

Parole Act

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) said, it seems to me that we have enough Canadians. I consider Indian people as having full Canadian citizenship. If one of them is chosen to sit on the Parole Board, so much the better. If none of them is chosen, so be it. If English-speaking Canadians, Ukrainians, Polish, Yugoslavs, are appointed, good, but it will not be because they are Yugoslavs, French-speaking or English-speaking Canadians, but because they are Canadians. This is what we want on the Parole Board. The Indian people must be considered the same way as others, no more, no less. If any rehabilitated ex-convicts are appointed, good, but let them not be there as ex-convicts but as Canadians. They have made mistakes, but very few among us have never made any mistake. We have all done so at one time or another. Let them not say: Because they are ex-convicts, we accept them on the Parole Board.

● (2100)

Mr. Speaker, one would have to—

Mr. La Salle: One would have to serve a sentence to be a member of the National Parole Board.

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue):—as the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) said, one would have to serve time in prison to be a member of the National Parole Board. I believe the main amendment should be to enable the board to expedite things, to solve cases more quickly and not to spend hours before answering requests. If there is a shortage of employees, let us give them employees; a shortage of secretaries, let us give them some; and whenever a member of Parliament writes to them, let them be decent enough to reply as soon as possible. Months go by before they give an answer. I can understand that we can make mistakes, the same way the Parole Board did make mistakes already.

I never recommended the release of a person named Dion for instance who had killed young people in Quebec City. He was released. He killed again, he went to prison, he was again released; he was released four times. The board had considered the record and everything that time.

As I said a while ago, there are mistakes. I once recommended the release of a 19 year old boy in my constituency. It took so many letters: one from the parish priest, one from the mayor, one from the bishop, letters from everybody. Finally he was released. I will not name him but I remember. I forgive him but I do not forget. Once he was released, he arrived in Rouyn at noon by plane and the same night broke into my garage and stole \$350 worth of tires. This guy I had recommended for parole, well, he was picked up again.

An hon. Member: You didn't recommend him again!

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): No, I did not recommend him for a second time, Mr. Speaker. I preferred that he stay where he was.

Therefore, we can be mistaken like this. I realize that the Chairman of the Parole Board himself can be mistaken, that precautions must be taken. In many cases, the

[Mr. La Salle.]

recommendation for the parole of criminals has been done with much less caution.

An hon. Member: Name them.

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): Yes, I can name some: Chartrand, Pépin, Laberge, etc., were not liberated by Mr. Street but by the province of Quebec. They could go home during the weekends. During the rest of the week, they could also stay at home, or almost. This was a prison system suited to individuals while the regular system was completely different.

Mr. Speaker, this has nothing much to do with the Parole Board but I should like to make a complaint to the government: the Parole Board is ineffective. It includes dead wood, do-nothings, people who do not answer when we have business with them, who do not follow up on requests or recommendations. They drag on, they make no decisions and then refuse to tell us why. We are told that all this should be kept secret before Parliament! Therefore, I ask the government to urge the parole officers to be more active, vigorous and not so sluggish. Let them not die from lingering illness but give them orders for action.

As regards the amendment providing for the appointment of a couple of Indians and ex-convicts to the Parole Board, I find it secondary. When the hon. member for Skeena suggested that in his province there are more Indians inmates than white inmates it is because Indians do not behave as well as the others.

There are Indians in my riding. In fact there are two reservations. However, I have seldom seen an Indian being jailed. Since those people are behaving there is no need to imprison them. There is no need for us to ask for parole for them because they are not in jail. Therefore, I conclude that the Indians in my riding are behaving better than in the Skeena riding. In my riding the Indians are not jailed whereas it seems that in Skeena they are about all imprisoned.

Mr. Speaker, I have much respect for the Indians which I consider as Canadians. If they do not want to be considered as Canadians, it is up to them. There should not be any preferential treatment for the Indians nor for the French-speaking, English-speaking, Ukrainian-speaking or Italian-speaking Canadians. We are all full-fledged Canadians. Consequently, let us have genuine Canadians on the Parole Board and not do-nothings with marshmallow backbones. We need people able to take their responsibilities and to reply when they are asked questions.

[English]

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, the amendments before the House lead me to consideration of the much broader question of parole and the manner in which it is being implemented. I should like to speak briefly at the report stage of Bill C-191 to urge that the amendments proposed to the Parole Board Act, providing for the addition of not more than ten members to the National Parole Board, be implemented as quickly as possible. The need for a larger, more flexible board with regional representation and regional areas of jurisdiction is obvious when one considers the tremendous backlog of cases now before the board; and as the board assumes