

*Penitentiaries*

With respect to the operation of the penal system, we heard disappointing evidence from inmates with regard to parole and mandatory supervision. The decision of the Parole Board to revoke paroles should be reviewable by the courts. Minor violations of the terms of parole should be punishable by temporary reconfinement, during which time the inmate would not lose time served on his sentence. This measure as well should be reviewable by the courts.

With respect to our position vis-à-vis staff, it is our belief that the system is sadly lacking in good policies concerning recruitment, career opportunities, and discipline. One of the major reasons for hostage-taking incidents is the fact that there is constant conflict between inmates and staff because of improper attitudes on the part of both. A shining example of how that can be corrected existed in the institutions we visited in the United States.

The Canadian penitentiary service should be withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the Public Service Commission. It should establish hiring, career planning, and dismissal procedures of its own, using the standards of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as a model. Recruitment standards for the service should be raised, and all applicants should undergo appropriate personality testing to determine their suitability for correctional positions. Also they should be subjected to security clearance.

Further, the Canadian penitentiaries system should provide regular upgrading courses and educational leaves to improve the quality of its staff and make it possible for employees to rise in the service. In this connection, an attempt should be made to generate personnel trading-off programs with other countries. If that were implemented, Canadian personnel in the penitentiaries system could work in the Danish system or in the American system at places like McNeil Island, San Diego, etc. This exchange will result in benefits to the system. There are several further recommendations with respect to staff which I do not have the time to put on the record.

The next matter I should like to deal with is the care of inmates. Despite assurances that the committee's brief is being accepted by the government with respect to a building program, I have some doubt. All we are doing is building more warehouses, the police are arresting more people, and the courts are sending more people to jail, when diversionary programs could prevent that kind of growth of prison populations. The Criminal Code must be looked at in order to achieve changes and have other methods of sanction employed. With respect to the ongoing building program, it should be brought to a conclusion as quickly as possible. This may mean that there will have to be more flexibility on the part of the government in its policy of constructing new institutions close to large urban areas. The report speaks of work communities and the like.

Generally wherever we went we found that the feeding and clothing of inmates was bad. The hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville has pointed that out on more than one occasion. We found some serious deficiencies with respect to medical

services, about which the hon. member for Oxford will be speaking.

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We found very serious deficiencies in the treatment of inmate grievances. We on this side urge the minister that inmate grievances should be handled at the first level by a board consisting of two inmates and two staff members, with a member of the administrative staff sitting as chairman and voting only to break ties. This board should have the authority to decide upon the validity of a grievance and to make recommendations to the institutional director regarding possible solutions to inmate complaints. We believe that an inmate should have the right to appeal the decision of the director or the grievance committee to an arbitrator.

In different words parts of these policies are in the recommendations of the subcommittee. The arbitrator should be a person drawn from outside the system and appointed by the director. Such a person should be of good standing in the community and be possessed of arbitration skills. If a resolution of an inmate's grievance cannot be arrived at, the inmate should be able to appeal directly to the commission. No inmate should have to wait more than six weeks before receiving a final answer to his grievance after it has been passed on to the board of review or the commissioner's office. If more time is required the inmate should be so informed, and the reasons for the delay should be fully explained. Some progress has been made in this direction, but far from enough. This kind of system is now operating, with good results, in other countries.

This package of 65 recommendations as a whole may look quite radical to the officials in the penitentiary system. I think that attitude might be changing slowly. The in camera hearings with respect to the progress of the implementation of some of the recommendations made by the subcommittee have been very useful. They have brought the members of that subcommittee into direct communication with those responsible for advising the minister on policies. We feel that we are making some progress in changing their thinking, and I say this without any disrespect to the top echelon staff involved. We would like to avoid the assessment by them that these recommendations are truly radical.

There are further recommendations with respect to inmates which I will not have time to put on the record, but let me stress that it is my belief that the recent incidents in B.C. and at Dorchester are a direct result of the long delay—nine months since the government has had the report—in implementing some of the more crucial recommendations of the report as they apply to inmate reform procedures and staff reform procedures. We are back to square one. There was not a single hostage-taking incident or a single incident of violence during the entire time that the subcommittee was doing its work. The report was tabled last June. Nine months have gone by. I for one am extremely disappointed—and that disappointment is shared by other members of all parties who sat on that subcommittee—that we have not moved more positively, aggressively, and quickly to implement the recommendations.