

[English]

INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

CHINESE NEW YEAR—PROSPECTS OF PRODUCTIVE YEAR FOR CANADIANS

Mr. Art Lee (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, as you know, today is Chinese New Year's for Canadians of Chinese ancestry.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lee: Therefore, I feel it is fitting that I wish you and all hon. members "gong hing fat choy". This New Year, by the Chinese lunar calendar, is 4673 and is the year of the hare.

An hon. Member: Is the hare going to get you?

Mr. Nielsen: The hair of the dog that bit you.

Mr. Lee: In view of the fact that the hare symbolizes a good year for production, I would like to ask the Acting Prime Minister whether he believes that all Canadians, particularly those of Chinese ancestry, will have a productive year.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am sure we all very much appreciate the comments made by one of the most distinguished representatives of the Canadian Chinese family.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Hear, hear!

● (1430)

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, I just want to second the remarks of the hon. member for Vancouver East and hope they are true.

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ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

INCREASE IN CRIME—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO IMPROVE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR ALLOCATING INMATES TO INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Heward Grafftey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, my question which is based on recent statistics which show a rise in violence and crime in Canada, is directed to the Solicitor General. In so far as many experts attribute this rapid rise in violence and crime in Canada in part to a faulty classification system which oft times puts maximum offenders in medium security institutions, what action is the minister contemplating to upgrade and improve the classification system relating to inmates?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, the classification system is under review. I should point out to the House that it is the other way around in many cases—we have medium security inmates in maximum security institutions when they should be in their own type of institution.

Oral Questions

INCREASE IN CRIME—DATE OF PRESENTATION OF NEW BAIL ACT

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. In view of the fact that some national newspapers are now endorsing what I said a few days ago about the increase in violent crime across the country, and the fact that much of the crime is being committed when people are out on bail, can the minister tell the House when the new Bail Act will be presented?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is drawing a conclusion from statistics which most people consider do not really support any such conclusion at this particular point in time. The fact of the matter is, as a study recently released reveals, that at this time statistics are not complete or adequate enough to show exactly the extent to which persons on bail commit crimes. The point of our changes in the Criminal Code with regard to bail some time ago was to ensure that those who are accused but not yet found guilty are not needlessly detained in prison. It is proposed to make certain changes to carry out the original spirit and purpose of the changes we made several years ago, and not to move away from the basic principle that people who are not convicted ought not to be detained unnecessarily. These changes will be contained in Criminal Code amendments which are in the process of preparation and which I should like to see in the House before very long.

Mr. Woolliams: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In light of the fact that the minister is contemplating a change to this particular section of the legislation which has put the onus on the Crown to prove certain things, why is he changing the Bail Act? If what I have said, what the national newspapers believe and what judges and magistrates accept, is true, why is the minister bringing in a change to the Bail Act? Why fool around?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, the exact purpose will become perfectly clear as the amendments come forward, but I would say in a general way that it is to ensure that the original intent is carried out. Since the act was passed we have gained additional experience in its operation which has allowed us to look at areas where there may be doubt and dispute, and to clarify this. It has allowed us, as well, to make sure that any impediment or difficulty that magistrates may have experienced in applying the law is removed. I want to emphasize that it is not the government's intention to move away from the general principle that persons should be presumed innocent until proven guilty and not failed unnecessarily in the process.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

DISBANDING OF MILITARY BANDS—REQUEST GOVERNMENT REVIEW DECISION

Mr. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Defence. Will the minister tell the House what possible justification he