

*Penitentiary Act*

years and this overcrowding would seem to suggest that our mode of treating criminals has not been very effective—we have not been able to reform very many and we are creating more. We are taking little trouble to discover the causes of crime and to eliminate those causes. In this scientific age we ought not to continue simply to use the old repressive measures. A commission should be appointed to be composed of men of high ideals possessing a wide experience of such matters. The riots at Kingston, although serious enough are a comparatively small matter when considered in the light of the big problem involved. This commission should investigate the whole matter and report to this house as to what steps should be taken in the future to solve this great problem.

Some hon. members may remember the commission set up years ago to investigate Kingston penitentiary. I do not think the recommendations made by that commission were followed in any regard. I had the greatest difficulty some months ago in securing a copy of their report. They made some recommendations but everything was forgotten. Some years ago the hon. member for Southeast Grey (Miss Macphail) in two successive sessions made the plea that prisoners, especially married prisoners, should be paid for work performed. That resolution was adopted by the house, but practically nothing has been done in the matter.

These men are unable to defend themselves and every precaution should be taken to ensure that their interests are safeguarded. It is not a question of this or that little thing, such as cigarette papers or the providing of some toilet necessity; the trouble goes a great deal deeper than that. Moreover I do not believe those causes which are assigned by the men could, under the conditions under which the investigation was made, reveal the real reasons for the riot. These real reasons could be ascertained only by men of scientific training and with some knowledge of the general character of criminals of this type. I would plead with the minister and the government that now the report has been presented on the immediate question of riots in the penitentiaries, the government would give consideration to the appointment of a commission that before the next session of the house would bring in a report which would place the treatment of criminals on an altogether different basis.

Mr. LAPOINTE: I intend to discuss certain features of the report of General Ormond [Mr. Woodsworth.]

when the estimates of the penitentiaries come up for discussion. I may say immediately, however, that I agree with the hon. member for Kingston City as to the character of the report, which is certainly a very remarkable one. The superintendent's conclusions are:

1. Insufficient supervision covering a period of not less than ten years.
2. Insufficient and inefficient inspection covering not less than a period of ten years.

I have not been able to find out how General Ormond has come to these two conclusions. They are based on nothing that can be ascertained anywhere in the report or in the documents which have been submitted to us. They seem to be only the yielding to the temptation of blaming somebody else—those who preceded him. I have not the pleasure of being acquainted with General Ormond, but he seems to have been rather unfortunate. After he was appointed last August he paid three visits, one to each of the three penitentiaries, Dorchester, St. Vincent de Paul and Portsmouth. He has been unfortunate because riots took place in those three penitentiaries to which he had paid visits and where he had interviewed convicts. My information was to the effect that he lacked experience of penal institutions, and if my information is correct, he interviewed the convicts in the absence of the wardens or other officers, something which is never done. Apparently he promised the convicts many of the things for which they had been asking, such as cigarette papers and so on, and when the promises were not implemented, the riots took place.

Let me tell the Minister of Justice that, like the hon. member for Kingston City, I have no reason to take up the cudgels for either General Hughes or Warden Ponsford. They were not the appointees of the administration of which I was a member. I found both of them there when we took office. It is true, as the Minister of Justice has said, there was no love wasted between the two, as I saw, but together they made a pretty good team so far as the administration of the penitentiary was concerned, and as the hon. member for Kingston City has said, there was in Kingston under Ponsford and General Hughes no outbreak which could be called a riot. It was when this wonder from Calgary took charge of the penitentiary that the riots broke out. I shall have something else to say about the matter when the estimates are taken up.

May I say also that three or four years ago a commission was appointed by some states of the United States to study prison regula-