

wider responsibilities for day parole as well as full parole, that backlog is apt to increase accordingly.

● (2110)

I am not at all sure that ten new members added to the board will be sufficient to handle the ever-growing administrative and time-consuming paperwork that accompanies applications for parole; but at least their numbers will help to distribute the burden of interviews, reporting and judgment that is proving onerous for the presently constituted board.

The proposal to have these new members located in various regional centres across the country will, I trust, restore the former practice of allowing inmates to be interviewed personally by parole panels, a practice which was a much fairer and more equitable one than the present system of forwarding detailed documentation to Ottawa for assessment and adjudication by officials far removed from the penal institution in which the inmate is housed.

The number of inmates in our federal institutions is at an all-time high—approximately 9,000 men and women. Not only have convictions been increasing, but the granting of parole has been considerably tightened up in the last few years, with the resultant overcrowding in penal institutions that now poses such significant problems in our penitentiary system; problems of lack of physical facilities, training programs and, as well, problems of lowered staff morale due to longer work hours and heavier duties. These problems all contribute to the security risk factor, one which poses a potential threat to the communities where penitentiaries are located.

I would like to see the minister move ahead much more rapidly than he has to confront these very serious problems, by utilizing the proposals in the Huguessen report and the wealth of information presented to the committee under the distinguished chairmanship of Senator Hastings. I would like to see the recommendations put forward in the Outerbridge report given early consideration so that a large network of halfway houses can be available for inmates who can be considered for early parole. To accomplish this, a strict screening of applicants for such centres would be required on the part of the Parole Board.

But having visited many of our federal institutions, I am convinced that there are many who should probably not have been incarcerated in such institutions in the first place, and there are others who, having served an initial sentence, would be of more benefit to themselves and to the general public if allowed to operate in a much less restricted atmosphere. Halfway houses under the supervision of the parole service should be able to offer that opportunity. The words of the Outerbridge report make this very clear. An article in the *Calgary Herald* of September 25, 1973, comments on the report and quotes excerpts as follows:

In general, halfway houses are smaller, more visible to the public, less expensive to operate and they do not require capital construction costs as high as those of prisons.

In addition, if residents are well selected, CRS's—community residential centres—can be introduced without substantially increasing the risk to the community.

The report says "more than 90 per cent of incarcerated offenders are released to the community within two years, and, the question

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remains whether the risk to the community is greater or smaller after their incarceration than before."

We submit that it is likely to be greater.

In our opinion, therefore, it seems logical that a high priority should be placed in the developments of alternatives to imprisonment.

Presented at a time when paroles are down and the prison population is rising at such a rate that the Canadian penitentiaries service is contemplating a building program, the report calls for an expansion of halfway houses as "an alternative means of relieving the increasing pressure on our prisons."

I would suggest to the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand), in his consideration of parole, that the time has come for a revision of mandatory supervision releases to see whether or not this form of release is proving effective or whether it is, in all too many instances, extending sentences in a manner that was not originally intended when the program was introduced. I would also urge that where the facilities are available, such as in Ontario, parole applications for inmates in provincial institutions on criminal charges be processed by provincial parole boards rather than by the National Parole Board. If such a step were to be taken, it would substantially reduce the congestion that now exists at the national level.

When the minister first served notice that he intended to add new members to the Parole Board, I asked him to give consideration to the appointment of a native person to the board and he gave his assurance that this was being actively considered. Having in mind the numbers of native persons in prison and the treatment they are accorded, I trust this proposal is still receiving his very careful assessment.

Finally, I would like to see the Solicitor General initiate a campaign designed to encourage members of the general public to get involved in helping those who have been released on parole to normalize their role in society. That would mean encouraging business and labour to guarantee a certain number of jobs for men and women on parole. It would mean accepting ex-inmates into homes and community organizations in a way that happens all too infrequently. It would mean recognizing that men and women who come out of penal institutions—and let us face up to the fact that they do come out—need all the help, support and encouragement of the general public that they can get in those first lonely, disruptive and frightening weeks and months when they are released from prison.

Russell G. Oswald, commissioner of correctional services in New York state, wrote recently on correctional administration but he could have been speaking to all of us when he said:

Correctional administrators have an awesome responsibility . . .

The disruptive prisoners are in the minority but get excessive publicity. Most of the others are literally crying out for our help so they can climb that steep grade back to decency and constructive community living. We cannot permit ourselves to be diverted from our commitment to meaningful change by those who would try to confuse and frustrate us by their illogical violent behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, it is through the medium of a properly and humanely administered parole system, one which would operate more effectively than the present parole system, that the majority of inmates will be able to climb that steep grade back to decency and constructive community living.