

*Supply—Solicitor General*

If the parole board is to have any value at all its job must surely be to ease prisoners back into society and help them. If the chairman of the board wants to run a popularity contest, let him go to Hollywood or run for parliament or do something in a field where popularity counts. The people I am concerned about now will never vote for anyone in great numbers. There is need for a great service to be provided here and it is the responsibility of the board to give that service by helping in every way they can. If the board waits until a sentence has been served it does nothing except consent to a man's detention for a certain period of time.

As I say, Gaston Nicholas will get out eventually but had he been let out two years ago I am sure there would have been no trouble. He would have been assisted by a number of us who are interested in his case as well as by parole officers and others who are in a position to help. Now he is bitter. In my opinion he has been punished for things for which he was never really responsible and over which he did not have much control. He has returned to a place where he has separated himself voluntarily from society and as a result he appears to be a much poorer risk in terms of a return to civilian life. This is only one case which I could cite. I have referred to it a number of times on previous occasions.

I expect in the course of the coming year to make a point, if necessary, of destroying, if possible, the individuals who composed the parole board. I think I can find sufficient information in some of the instances which have come to my notice to provide the one thing they do not want, namely, publicity for the cases where they have failed. I am prepared to do this if it will bring about a complete change in the thinking of the parole board. I know some members of the board. There is one in particular for whom I have a great deal of respect. I do not know the other members of the parole board. I only know the decisions they have made.

• (5:40 p.m.)

I agree entirely with the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka that if an inmate automatically comes forward for parole and is refused without reason, this does him no good. In fact it does him considerable harm. He will sit and wonder about the situation and it will not help his chances of establishing himself again in society. Not all such prisoners will be violently resentful of the board's decision but you can imagine their feelings when, after learning from their classification officers and

padres that they are making good progress, they are refused parole without reason.

The percentage of those released on parole has fallen substantially since 1960. The figure is probably 20 per cent less now than in that year. This is the criterion we must consider. If we devised an automatic method of parole it would be like the procedure in the air force where, after a man has done certain things and spent a certain time in the service, he becomes an A.C.1 without trying, then an A.C. 2 without trying and after a further period of time an L.A.C. without trying. In the services this has worked fairly well. Some people became corporals under that system and one such corporal even tried to run the world.

Let us not say we have a modern parole system. We do not. The people on the parole board are terrified of making a mistake but the kind of mistakes they make could happen anywhere. Today I got a telephone call from my son telling me of an accident in Alberta over the week end in which a mounted policeman was shot. A man was causing a disturbance. The policeman got out of his car at the spot and immediately was shot in the head with a 22 rifle. Did he have any way of knowing that the man was going to shoot him? Have we any way of telling that a man would commit that kind of crime?

Improvements have been made. Let us not sell short the former minister of justice who upgraded classification officers and other officials in the penitentiary service. Let us not sell short the commissioner of the penitentiary service who is trying to achieve an ideal situation, leaving aside for a minute the question of buildings and physical facilities. His qualification officers are able to evaluate prisoners much more efficiently than the average Joe on the street is evaluated in normal, everyday life.

I do not think the person who shot the policeman had a record or a history of insanity. But I point out that in our prisons the wardens very often can tell which prisoners will return to jail and how soon they will return. They have a fairly good record of evaluation, but above them is the parole board with greater powers. In my opinion this board is not carrying out the provisions of the Parole Act as I know them. It is not providing the proper supervision for people released into society. In effect it tells the worst offenders: We are not going to help you at all; when your time comes up you will be thrown out on the street without any kind of supervision or help.

[Mr. Peters.]