

what a great step forward criminal law has taken in this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gilbert: I give the government credit for this. Nevertheless, we should take the extra step proposed by the bill of the hon. member for Simcoe North, and give hope and the prospect of happiness to people who have been convicted, especially of summary conviction offences, and who carry with them the burden of such conviction.

There are three ways in which a conviction can have serious consequences. First, it can affect the prospects of a person looking for a job in which he is required to be bonded. I am sure the Solicitor General will say that the government has helped those who have been convicted of criminal offences and who now wish to be bonded for the purpose of employment. Nevertheless, it is still difficult for a convicted person to get a job in which he must be bonded. It is difficult for him to find employment.

Here, again I give the federal government credit. It has attempted to have omitted from employment applications the question: "Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence?" But the government's jurisdiction is limited to federal enterprises. I suggest that the provinces should provide for the removal of this question from employment applications which involve provincial employment. To my knowledge not one province has done this. The provinces' record is poor on this question. I hope that they will all see to it that the question "Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence?" is removed from employment application forms. I will make certain that New Democratic governments of the provinces of British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are reminded of the necessity for removing this question. I hope that other members, including those who have applauded, will bring this matter to the attention of other provincial governments. I am referring to the governments of Ontario, Quebec, the maritimes and so on. The law about employment applications should be uniform across the country.

Lastly, and here I am about to put the Solicitor General on the spot, a criminal record makes travel difficult. People in Canada who have been convicted of a criminal offence and who wish to go to the United States or other countries are stopped by officials at the border and asked: "Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence?" If the answer is in the affirmative they are turned back, even though the offence may have been relatively minor, that is to say, of a summary conviction nature.

The Ouimet commission, as well as members who have spoken on this subject in the past, urged the government to make reciprocal agreements with other governments about these types of criminal offences. The government has not acted so far. I hope that the Solicitor General can stand up and say that the government has made an agreement with the United States, so that a person who has been convicted, but pardoned, can say "No" in reply to the question, "Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence?" and be supported by the federal government in so saying.

I recall arguing with a former solicitor general about this matter. I tried to persuade him to get in touch with

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other governments and make reciprocal agreements concerning travel. A criminal conviction affects a person's life in matters of bonding, travel and employment, and these are three mighty important areas.

● (1730)

The most important thing is to avoid the delay and embarrassment in respect of a summary conviction offence by implementing the bill of the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard) and by accepting the recommendation of the Ouimet Commission, that if a person who is convicted of a summary conviction offence has led a crime-free life for a period of two years he may apply for and be given an automatic pardon without the necessity of all the investigation that is now required.

I am sure the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) at this time in history needs some legislation that will boost his morale, because there is an awful trend or tide within certain groups in the community concerning capital and corporal punishment.

Mr. Robinson: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Gilbert: I will in a minute. I think the Solicitor General has the right attitudes, the right principles and the right programs, but it is going to take a little bit of time to implement them as well as a little patience and understanding on the part of the Canadian people. This would be a feather in his cap.

An hon. Member: Give him help.

Mr. Gilbert: Somebody suggests that we should give him help. We are always anxious to help in respect of legislation that is forward looking. That is one thing you will find about members of the NDP. They believe that the dignity of the individual is important and that social justice should be measured in full.

Mr. Speaker, I said I would only take a few minutes. May I suggest that the Solicitor General would be given credit if he stands and says he intends to bring this legislation forward. I am sure he will get the support of all parties in respect of such an amendment. I look forward to thumping my desk in support of the Solicitor General when he brings forth that legislation.

Mr. Robinson: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Gilbert: Yes, certainly.

Mr. Robinson: Would the hon. member be satisfied if the act was amended so that the question asked about a previous record was: "Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence within the past two years?"

Mr. Gilbert: Mr. Speaker, I am not one who is going to accept this legislation. That question should be directed to my friend the Solicitor General. I would be inclined to accept that wording if the hon. member is talking about the wording on employment applications.

Mr. Robinson: Yes.