

● (1520)

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence. I look forward to the remainder of the debate and the vote later this afternoon so that we can get back where we belong, namely, in our constituencies. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions or comments? The Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet).

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, very briefly, I would like to congratulate the previous speaker whose comments were more or less what mine would have been if I had spoken to this motion today.

I think he was right to analyze the situation the way he did, and I think his speech will be helpful to Canadians who are watching us on television and who wonder why Parliament was recalled today in such a hurry, to adopt a Bill that has been before Parliament for a number of months.

I wonder whether the Hon. Member would agree that the Government's decision to recall Parliament is unfounded or at least ill-founded, as well as costly and unnecessary.

I say ill-founded because I think we should not take the exceptional course of recalling Parliament unless there are issues that are particularly urgent or unless there is an overriding need to do so. I believe that the precedent created today by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and by the Solicitor General (Mr. Kelleher) is an ill-considered precedent. In my opinion, the reason given by the Conservatives for resorting to this exceptional measure does not justify a massive recall of Members to Parliament, the cost that entails and the inconvenience to House of Commons employees and the entire parliamentary apparatus.

I feel that we are here today because of a mistake on the part of the Government. And I think this measure is unnecessary in any case, because, although the Prime Minister would have us believe that without this legislation, dangerous criminals might be released, what he is not saying is that every month, inmates who have served their sentence are being released from prison and returned to the community.

I think it is rather strange that all of a sudden, after nearly two years, after more than 20 months in power, this Government is getting worried about inmates who are released at the end of their sentence. I therefore wish to ask the Hon. Member who just spoke whether he could explain why it is the Government was unable to have the legislation adopted earlier in the year, if it was really so anxious to keep all inmates deemed to be dangerous inside our penitentiaries. In fact, in that case, this Bill should have been one of the first measures adopted by Parliament, and so I wonder why the Government waited until the last day of the session to have this Bill adopted by the House?

Parole and Penitentiary Acts

[*English*]

Mr. Angus: Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet). I appreciate his comment. I think it is interesting to note that this is the twelfth time since Confederation that this House has been recalled on an emergency. We have been recalled for matters such as the declaration of war against Germany, the Suez crisis, the Great Depression, sometimes to legislate men and women back to work, the Constitution of Canada. When I read that list and compare it to the reason we are here today, in order to right the incompetence of the Government in planning the business of this House, it is clear, and I think all Members of this House and those who are watching will agree, that this does not compare.

The Government has had over a year since the introduction of the Bill. It has had at least five months since it cleared committee, which is two points back from the final process. While I cannot give the Hon. Member any specifics, I know that we twiddled our thumbs in this House over the winter months. We talked and talked on legislation that was nowhere in the same vein as this Bill. That the affairs of this country could have been managed much better.

At the end of June we saw a lot of pressure by the Government to rush through legislation. The Hon. Member for Papineau will recall that his colleague, the Hon. Member for Humber-Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin), made sure that one particular piece of legislation did not pass through this House. I am sure the Government House Leader will remember that measure as well. When we come back on September 8, and if the press reports that tell us there will be a Throne Speech on September 17 are true—I do not know if they are—we will see the Government try to cram through a lot more. This House has had enough of that kind of management. We expect to see legitimate debate, a full airing of issues so that the concerns of the people of Canada can be properly brought to the floor of this Chamber.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Supplementary question, the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet):

Mr. Ouellet: A short supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I should like to ask the Hon. Member whether it is true that the argument to the effect that we in the Opposition and the senators who supported this amendment really want to let dangerous criminals loose in the streets is an argument or an accusation made by the Government appears to me to be dangerous and quite unfounded. I wish the Hon. Member who said he would support the amendment passed by the Senate—as we in the Liberal Party will also support the amendment—would reassure the people who are listening to us that indeed, by endorsing the amendment, we will not be doing anything at all to encourage or multiply the possibilities of having dangerous criminals roam the streets.

What we are proposing is that, in the case of an inmate who is about to finish serving his sentence and may be released