

Supply—Justice

The committee would also be interested to hear from the minister how this parole board operates.

I suppose that, as I do myself, several hon. members—

(Text):

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Chairman, if the hon. member will permit, it had been my expectation that I would have to deal with this subject on the second item, item No. 150. At that time I will have the officials of the new national parole board with me and if it is agreeable to the hon. member to wait until the next item we could deal with that subject then.

(Translation):

Mr. Eudes: I presume that, as I do, many hon. members get from their electors requests for assistance in securing parole for a prisoner. What is the procedure to be followed in such cases? What advice can we give to those electors who, in all confidence, solicit assistance?

In that connection, would the minister please explain, later on, the increase in estimates on item 150? That item, which for 1956-1957, amounted to \$224,180, has now been raised to \$344,531 for 1959-1960. And I hope he will be able to satisfy the committee that this increase furthers the purpose of the national parole board.

On April 22 last, as recorded on page 2928 of *Hansard* I asked the Minister of Justice the following question:

1. Have any representations been received by the government to appoint a woman member to the national parole board?
2. If so, from whom have any such representations been received and what action, if any, is contemplated?

The minister replied as follows:

Since this question involves the necessity of circularizing my colleagues, I would ask that it be made an order for return.

And the house decided accordingly, but the return has not yet been forthcoming.

Eight weeks have elapsed since then. I presume that, in the meantime, the Minister of Justice has circularized his colleagues and that he is now in a position to reply to my question.

Could the minister tell us how many women are now in prison, and inform us how the national parole board proceeds with their rehabilitation?

[Mr. Eudes.]

That rehabilitation matter is, in my opinion, extremely important. In recent years, especially after the investigations made by the Fauteux commission and the recommendations embodied in its report to the cabinet, the government, and society, have been taking a more humanitarian view of prisoners.

As a result of Freud's discoveries in the field of psychoanalysis and of the work carried out by his disciples in that same field and in the field of psychiatry, for some years now, lawyers and legislators have come to take a different view of men who at one time were simply described as criminals.

The view today is that the person condemned is perhaps not solely responsible for the crime he has committed. Society environment and family life, to an extent which is impossible to specify but which exists, have also shared in the commission of the crime.

Fortunately, today, a condemned man is no longer considered as a criminal. He remains a human being, whose rehabilitation is a duty upon society.

In Canada, in recent years, great progress has been made in this field.

However, among the convicted there are women. To help in their rehabilitation, I feel that a woman should be appointed to this national parole board.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I should like to join with the hon. members who have commended the Minister of Justice for his bill to increase the number of superior court judges, particularly in the province of Quebec. This bill, when it comes into force, will help make the administration of justice more efficient.

It is my hope that the time lapse between the date when a case is registered for a hearing and the date of the investigation will be shortened.

A similar bill had in fact been suggested by the predecessors of the Minister of Justice, but for reasons known only to "Lady Politics", the bill never saw the light of day because of a lack of assent on the part of the Quebec government.

In closing, I should like to ask another question of the Minister of Justice, namely whether capital punishment has been abolished.

Over the weekend, another death sentence has been commuted to life imprisonment. I think I am not mistaken in stating that, since this government took office, 90 per cent of death sentences have been commuted by order in council.