

Penitentiaries

escorting the prisoners rightly refused to turn them over to the guards. The guards were suspended but were not fired. They should have been fired. This is the type of problem which plagues the Canadian Penitentiaries Service. It has to be the master of its own destiny and come to grips with problems.

The crux of these recommendations is a straightening out of the organization. The previous solicitor general commenced the implementation of some of these recommendations. He appointed a new commissioner, Mr. Yeomans. I have been informed by lower and middle management within the service that Mr. Yeomans is the man for the job. He will do the job and shake things up. Some people are somewhat worried about this and phone their members of parliament because they are concerned about the fact that they are losing their jobs or being transferred. Mr. Yeomans is doing a good job, and I encourage the Solicitor General to back him up. In December Mr. Yeomans said: "The only thing I have read about the penitentiaries service was your report". Perhaps the members of the committee are not expert in everything, but we like to think that our report was a good start. If he can implement most of the recommendations, then he is well on his way to doing an excellent job.

Before closing I have a few remarks regarding the recent hostage takings and the murder at Archambault. These incidents should not prevent the government from continuing its reform. I was gratified to hear what the Solicitor General had to say in that respect. Hostage takings and murder are tragic. No one can condone those events. In due course the precipitators will be prosecuted before the courts. One must remember that hostage takings, and probably even murder, are symptoms of the problems in the penitentiaries service and society as a whole. Prisons are in existence to segregate criminals from the people in our society in order to protect the general population. Similarly, within the prison institution there are segregation units such as special maximum units to protect the general prison population from dangerous and violent persons like the infamous Andy Bruce, whom the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt) referred to in his remarks earlier.

● (1552)

I have received some letters indicating that if we had capital punishment we would not have any of these problems. As a person who voted in favour of the retention of capital punishment, I say that such a view is very simplistic. To introduce capital punishment solely as a knee-jerk reaction would be extremely foolish. Capital punishment is just one form of punishment, and that must be remembered. During the debate on capital punishment I distinguished between premeditated and unpremeditated murder. I suppose the first degree murder referred to in Bill C-84 is premeditated murder and second degree murder is unpremeditated. People who are knowledgeable about and cognizant of what that means treat the two offences as being distinct; they do not think of capital punishment as a catch-all means of solving all our criminal justice problems.

[Mr. Lee.]

One other thing I questioned very seriously during the capital punishment debate was the issue of long term incarceration. We must remember that people convicted of first degree murder will be incarcerated 25 years and will be eligible to apply for parole or a sentence review only after 15 years. Members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs have observed that we seem to be moving toward longer terms of incarceration. I seriously question that because long term incarceration creates time bombs. We in the subcommittee never really examined in any great depth problems created by long term incarceration, and to the best of my knowledge the Department of the Solicitor General has not completed its investigation into the ramifications of long term incarceration.

The hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt) cited the history of the infamous Andy Bruce, an individual who has been in and out of prison and who has spent most of his adult life in maximum security institutions. During his stay in the B.C. penitentiary most of his time has been spent in the "penthouse" or the super maximum unit. He says he does not condone what he has done, and I agree with him, but one must examine the consequences of keeping an individual in a four by six cell. He becomes a "time bomb".

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. gentleman but his time has expired. He may, however, continue with unanimous consent. Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Lee: I thank my hon. colleagues for their indulgence, and I will try to make my closing remarks very brief.

I think it is urgent that the Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) study what should be done with people who are incarcerated for long periods of time, because we create time bombs when we send people involved in hostage-taking incidents back to the super maximum units from which they came.

I am sure the issue of capital punishment will be debated at another time. I do not think it should be confused with what we are talking about here, which is prison reform.

I think I speak on behalf of hon. members on this side of the House when I say that we shall continue the unanimity and the spirit of co-operation which developed during our investigations into the penitentiary system, during the drafting of our report and certainly in our cross-examination, if I may use that term, of the new Solicitor General with respect to his response to our report. For the reasons I have outlined I support in principle the motion in the name of the hon. member for Yukon.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock): Mr. Speaker, I have followed with interest the debate on this motion, which asks the Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) to adopt the unanimous recommendations put forward by the subcommittee on the penitentiary system in Canada. Most of the speakers to this point were members of that subcommittee. I was not a