

Penitentiaries

However, it became very clear that it was not the government which was calling the shots in this matter. Indeed, it was very likely the commissioner of corrections who was calling the shots because the report which was tabled by the Conservative party was identical to the report tabled by the Liberal party. Those were the criticisms which were made by the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville, and those are some of the concerns he has expressed often as to the need for an ongoing review process in the Canadian penitentiary system. If a crisis existed in 1977, it is not an exaggeration to say that a crisis exists in the Canadian penitentiary system today. There are many examples to illustrate that, and I have pointed to some of them already.

I would like to spend a moment or two dealing with some of the recommendations of the subcommittee and then turn to a specific example of a very serious crisis within the Canadian penitentiary system, that is, the recent occurrences at Dorchester penitentiary in New Brunswick. As I have said, the Commissioner of Penitentiaries—and, through him, the government—has been very selective in his approach to the recommendations of the special subcommittee on the penitentiary system. I would like to give a few examples of how he and the government have been not only selective but misleading. They have misled the Canadian public and the Canadian Parliament by suggesting that certain recommendations have been implemented when in fact no such thing has happened. As recently as a year ago the then hon. member for New Westminster-Coquitlam pointed out that in fact only some 14 of the 65 recommendations of the special subcommittee on penitentiaries had been implemented. I would like to give just three or four examples of the deceit—and I use that word advisedly—that is contained in this progress report on implementation.

• (1610)

What are some of the recommendations which have been allegedly implemented but which in fact have not been implemented at all? I start at the beginning with recommendation No. 1 which is about a crisis existing. There is a statement that it is imperative for the Solicitor General to act immediately on the report as a matter of the utmost urgency. This recommendation is stated to have been implemented. That is simply false. The government did not act immediately upon this report as a matter of the utmost urgency. They picked certain recommendations with which they could live and threw the rest out. So to suggest that that recommendation has been implemented or that a crisis no longer exists in the penitentiary system is misleading the Canadian public.

Recommendation No. 8 is another one which has been allegedly implemented. It calls for a sufficient number of training positions to be established to allow for the full and adequate training and continuing professional education of custodial personnel. We are told that it has been implemented, yet not a single additional position has been filled. So to suggest that that recommendation has been implemented is again misleading the Canadian public and members of Parliament.

Recommendation No. 17 is another one. It recommends that women should be employed on the same basis as men in the penitentiary service. We are told that that recommendation has been implemented. Well, I suggest that any member of the public or any member of the House should go into a penitentiary in this country to see whether in fact that recommendation has been implemented and whether indeed women are employed on the same basis as men in the penitentiary service. That recommendation has not been implemented and once again the people of Canada and the members of this Parliament have been misled.

I could go on and on throughout the report, but I will only give one more example because I think that in many ways what has happened is typical of the shallow response of this government to the importance of these recommendations. Let us consider recommendation No. 25, surely one of the important recommendations in the subcommittee's report. It is a straightforward one and it states that the penitentiary service should be open and accountable to the public. We are told that that recommendation has been implemented. There is a little footnote which explains how it has been implemented, how the secrecy within the penitentiary service has been swept away and how the service has been made open and accountable to the public. They give an example which I will read from the report. It is stated:

Approximately 45,000 visitors toured B.C. Penitentiary during the week of May 4, 1980.

The B.C. Penitentiary contained no prisoners on May 4, 1980, and if that is an example of how the penitentiary service of this country is accountable to the people, then once again we see clearly that members of the public and members of Parliament have been misled.

I suggest that these implementation reports are a serious shortcoming of this government and that the government has a responsibility to come before the subcommittee on penitentiaries of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs to explain exactly why they have chosen to reject some of the most important recommendations which the subcommittee made unanimously.

I said I would turn to Dorchester. Recently, as members of this House have become aware, some very serious allegations have been made about incidents at Dorchester. There has been the tragic death of a prison guard, there has been a suicide, there have been allegations of widespread beatings and gassing at the institution, there has been an allegation, confirmed by the Department of the Solicitor General, of an incident in June of this year in which 137 shotgun rounds were fired into a gymnasium full of prisoners, and there have been allegations that the prisoners' personal property and private belongings have been systematically destroyed. I emphasize that these are serious allegations and it is not for me or for the Solicitor General to determine, without hearing both sides fully, whether or not there is truth to these allegations. They must be weighed by an independent judicial inquiry. For example, an allegation has been made that, following the hostage-taking at Dorchester and following the tragic death of Bill Morrison,