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PENAL REFORMS IN CANADIAN PENITENTIARIES

Mr. Jean-Pierre Goyer, Solicitor General of Canada, in a statement to the House of Commons on October 7, outlined Government policy on the federal penitentiary system, which pertains to persons convicted of sentences of two years or more. He explained reforms that had been undertaken a few months ago by the Canadian Penitentiary Service and spoke of changes involving clothing and haircuts, more private family visits, leave of absence, medical services, inmate committees, cafeteria systems and work and industry reforms, etc.

"We have decided from now on," he stated, "to stress the rehabilitation of individuals rather than protection of society." Mr. Goyer's statement follows:

...I will start with some figures on the present situation. First of all, as far as expenses are concerned, the Government must spend about \$10,400 a year to keep an inmate in an institution, while it costs only \$415 to the Government if an inmate is on parole.

During...June, 5,257 offenders were on parole across Canada. A study carried out by the National

Parole Board of 2,663 inmates on parole showed that 2,078, or 78 per cent, had a job. They earned, for that month only, nearly \$857,000. On the basis of such results and of money earned by the same persons for a whole year, this adds up to more than \$10 million and their income tax, both federal and provincial, has been estimated at nearly \$1.3 million.

Let us take a look now at the social angle. In Canada, close to one million persons have a criminal record. Each year, on average, 3,750 persons are admitted in our 36 federal institutions. At the present time, there are 7,270 inmates in our institutions, whose average age is 35 years and 80 per cent of them are recidivists.

These few figures point to the obvious conclusion that rehabilitation of offenders remains one of the major problems of our times. The present situation results from the fact that protection of society has received more emphasis than the rehabilitation of inmates.

AIM OF CORRECTION SYSTEM

For too long a time now, our punishment-oriented society has cultivated the state of mind that demands that offenders, whatever their age and whatever the offence, be placed behind bars. Even nowadays, too many Canadians object to looking at offenders as members of our society and seem to disregard the fact that the correctional process aims at making the offender a useful and law-abiding citizen, and not any more an individual alienated from society and in conflict with it.

Consequently, we have decided from now on to stress the rehabilitation of individuals rather than protection of society.

Criminologists, psychologists, psychiatrists and senior officers with a long experience of the correctional field are agreed on the fact that at least 80 per cent of our inmates can be rehabilitated.

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