

TREATMENT OF RELEASED VANCOUVER INMATE

Hon. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): Madam Speaker, until the rule change comes about, could the minister explain in this particular case the difference between parole and mandatory supervision? Why was Kocurek allowed to be lawfully at large, carrying a pistol and handcuffs, after failing to show up for his first scheduled visit to the mental health unit?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, mandatory supervision operates under a formula provided in the statutes. Whether or not the parole board considers inmates a threat, they are entitled to be on the street for the last one-third of their sentence, provided only that they have behaved during the time they have been incarcerated. I recognize, and I have indicated, that there are shortcomings with that system. Mandatory supervision has certain advantages. It provides an incentive to inmates to behave well while in prison, but the price for that advantage has been high. I very much favour changing it.

ROLE OF PAROLE BOARD OFFICER

Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Solicitor General. According to press reports it is quite clear that federal officials warned that Kocurek was dangerous. Was there in fact a parole board officer to whom Kocurek was supposed to report? If there was, why was that parole board officer not keeping track of what Kocurek was supposed to be doing? I refer especially to his refusal to turn up at the mental health clinic? Why did no one know about this?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, I would like to have the opportunity to look into that further before answering the question. Basically mandatory supervision is a right that an inmate earns by good behaviour and not a right that officials can take away from him without a proper hearing.

NATURE OF SUPERVISION

Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Madam Speaker, the Solicitor General seems to be indicating that, once someone is out on mandatory supervision, it does not matter what he does with respect to the federal authority to bring that person back into custody or check on him. Is that what the Solicitor General is telling the Canadian people? In this case it seems to me that if Kocurek was supposed to be reporting to somebody in the parole board, that parole board officer had an obligation to find out what he was doing and whether he was reporting to places like the mental health clinic. Is the Solicitor General telling me that absolutely nothing can be done, that there is no supervision at all when someone is out on mandatory supervision?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): No, Madam Speaker. In fact over half the cases of mandatory supervision are unsatisfactory and are revoked or circumscribed in some way.

Oral Questions

These are the statistics that concerned me so much when I began my job that I asked for an investigation into mandatory supervision and discovered all the shortcomings of it. Indeed, mandatory supervision can be terminated. I have indicated that I favour changes to make mandatory supervision even tighter than it is.

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LABOUR CONDITIONS

LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. Ted Miller (Nanaimo-Alberni): Madam Speaker, my question is addressed to the Prime Minister. Currently there are 11,000 workers drawing unemployment insurance benefits in my riding of Nanaimo-Alberni. In Port Alberni alone there are 1,200 workers facing the prospect of going on welfare by the end of August, to join 1,300 families already in that unenviable position.

Will the Prime Minister explain to the people of Nanaimo-Alberni, and those in the rest of Canada who are unemployed, how their belt tightening has helped improve the Canadian economy and what the government proposes to do to help those workers who have sacrificed so much already?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I have not had notice of the question so I am not sure if I can identify the kind of jobs that have been lost in that area. I imagine that they would be in the forest industries, and that the hon. member would know that our main clients for the products of those industries are in other countries. For instance, when the United States economy is undergoing negative growth—in other words when it is in a recession—the markets for the products of the workers in the hon. member's riding are shrinking.

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The answer which I could give his workers would not be satisfying, unless I could guarantee to them that there would be an upsurge in demand in the United States. Of course this is something for which we are hoping, particularly in Canada, because such a large part of our trade is with the United States. But it is certain that the question asked by the hon. member illustrates well that nothing which this government could do, no matter how perfect it would be—and God knows it is not perfect; not all that perfect, anyhow—could guarantee that these workers would suddenly find a surge in the markets of the countries which buy products from Canada.

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT STIMULATE ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Miller (Nanaimo-Alberni): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister as well. The public mood in Port Alberni—and I imagine in other communities across Canada—has been one initially of