

ABOLITION OF LAW IS STRONGLY URGED

Mr. Justice Curran Advocates
English as Teaching Language
in All Schools.

In Best Interests of Foreigners—
Hopes Government Will Not
Yield One Iota.

John P. Curran, judge of the King's Bench, came out flat-footedly as favoring the abolishment of bilingual schools in Manitoba, in the course of an address yesterday afternoon, before the People's institute, in the auditorium of the Isaac Brook school.

Said he, "If the foreigners who come to Canada are to be good citizens of this country, they must speak the English tongue. I have no affiliation with politics, and thank God for it, but how are we to make these people English if we are to allow them to drag along in the old ruts that they were used to in the countries of their birth? When they come to this country, should we encourage them to speak nothing but their own tongue? Surely it seems to me a matter of commonsense that a child should understand.

"I hope that the government will never yield one jot or tittle in their determination to make the teaching of English alone prevalent in our public schools," continued Judge Curran, and he was roundly applauded by the audience present.

The speaker took for his subject a resume of his findings at the provincial jail, which he inspected last fall, and advanced several methods for dealing with the unfortunate people in this province who fall within the clutches of the criminal law, and are punished accordingly. His address was most comprehensive and interesting and was, judging from the applause which was frequently accorded him, greatly appreciated by his auditors.

Prison Reform

Judge Curran said in opening that there seemed to be no subject to which the people had paid so little attention than the question of how our criminal population is taken care of, dealt with, punished, etc.

"That condition of 'let it alone,' which has prevailed through many centuries," said he, "has been the occasion of much suffering among humanity. What a horrible theory was that advanced by Lombroso in 1876, which was that some people were born criminals and criminals they had to stay during their lives! Some men and women start in life handicapped. If they fall by the wayside, something must be done for them other than branding them as criminals.

"Punishment, per se, will not make a criminal a good man; you can't reform a man by an act of parliament. And so it is with our so-called criminal code.

"Therein lies the great weakness in our system of dealing with criminals; the meting out of the fixed sentence. 'Take the case of a man who has been convicted of theft. The judge has a latitude of punishment to be given, running from three months to many years. How is the jurist, who knows little or nothing of the man himself, to justly fix the period of incarceration which that man is to experience?'"

Indeterminate Sentences

Judge Curran advocated strongly the system of indeterminate sentences. "The present state of things are unjust," said he, "and they cannot be remedied under our present system. The only remedy is the indeterminate sentence plan, which is now in vogue in most of the states of the Union. It is possible for men who are mentally and morally sick to be cured in our corrective institutions.

"The old idea of the jail, an example of which we have at the foot of Vaughan street, is absolutely discredited nowadays. How much better it would be to sentence a man

to a reformatory, such as is at Guelph, Ont., than to the Manitoba provincial jail."

Judge Curran said that he had no fault to find with the officials of the provincial jail as the result of his investigations. It was the system which they were administering that he had found to be seriously at fault, he averred.

The speaker then gave the reasons for his castigation of the present methods, which he had embodied in a report submitted to the provincial government. First, and foremost, was the lack of occupation among the prisoners. "Not more than ten per cent.," said he, "are given any occupation at all. The rest are all kept under lock and key, and without the benefit of any fresh air exercise. That ten per cent. is allowed to go out upon our public streets in the care of a keeper, clad in beautiful and conspicuous garb, which was originally, I believe, black and yellow. Why should these men be subjected to the degradation of appearing in our streets in such habiliments? Still, these men get out in the air, and are relieved of the interminable walking up and down in the jail corridors.

Effect of Prison Bars

"Prison bars are the prime cause of the wrecking of men's bodies and souls. There are bars and plenty of bars in the provincial jail. And they have locks on them, and the inmates have bars staring at them from every angle.

"The remedy for these bars, I am thankful to say, is now being provided by our present government. They are making arrangements for the institution of a prison farm, which, I hope, will be more than that and prove to be an agricultural reformatory."

Lack of educational methods at the provincial jail was given by the speaker as the next serious fault he had found. A large percentage of the prisoners, he said, were foreigners, and it was in no way right, when the opportunity was offered, to refuse to teach these men English. He cited the case of the two Russians Malkoff and Kuzin, who were hanged for murder last year. "Turnkey Handel himself, who is a Russian," said Judge Curran, "told me that neither of the men at any time thought they faced the possibility of hanging; they thought right along that they would not get more than four or five years' sentence. They were accustomed to the laws of their own country, and were unacquainted with ours. Is it right to permit people in this country to remain in such ignorance of our laws?"

It was at this juncture that Judge Curran made his utterances about the necessity of teaching English, and English alone, in Manitoba's public schools.

The speaker then said that the commingling of young prisoners with crime-hardened older ones in the Manitoba institution was most reprehensible. The prisoners should be graded and classified, so that the older hands should not contaminate the younger.

System An Abomination

Judge Curran then turned his attention to the "abomination of women confined in that thing." Said he. "It is true that they are absolutely separated from the men, but they are there nevertheless, and there is nothing for them to do, outside of washing and mending the prisoners' clothes.

"What is to become of these women, the great majority of whom are the victims of a problem as old as humanity?" he queried. "Some better means for taking care of these social outcasts must be devised. One can read the unending police court stories every day in the newspapers. I met a woman prisoner in the Manitoba jail who had been the round of the streets, the police court and the jail for 21 years of her life! Surely there is some other way of dealing with them than in confining them in the jail for six, eight or ten months.

"There they are herded, negress, half-breed, Gallican and white, in one big family. That is the condition which prevails there, thanks to the system. It is up to the women of Manitoba, now that the men have proved their inadequacy of handling the question, to exercise that God-given charity for their fallen sisters which should be in their hearts."

Judge Curran advocated a municipal organization of women, who should ask the city of Winnipeg to institute a farm for women prisoners, where they would be educated in household and domestic duties. He suggested that part of the old agri-

cultural college might be utilized for this purpose.

"It is absolutely futile to think of reforming the prisoners in our provincial jail. They go in, remain and emerge in moral darkness. It is a reproach to our country that such a thing could be," said the speaker.