

directed and administered by a Superintendent and three inspectors as officers of the Department of Justice.

To attain this objective it is necessary to amend many of the sections of the Penitentiary Act, as well as to re-number the same, and for the purpose of clarity the provisions of the said Act have been amended and consolidated in the present Bill.

I desire to submit the explanation given by the Minister of Justice when he presented to the House of Commons the resolution preceding this Bill. He said:

I do not minimize, the committee may be sure, the great importance of this resolution and the legislation which will follow it. As the honourable member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Woodsworth) said, this question is one which has been before the country for many years. Rightly or wrongly there has been a feeling that all was not perhaps as well as it should be in the penal institutions of Canada, and I well remember well-meaning citizens imploring us to carry on an investigation. I was on the other side of the House at the time when that great social worker, my own fellow citizen and townsman, Archdeacon Scott, the padre, came to see me and besought me to plead with the then Government for an investigation into the penitentiaries. A large body of public opinion was certainly aroused at the time, and when the campaign of 1935 took place the present Leader of the Government made a promise that there would be an investigation by royal commission into the administration of the penitentiaries.

We came into office in October, 1935, and the royal commission was appointed in February, 1936. The resolution before us is the result of the report of that commission. Whatever may be our opinion as to its findings and recommendations, I think everyone will agree that its report is a considerable and well-prepared work and that the commissioners have devoted their energies and abilities to doing the work as completely and even as perfectly as it could be done. This does not mean, of course, that we are to agree with everything they may suggest or recommend. I personally agree with a great many of the things they recommend. With some of them I do not agree, and as to many others I have doubts whether they should be carried into practice. But as far as one of the recommendations is concerned, and it is their main recommendation, the one which is embodied in this resolution and in the Bill to follow, namely, the appointment of a commission or a prison board to replace the present administration, with that recommendation I am in agreement.

Most of the other suggestions and recommendations—and there is a multitude of them—will have to wait. Most of them can be carried out by regulations after the commission, the prison board, to be appointed have satisfied themselves that they should be carried out; but the most important of them will have to be the subject of legislation, and Parliament of course will have ample time to study the report and consider the advisability of making those changes. The commissioners in their report suggest that it is a work of five years to put into effect all the recommendations which they make, but this Bill, I repeat, is merely for the purpose of creating a prison board.

I fully sympathize with the view expressed by my right honourable friend the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Bennett), by my honourable friend the member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Barber), and by my honourable friend the member for Yale (Mr. Stirling), that the members of the House have not had sufficient time to read and consider this voluminous report; and if this legislation would have the effect of carrying out all the recommendations of the commission, I would certainly feel that their contention was even stronger than it is. But so far as merely creating a prison board is concerned, changing the present system in that respect, I do not see that it is so essential or necessary to have read all the arguments in favour of the numerous changes which are suggested. There may be some who think, as my right honourable friend does, that we should wait, but I am quite sure that there are a good many more who would strongly criticize the Government for not doing anything this session, after this report has been tabled.

I do not agree with the basis on which my right honourable friend lays his strongest objection. He says that we are asking the committee to render a verdict against General Ormond. We are doing nothing of the kind. It is not the person of the superintendent; it is the system against which a verdict is rendered. If there is a verdict it is a verdict against a system; it is a question not of changing a man and putting another man in his place, but of changing the system. My honourable friends who spoke of the dismissal of General Ormond did not state the position correctly. There is no question of dismissing the superintendent by the creation of a commission.

Mr. Stirling: That is the recommendation.

Mr. Lapointe (Quebec East): True, his office would disappear. As this happens quite frequently in the Civil Service, he would be eligible for retirement allowance if he is entitled to any. The question of dismissing General Ormond has not been considered at all. Surely, if the policy of having a prison board in charge of the administration of the penitentiaries of Canada is the right policy, no single man should be an obstacle to putting that policy into effect. I repeat, the fact of giving effect to the recommendation of creating a prison board does not mean that anything is done against the superintendent who is in charge at the present time.

Of course I should be following the line of least resistance if I were to accept the view that it would be better to wait a few months. This will be a very difficult task. The appointment of the three men who will serve on this prison board will be a task of great magnitude. Some seem to believe that we should find supermen for that work. Unfortunately they do not exist any more in Canada and the other countries of the world. We have to find the best men possible. I am free to admit that at the present time I do not know what men will be appointed on that board. I have already received many requests, and I am afraid I shall disappoint some of the writers when I say that the choice which will be made will not be made from among those who have written. I may add that these will not be political appointments. If there is a work which will be most responsible and difficult, it will be this. It is a work which does not bring much satisfaction. There is no