

The National Parole System.*—The progressive correctional system now in operation in Canada places emphasis on reformation rather than on punishment alone for the sake of retribution to society. It is quite obvious from past experience and from the high rate of recidivism among criminals that punishing a person for wrong-doing merely by depriving him of his freedom is not effective in turning that person from crime. It is therefore considered imperative that during his period of incarceration every possible means be taken to reform the inmate through treatment and training and through assistance with his personal problems. Not only is it desirable that the individual be given such assistance and returned to freedom as a useful citizen but it is also undoubtedly preferable for society generally that he be saved from the further resentment and bitterness that would result from imprisonment without assistance. The only way the public can be properly protected is by reforming the offender. Thus the treatment and training program in the institution is a vital part of the whole correctional process and parole is an extension of that training outside the institution.

In January 1959, the National Parole Board, consisting of a chairman and four members, was formed and given absolute jurisdiction over all matters of parole. It operates under authority of the Parole Act (SC 1958, c. 38) which came into force on Feb. 15, 1959, replacing the former Ticket-of-Leave Act administered by the Remission Service of the Department of Justice. A fifth member was appointed on Oct. 1, 1960. The Board has taken over the Remission Service, and the staff of the Board, numbering 100 persons, is known as the National Parole Service.

The basic purpose of parole is to reform and rehabilitate the offender and the function of the National Parole Board is to select those inmates in the various federal and provincial penal institutions who indicate that they sincerely intend to reform, and to assist them in doing so by grant of parole. The Board is not a reviewing authority and is not concerned with the propriety of conviction or the length of sentence but only with the problem of deciding, in each case it considers, whether or not there is a reasonable chance of reformation. Parole should not be confused with clemency and is not granted on humanitarian grounds alone. It is not a matter of shortening sentence, although it has the effect of shortening the time a man spends in gaol. Parole means that an inmate is allowed to serve the remainder of his sentence at large in society but under certain restrictions that will ensure his leading a law-abiding life. These restrictions are designed for the protection of the public and for his own welfare.

The decision of the Board is based on reports it receives from the police, from the trial judge or magistrate and from various people at the institution who deal with the inmate. Reports are also obtained from a psychologist or psychiatrist, when available. Where necessary a community investigation is conducted to secure as much information as possible about the man's family and background, his work record, and his position in the community. From all these reports, an assessment is made to determine whether or not he has changed his attitude and is likely to lead a law-abiding life. An inmate need not obtain the services of a lawyer to apply for parole. He may apply by sending a letter to the Board and is assisted in preparing such application at the institution, or another person may apply on his behalf. The Board automatically reviews all sentences of over two years. As soon as an application is received, a file is opened and investigation begun, the results of which are presented to the Board for decision. All applications and reports are processed by the Parole Board staff at Ottawa. In addition to the headquarters staff,

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