that comprises medical, as well as paramedical services. Case-studies are made, and after combined-services discussions, and a complete rundown of the previously arrived at decision, a solution is finally adopted. What one finds difficult to accept, for the time being, is that the parole officer presently takes no part in the decision-making process. He merely assembles the various reports, as one would a jig-saw puzzle—without having personally participated in the acquaintance-ship of the offender—involving the entire human process of making a decision affecting another person. Hence, it is our desire to give him a more important role.

Senator Lapointe: Prior to requesting that such powers be vested upon provincial authorities, if it is your wish—that decision-making powers related to parole releases be vested upon provincial institutions—there will arise, as