

the main failures of governments of this country in the past ten years. In my view it is one of the basic failures of the whole outlook and thrust of action we get from Liberal governments.

While they tend to be composed of well-meaning, humanitarian-minded individuals, as is the hon. member for Egmont, they refuse to look squarely in the face the kind of society which has been growing in our country. They refuse to recognize that the very foundation of our society is greed which is surrounded by a halo of something, in sort of glorious quotation marks, called free enterprise. In the name of free enterprise we have built a society that is now starting to react increasingly in the way I have suggested. There is increasing vandalism. When I say we should start looking at the causes, I mean we should have an economic debate in this House. If we want to get at crime, let us get at some of the real causes of poverty and injustice which seem to be the nature of our society.

I am old enough to have been born in an age when 80 out of 100 Canadians were born on farms. Most of us lived in a rather healthy, rural kind of community. Unless we went to one of the larger centres we could go for years without ever seeing a policeman. Yet in the little village referred to in this newspaper article, the only thing that has happened is that they have increased the police force. We have become increasingly a people dispossessed of any real ownership or feeling of participation in what makes our economy tick. When people feel dispossessed, lost and rootless it is axiomatic, when they see others who have legally amassed great control and wealth and are sitting at the top, that there will be resentment against this basic injustice.

As well-meaning as the resolution introduced by the hon. member for Egmont is, I submit that setting up a committee to do the kind of job suggested would not accomplish anything. It would not accomplish any more than the other dozen standing or special committees, or royal commissions we have had in recent years. If the hon. member really wants to see a turnabout in this kind of attitude, as do we who have taken the position that murder by the state is not an answer to murder by an individual, he should be asking the House to concentrate upon these kinds of things. I know this is a nettle that people like the hon. member for Egmont do not want to grasp. But unless he is prepared to come to grips with and grasp firmly a desire to deal with these things and recognize this is a society whose foundation is based upon greed and the grabbing of profit, which is bound to breed crime among those who have been dispossessed, he will not achieve the purpose which in his heart I know he desires.

Mr. Rod Blaker (Lachine-Lakeshore): Mr. Speaker, it is with considerable sympathy for the motion of the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) that I rise to speak on this subject. While I tend to agree with some of the comments made by previous speakers that perhaps a special parliamentary committee on this subject is not necessarily the right way, it strikes me that many of the comments made by the hon. member are worthy of further thought and, certainly in my case, admiration for the consideration which went into his remarks on this problem.

Administration of Justice

I may be incorrect because I am working from memory, but I believe recidivism is approximately 80 per cent in the case of individuals who have been incarcerated for more than one year. Where they have been incarcerated for less than a year, the rate of recidivism is approximately 20 per cent. Taking another aspect of our whole concept of punishment of crime, it is almost stunning that in an effort to reform an individual—and surely punishment is not the only aspect we are interested in, in terms of crime—and to return him or her to a normal, productive life as a citizen, one of the big things we should think of is placing such an individual in the same building and in the same environment as hardened criminals.

There can be little doubt that whatever our intentions may be with regard to the correction of criminal mentality, it is none the less a fair accusation against the penitentiary system to say it constitutes a school for criminals. In all fairness, mention should be made of the other aspects of the penitentiary system and the very substantial efforts which have gone into correcting and improving that situation. However, there remains enough of a problem that I believe the comments of the hon. member for Egmont on that subject are perfectly valid.

I wish to underline the comment made by the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan), I say this with all due respect for the hon. member for Egmont, but I ask him at the same time to acknowledge that it is a very sad practice on the part of some members of the House to seek to derive political advantage from every escape which occurs. They play to the media. This attitude does none of us any good. It is certainly not good for society that we should use an escape from prison as an opportunity for political gain. It is most regrettable that this practice should continue.

I think it is most timely that the hon. member's motion should have come forward today. As he may know, commencing today and lasting for the next three days is a national conference on youth services in crime prevention which is being held at the government conference centre. This conference has representation from departments of the federal government, the provinces and volunteer agencies. This goes to the merits of what is suggested in the hon. member's motion. There is considerable hope that the experience gained from such a conference will be valuable in enabling us to make further advances toward the goal we have in mind, that is, to prevent crimes taking place and to prevent individuals becoming criminals.

I shall be more brief that I had intended, Mr. Speaker. I had thought to discuss action taken through the Department of the Solicitor General, in co-operation with other departments, in terms of crime prevention among young people. I shall only say that the broad activities of the department and of other departments are concerned with planning to prevent delinquency through the development of interventional procedures prior to a youth's entrance into the criminal justice aggregate, the expansion of relations between the police and the community, activities reflecting innovation in the police role, the expansion of community corrections and the development of manpower planning in diversifying the utilization of human resources in social defence. I might also in parentheses