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Thursday, May 12, 1994

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 12, 1994

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

That one researcher from the Standing Committee on Transport be authorized to attend the Canadian Transportation Research Forum in Victoria, B.C., from May 15 to May 18, 1994.

(Motion agreed to.)

(1010)

[*English*]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

NATURAL RESOURCES

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present in both official languages this morning the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Finance concerning Bill S-2, an act to implement a convention between Canada and the Republic of Hungary, an agreement between Canada and the Republic of Nigeria, an agreement between Canada and the Republic of Zimbabwe, a convention between Canada and the Argentine Republic and a protocol between Canada and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to income taxes and to make related amendments to other acts. The committee agreed to report the bill without amendment.

TRANSPORT

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That the House authorize the Subcommittee on the St. Lawrence Seaway of the Standing Committee on Transport to travel to Quebec City from May 23 to 25, 1994, to St. Catharines and Thunder Bay from May 31 to June 3, 1994, and to Washington, D.C. from June 6 to 7, 1994 for the purpose of holding informal hearings on the viability of the St. Lawrence seaway and that the necessary staff do accompany the subcommittee.

(Motion agreed to.)

[*Translation*]

TRANSPORT

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I move:

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I would move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) concerning forestry practices in Canada in clear-cutting, the House authorize the Standing Committee on Natural Resources to travel from May 23 to 26, 1994 to British Columbia and Alberta, and in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick on May 30 and 31, 1994, and that the necessary personnel do accompany the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PETITIONS

KILLER CARDS

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege this morning to present this petition on behalf of citizens of my riding, places like Mallorytown and Athens and Addison and Smiths Falls and Lyn, asking for the government to amend the laws of the country to prohibit the importation, distribution, sale and manufacture of killer cards, and to advise the producers of these cards that their product, if destined for Canada, will be stopped at the border, seized and destroyed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Fernand Robichaud (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs)): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

Supply

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Paul E. Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby) moves:

That this House urge the government to respond to the evident lack of confidence that has arisen from Canadians over the Young Offenders Act, and recommend modification to the definition of “young persons” in section 2(1) of the act to mean a person to be ten years of age or more, but under 16 years of age.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a matter of national importance. Our country is hurting. The basic foundation of what we have known as peace, order and good government has been called into question by Canadians. Specifically in relation to the juvenile justice system there is anger in the land.

The community is divided and there is much fear and mistrust. Our youth, the promise for our future, are seen by many not as our hopeful legacy for tomorrow but as strangers to be feared.

Youth speak differently, they do not want to dress anything like the rest of us, they do not seem to value or give due regard to what we hold dear. It has been that way since the second world war, since the emergence of a youth subculture.

Now there is a fundamental difference. Young people are getting an unfair bad rap for our lack of courage as a community to expect and demand standards of behaviour and mete out balanced consequences when the social order is threatened by the violent young. And when some young people excessively display their youthfulness there is immediate fear and resentment from the bystander, a sense of helplessness.

There is a backdrop of community perception that there is no accounting for any behavioural excess. The right to live in peace has evaporated and the fear of violence from the few becomes transferred on to all good kids. Instead of fondly regarding our young, the image of delinquent is what too frequently comes to mind. The good many are categorized by the bad few.

Indeed there is an innate sense that the fundamental social order of the community has broken down when the average Canadian thinks of youth crime, for we have a justice system that has devolved to one of being merely a legal system that seems unresponsive and unaccountable to the community.

The Liberals gave us the Young Offenders Act. The Conservatives tinkered with it. We have now lived with its consequences for 10 years and I have heard loud and clear that voters in my riding and all across Canada do not like the YOA. They will no longer tolerate the YOA in its present form.

I do not need to remind my colleagues in this House that the buck stops here. We have brought forward our motion today on behalf of the millions of Canadians who said clearly to candidates in the last election that specifically the Young Offenders Act is not what the country wants.

(1015)

This national concern involves a sense of public security and the ability of the government to fulfil its most fundamental duty to protect and defend the citizenry.

My motion before the House today says:

That this House urge the government to respond to the evident lack of confidence that has arisen from Canadians over the Young Offenders Act, and recommend modification to the definition of “young person” in section 2(1) of the act to mean a person to be ten years of age or more, but under sixteen years of age.

It is simply put but I am all too aware of the issues that are not simple. Changing one statute is not going to solve all the problems of youth crime and social conflict but we must make a start and the Young Offenders Act is itself a reasonable place to begin justice reform.

Through change we can set a climate of balance and reasonableness that appropriately understands human nature and the propensities for greed, selfishness and personal denial of accountability.

The Young Offenders Act reflects an unrealistic view of ourselves as a society and it also has rejected the wise parent model of the preceding juvenile delinquents act. There was a mistaken belief that grand schemes of top down, social dogoodism would reform human nature. When the community experienced in real terms the pragmatic results of what had been done to it by this House, the reaction of revulsion began to build.

While the Young Offenders Act formalized old informal practices, guaranteed access to legal counsel and made a more litigious process, the essence of the act sent the wrong message to the community. To verify and bolster those notions to the doubting Liberals who are loathe to admit that they were sorely wrong, Reformers are trying other measures to check perceptions of what the community appears to want.

We now have the technology to have universal suffrage on individual issues of the day. MT&T Technologies televoting service makes universal suffrage a reality. It enables all citizens to vote in an election or respond to a question of the day by using the telephone.

Supply

Voters call a special telephone number to access the teledemocracy system and enter their own personal identification number, or PIN number. After hearing the survey questions, voters press a key to vote yes or no and, then press the pound key to confirm their vote.

It provides a cost effective way to poll a large group of people on an issue. It is an ideal process to gather information, confirm proposals and it provides an additional check on attitudes beyond opinion sampling and traditional methods. The accuracy of what polling companies produce is always a problem of sample size, structure and other things. The MT&T Technologies televoting service provides the largest possible sample size even beyond what traditional paper balloting and a general election might provide.

My colleague, the member for North Vancouver, has signed a contract to experiment with this technology on the questions of the Young Offenders Act. When Reformers set aside one of their few allotted days to bring a motion of debate to this House, we are following the bottom up community accountability model that is at the heart of the Reform Party.

We are prepared to test in scientific terms with the real broad base data what the community mood is and verify what we have already come up with through traditional methods. If anyone wants to learn more about this process, call anytime to area code (604) 666-8378. I will repeat that number again in a moment.

In addition to the specific televote that will take place in North Vancouver in June, there will also be a more general style of phone in opinion poll at the same time available to the whole country. If the media has the social responsibility to report it, people across the country will hear the number and be able to participate.

One need not only take the Reform Party's word that the community is fed up with the Young Offenders Act. We will be checking again through the method of teledemocracy. The Young Offenders Act is the title of it and I say let it live up to its name and be amended so that it truly deals with young offenders, not youthful adults.

There are many ideas for changing the statute. I heard scores of them from criminologists, program analysis bureaucrats of provincial ministries, from police, street workers and above all, young people themselves. I am speaking from years of experience working within the juvenile justice system and I ask who runs the justice system anyway, the criminals, the lawyers, the courts, correctional authorities, probation and parole officers? That seems to be how it has operated.

There have been some partial attempts here and there to keep the community involved but the broad community must have ownership in the operations of the justice system. It should not operate solely in a delegated sense, what government does for us in what we cannot do for ourselves.

(1020)

While the social order begins at the family unit and should be supported and enhanced by our institutions, schools and community organizations, at some point the buck stops.

For juvenile crime community accountability arises in the formal court proceedings. When the bottom line is too diffuse there is unnecessary hurt and injury to the innocent. The community must have the tools to publicly denounce behaviour that is unacceptable.

Canadians want action. We can move beyond just a desire for peace, order and good government to a land that is just, that cares for its victims and casualties. We must protect the weak and innocent as we deal courageously with offenders. There are many ways to teach productive conflict resolution. We must break the cycle of kids who are hurting who go on to hurt others.

I have heard a bulging briefcase full of reasons why we should not do this or that with the Young Offenders Act. I bring to this House some personal experiences. I will recount how the Young Offenders Act did not serve them when they somehow became involved as victims.

I recall Darrel who at 11 years old was lighting fires at school and in the neighbourhood. The school had some difficulties handling him. The social worker from social services had nothing to offer the parents other than a parenting course and a medical referral through their doctor for a six month wait to see a child psychiatrist.

He was too young for the Young Offenders Act. Group homes could not accommodate a pyromaniac. The impulsive lad wanted help, he wanted controls and those who knew him were in fear of what he might do next. As a probation officer all I could do was assess and refer.

Despite the best efforts of loving parents, when subsequently showing off to friends Darrel started a fire in the elementary school in the evening. When the fire was noticed by the neighbours they saw kids running. When all was said and done, \$1 million later half the school was burned down and 600 students were displaced for a year.

As he was not a child in need of care and protection social welfare had no mandate. Mental health had no mandate other than providing community family therapy as the lad was not mentally disturbed. Darrel needed the cycle of his anger and self-centredness broken by a formal court denunciation. He could have also benefited from a court ordered correctional style wilderness camp program. That did come later when he was 12. The YOA did not serve him or the community.

I remember Brent. He had always been wilful, taking things that did not belong to him. He worked his way through the YOA diversions, restitution orders, community work service hours, very short term custody and the extensive probation order conditions. He was given break after break. His juvenile file I

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called one of those 10-pounders. At 17 he murdered an acquaintance with a stab to the chest.

Brent was a time bomb waiting to go off as he dared the authorities to knock the chip off his shoulder. He took a life instead. That is not the end of it. He was placed on remand in custody in the youth detention centre. His girlfriend was allowed to visit with his mother and many friends. Visiting in a youth custody centre especially for someone only on a remand before any guilty finding was fairly lax. He and his girlfriend quarrelled and he hanged himself in the shower. When they cut him down he was brain damaged. Forever now he will be supported by the province as an invalid who cannot look after himself, hardly able to say a word, barely recognizing anyone. The YOA did not serve him nor the dead victim nor the extended family members.

He planned his hell raising until he turned 18 like the bad example of his brother before him, but this time it did not work out. A different law would have made a difference. These are just two examples from my personal experience that would have turned out very differently had the YOA been constituted the way I am recommending today.

We have some specific proposals. If Reform were government today we would have already acted. The motion today of course is the most fundamental. I can just imagine the reaction from the Prime Minister to what we will be saying today from this corner of the House—a shrug, a recounting that some want a little of this and some want a little of that; but we are not going to panic, just trust us, stress the positive, do not worry, be happy, this is really what the Canadians want to hear.

However, let Canada remember this day who was the justice minister when the Young Offenders Act was passed. It was the Prime Minister. What a legacy he has left us. If people want to blame someone for the juvenile justice system the blame can rightfully be laid at the cabinet door of this government.

The east-west cold war is over. The major threat to our communities now is from within, our own inaction to preserve, protect and defend.

(1025)

Sadly our laws and mores have been driven by the cultural conceits that took hold during the heyday of counterculture, including a denial of personal responsibility and the fantasy that coercive power of big government can produce an uplift to the spirit, cure poverty and bigotry, legislate economic growth and stamp out any number of individual and social inadequacies.

In the 1980s the Young Offenders Act initially took up and formalized the best of what we in British Columbia had already been doing for years with diversion strategies, alternative

measures, forest camps, borstals, volunteer probation programs, open custody units and local level innovation.

Then the spirit of innovation was bargained away at the last minute against the best advice just to get a deal with the divided provinces. If we did nothing else to this act than change the age of application it would go a long way to an efficacious result and assuage public concern.

The Young Offenders Act should apply to 10 to 15-year olds inclusive, not the current 12 to 17 years inclusive.

Next, provision 3.1 of the declaration of principle section should include the needs and rights of victims equally with the concerns of the offender. Section 9.7 should include provisions to have victims formally notified of court proceedings as well as the parents of a young offender. Section 16, transfers to adult court, should be possible for any youth under the act not just those 14 years and over.

The crown prosecutor should have the prerogative to proceed directly in adult court without transfer hearings against youths 14 and over where the crown believes circumstances warrant. There is no need for a long trial to decide where the real trial will be heard in such circumstances.

Section 17 should simply be repealed. The public has a right to know about young offender transfer hearings. Although youth court is usually open to the public one cannot publish or report any part of the proceedings that would identify the offender.

Under section 22 related to mental health treatment the judge should not need the permission of the offender he is sentencing to impose an order to attend a program.

Section 24, when a judge sentences to custody, should be just that, custody. The correctional authorities administer what kind of custody, assigning offenders within the range of open and closed facilities as the changing needs arise as in the adult sector. Let the jailers do the jailing and the courts do the sentencing.

Section 38 should be repealed and nothing should be substituted. When the law is broken an offender's right of privacy about their offence should not exist. Crime needs to be exposed, not hidden.

Section 44.1 should permit as well appropriate dissemination of youth records and materials also to school board authorities. Section 46 against prohibition of disclosure of identifying a youth should also be repealed. There should be no restrictions. Justice must be seen to be done as well as done.

Section 45.1 should be repealed and not replaced with any other measure. A youth court should be a criminal record and the rules dealing with those records should be one and the same as adult records.

A new measure should be added to section 50.1 and it should be that if a parent fails to reasonably exercise parental duty the court should be able to order the parent to pay a victim compensation for property loss for vandalism.

Section 56 should be repealed as the common law practice and current court rules in regular courts are more than sufficient to deal with statements made by offenders for evidence. If it is good enough for the regular court system it should be good enough for young offenders.

Finally, the operation of show-cause hearings and the interim release on bail for offenders must be tightened up to stop the revolving door. There is nothing more disheartening to citizens than to see charged offenders on the street the next day after the arrest.

There must be a surety that offending will be reported and denounced by a formal process. Both the offender and the offended must be responded to. The offender must realize and feel the impact of their criminal behaviour on victims and receive consequences commensurate to the crime.

Victims must be helped and restored as far as that is possible by both a caring community and a justice system that will defend them.

In closing, I summarize by saying I have outlined today specific proposals that are needed to bring confidence back to the juvenile justice system. Canadians want sweeping change now not another study, commission or round of extensive consultations. The minister has in his hand over 1,000 recent submissions from Canadians. We have done more than enough of that sort of thing.

If the community wants to be involved to directly share its views, call the telephone number I am about to give and learn how to use MT&T Technologies televoting service. Send this government a message. Call area code (604) 666-8378 and interact with the line to learn more about how the televoting service will be used in June. The evidence is in on what the public wants. It remains to be seen if the government has the will to respond.

(1030)

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the comments of the hon. member and I share his view that Canadians are most dissatisfied with the Young Offenders Act.

However I am somewhat concerned that on the eve of a re-examination of the Young Offenders Act, or a first examination of the Young Offenders Act on its 10th anniversary, it would appear the member has his mind closed before we have even begun to examine and test the 10 years' experience we have under the Young Offenders Act.

The Young Offenders Act is not a creature that was spawned out of nowhere. This is the successor act to the Juvenile

Supply

Delinquents Act of 1911. Many of the things that the hon. member is complaining about were dealt with in the Juvenile Delinquents Act. When Parliament in the mid-eighties decided to bring the treatment of young offenders into the eighties, instead of into the early 1900s, certain decisions were made.

I understand the hon. member's comments, and he was very specific in the sections of the act, but I want to be more general. The general philosophy is that there is a difference between a young offender, particularly a first time young offender, and an adult who has committed an offence against the Criminal Code. I am not talking here about repeat offenders.

This is my question for the hon. member. I wonder if he has a problem with the philosophy that a young person, perhaps 12 or 13 years old, who for whatever reason, whatever economic circumstances may be, walks into a local convenience store and steals a chocolate bar or some other small item, perhaps a pen for school, and is apprehended. Does he think that young person should be treated in exactly the same way as an adult criminal? I do not think so.

As a society we believe that young people make mistakes. They are not adults. They do things wrong. I am not talking about murder. I am not talking about violent offences. I am not talking about people who thumb their noses at the court system because they have been in it 15 times. I am talking about the person who makes a mistake and should in my view be given a chance to rehabilitate himself without having the stigma of a record and without having the stigma of classmates, et cetera, knowing what happened.

I speak from personal experience. I will not go into a long speech. I had a friend that this exact thing happened to under the juvenile delinquents act. His name was never published. Nothing ever came out. He did not appear in adult court. He was treated under the juvenile delinquents act. It was a humiliating experience for him. He is a fine, upstanding citizen today, has never been in trouble with the law since the age of 14. I hate to think what would have happened if we had been spreading his name all over the place.

Is there not room in the Young Offenders Act for first offenders and treating young people differently on their first offence than adults?

Mr. Forseth: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond. Certainly this is not the first examination of juvenile justice. The Young Offenders Act has been amended since first passage. I also remind him that I was a part of trying to administer the old juvenile delinquents act in the field and was a part of federal-provincial conferences that went on for years, round and round.

I am saying perhaps our mind is closed, but others have resisted the response from the community. The basic example that he provided was of a first-time young person who makes a mistake and steals a chocolate bar. In my experience in the practice in British Columbia, that person would not be charged

Supply

but they would be dealt with through alternative measures of the Young Offenders Act.

Similarly an adult, a first-time offender, who steals a chocolate bar in the adult system would not be charged either but would also be referred by the crown for adult diversion.

There is more than enough discretion at all levels of the justice system for it to operate and accommodate the extreme examples cited.

(1035)

My point is that we need some balance and proportionality. It is not a matter of social philosophy coming from a particular political point of view. It is the experience of communities right across this nation that has arisen from the practical application of the act in the community. If it was the appropriate balance, one would expect that the community would be responding in an appropriate way with some measure of confidence. However, the lack of confidence related in our motion is what we have and that is the empirical evidence of results in the field.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely both to the speech of the member who moved the Reform Party motion and to the comments of the other member, and I am not convinced, as has just been stated, that all Canadians are dissatisfied with the current Young Offenders Act. I think that as far as the public is concerned, this is a highly emotional issue. It is a subject ideally suited to long philosophical debates and above all, I do not feel that the average joe should have the final say on this matter merely by picking up a telephone and registering his views.

Young people are treated differently by the print media and we are seeing this more and more, precisely because we are dealing with a young person. Stories involving youths make the front page in all of the tabloids. Recently, one particular case in the region received front-page coverage for an entire week, and it is still being talked about today. I think that the newspapers make a big issue of it when a typical case arises and that their coverage directly influences how people feel.

I am somewhat disappointed with the comments of the member who moved the motion, in that he never quoted statistics to support his proposed amendments. He never once mentioned if indeed the crime rate among young persons between the ages of 10 and 12 had increased dramatically, to the point where drastic action was required to deal with the situation.

Well, I have some statistics which I would like to share with him and I would be interested in getting his comments.

The most telling figures are those concerning the homicide rate among young people. I think this is the issue which the motion before us wants to address. In 1981—I do not have very recent figures but I was told yesterday in response to my inquiries that the data is being compiled and that I would get it eventually—thirteen murders were committed by young people in Quebec, and thirty-four elsewhere in Canada. In 1982, nine such cases were reported in Quebec and twenty-three elsewhere in Canada, and for 1983, there were three cases in Quebec and twenty elsewhere in Canada. The most recent figures I have are for 1986 when six murders were committed by young people in Quebec, and twenty-two by young people elsewhere in Canada.

Furthermore, the general crime rate among young people has declined by 8 per cent in the province of Quebec, and by 34 per cent in the metropolitan Montreal area. There were 34 per cent fewer crimes in 1993 than in 1992. Does the member have statistics to the contrary? If so, I would ask that he disclose them so as to justify the motion put before us this morning.

[*English*]

Mr. Forseth: Mr. Speaker, I certainly question the statement, “where Canadians are coming from”. I believe the motion today represents a nation’s outcry of dissatisfaction with the Young Offenders Act.

As far as the statistics that he quotes are concerned, I would have to examine them. We are not saying that we have a massive crime wave from young offenders. We are saying that the community is basically at a disadvantage with the operations of the juvenile justice system.

Beyond just quoting statistics, the law must be educative. It also must send the right message to the community. When you ask young people where I come from what is their view of the Young Offenders Act, they think it is a soft touch, that it is inappropriate. The act must represent what is socially appropriate in our nation.

We say the title of the Young Offenders Act truly must deal with young offenders.

(1040)

In this age of social sophistication, certainly someone who is old enough to get a driver’s licence and aim that weapon of a car down the street should be held accountable for their driving offences, their drunk driving or whatever it may be in a regular adult court system.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak on this motion this morning because it is a very important topic.

Supply

As the member who presented the motion has said, it is of concern to a great many Canadians. However this concern is not necessarily for the reasons that he said. There is a great deal of concern in Canada for our youth, for our next generation; where they are going and what they will have when they become adults and lead the actual direction of the country.

We in the Liberal Party will be bringing forward legislation in June to deal with some of the concerns that the hon. member has brought forward. Whether these changes will meet with his approval or not, no one can say until he actually sees them. We will, however, be bringing forward a first phase in June that will deal with changes to the Young Offenders Act and to some degree will harshen penalties for young offenders.

The second phase is a study beginning in the fall of the Young Offenders Act. This complete review of the Young Offenders Act will determine what changes should be made to the act in light of the changes that were being recommended in June, and other changes which need to be made to accommodate the concerns of the people of Canada.

We will be hearing witnesses and the committee, I presume, will be travelling. It will be a complete and detailed study. The concern of course is that we must look at this act not from the point of view of a concern of the people of Canada—

An hon. member: No?

Mr. MacLellan: —but also from the concern of the young people themselves. We must look at the young people as being part of the people of Canada.

There is tremendous concern in the public but it is a concern for the safety of Canadians. It is concern with the youth and it is concern about where we are going as a country. We need to look at this question completely.

The hon. member who presented the motion states that we should reduce the maximum age of the young offender from 18 to 16 and the minimum age from 12 to 10. This is a dramatic change and one that will come up in our study of the Young Offenders Act in the fall.

Let me take the first part, the reduction of the maximum age from 18 to 16. We are saying that there has to be punishment for young offenders but we are not saying that young offenders are going to be put away for the rest of their natural lives. Even if we have transfers and these young people serve the full 25 years, someone who is 17 will be out before even middle age.

We have to acknowledge that these young offenders will be back on the street. What kind of people are we going to put back on the street? We send some young offenders, 16 to 18, to a maximum security penitentiary. Some might have to. Some might be considered as incorrigible.

(1045)

As a rule of thumb, if we take away the Young Offenders Act for that two year period we will be sending young people 16 and 17 years old to penitentiary, not necessarily for murder and not necessarily for violent crimes. That is not going to be in the act. There is no way of saying we have to restrict these young people going to maximum security because they committed a murder or a violent crime. We are taking them off the Young Offenders Act. They will have to forage for themselves if they are in the system in the same way as somebody 35 or 40 years old. They will be in a penitentiary and open to sexual and physical abuse.

If that is what the hon. member and the Reform Party wants, then they should come forward and say it. However, that is not going to give us the type of person we want in our society upon release after they have paid their debt to society. What we want to do is try to put somebody back in society who is not going to reoffend, not somebody who is so mad and bitter at society and what it has done that they will want to reoffend to get back at society.

Sure, there has to be protection. Certainly we have to protect the victims. There is no question that legislation first and foremost has to be concerned with that, but we also have to have rehabilitation. There are people who say that rehabilitation is just soft peddling the treatment we are going to give to the offender but that is not the case.

Rehabilitation is going to be a vital part of our society whether we like it or not. If we do not have rehabilitation for children at risk in one form or another we are going to have chaos in our society. Our young people are going to be the source of criticism for all of the adults in Canada.

Why should this be? Why should we in Canada be at war and at loggerheads with our own youth? Why should we say we are making young people the objects of concern and fear in our country? Young people are committing crimes and we say they have to be punished. They have to be punished with the victim and the Canadian public primarily in mind, but remember also the fact that the youth will be back in our society.

That is just one aspect and it is not the one which is going to have the utmost importance in the long term. We have to punish the offenders now. More important and for a more sweeping benefit to society, we have to do everything we possibly can to stop crime from happening in the future.

That is why the main thrust of this government in justice and public safety has to be crime prevention. That is not just crime prevention of those who have already committed crimes; it is to prevent crime from happening.

As we learned in the justice committee in the last Parliament, the older a young person is, the less likely rehabilitation is to have an effect. It is vitally important that rehabilitation start at the very moment children are determined to be at risk. A psychiatrist who appeared before the justice committee told us

Supply

that the most important age for preventing children at risk and dealing with this concern is from the day the child is born to his or her third birthday. That is a very young age.

We have to look at this. We have to look at custody. We have to look at foster homes. So many young people are moved from one foster home to another. There is no bonding with any one family. That is a concern we will have to deal with.

(1050)

We are concerned that there are single parents who have to work but do not have anybody to look after their children after school because they cannot afford daycare. That is something we will have to consider. We may not like it and we may not think we should be bothered with it but we have to consider it and deal with it.

There is divorce in this country and there are single parents. We have to recognize that these things are in our society and we have to work together. This is one community. We have to bring the provinces onside about rehabilitating young offenders, about diversification programs and community work instead of putting them in detention.

We also have to do something in the schools. The federal government cannot tell the provinces what must be done in the schools; it is a provincial jurisdiction. Sure we have the Canada food guide and we tell young people what they should and should not be eating, but we have to respect the Constitution. However we have to work with the provinces on spotting these children at risk while they are in the schools to try to deal with them. We have to support our teachers and one another provincially and federally in this very important area. If we do not, we will surely lose many of our young people.

Young people do commit crimes and it is a tragedy for the victims. The victims are going to lose their children who in many cases have been murdered by young offenders. The parents will never get over this ultimate tragedy. Surely there is no greater tragedy for a parent. I do not think anyone in this House would minimize that. Every time I think about this it sends chills through me. That is something we are going to have to deal with regarding young offenders and a punishment will be needed.

However we also have to try to spot these young people who may commit murder or other crimes in the future, and rehabilitate them before they actually commit a crime. That is a vital aspect of the society in which we live.

The most important area is one we keep covering up and that is child abuse. It is now being determined that as high as 80 per cent of adults who commit child sexual abuse were themselves sexually abused. The studies show no differentiation indicating that a child who is sexually abused one time as opposed to 20

times that the child is going to be more of an abuser or less of an abuser.

The fact remains if a child is sexually abused we can say without any hesitation that child stands a greater than 50 per cent chance of abusing a child. That is a frightening statistic. However, if we do not start dealing with crime prevention, it is going to escalate. Child sexual abuse will be with us in at least the proportions it is now.

We have to address this concern. We have to because it is ruining children's lives. We have to look at the question of child prostitution. There are pimps who use children of any age now, 12 years or younger, but certainly under the age of 18 and they profit financially from their prostitution.

What is that doing to those young people? What kind of punishment are we giving these pimps? Some would say it is absolutely devastating the lives of those young people. It is psychologically hurting and damaging them beyond repair. Their adult lives will not have anywhere near the meaning they would have had if this had not happened to them.

(1055)

These are questions society has to deal with. How are we going to deal with them? Sure, we are going to deal with crimes by punishing the offenders, but we as Canadians have to examine this whole question of children at risk in our society.

This has to be done by bringing forward a national council on crime prevention, as the Minister of Justice is proposing. It will have representatives from various federal and provincial departments and other organizations. It will look at this whole question and at legislation to see if it deals with every aspect that could lessen and prevent crime in our society.

As communities we have to get people working together: the police, Children's Aid, Elizabeth Fry, John Howard, drug dependency, and Alcoholics Anonymous. As individuals in our community we have to look at this question from the point of view of children in our neighbourhoods and stop crime before it happens. We have to help young people, not as parents, uncles, aunts or other relatives, but as members of the community. We have to realize that unless we do that we are going to have escalating offences by youth.

We have to look at it from that point of view, but the fact is we are not. In some of our cities there are young people of colour who have come to Canada from other countries with minimal education. They may be 16 or 17 years old. They are not going to sit in a classroom with children 10 years younger than they are. They do not have jobs. There is still a lot of prejudice out there. There is also the fact that we are not employing our young people the way we should. There are things against these young people.

What are they going to do? They want those things young people feel they can aspire to, so a lot of them turn to drugs and crime. We have to examine that. We cannot ignore that in our inner cities. It has been ignored in the United States and look what has happened. There are certain parts of cities in the United States the police will not even go into. Is that what we want? No.

We have to salvage these lives not only for the benefit of the individuals themselves, but for all Canadians so that they will be contributing to our country's future. This country is going to be in the hands of these young people in a few years.

I want members of the House to talk to young people. I do not want them to forgive their crimes. I do not want them to say the crimes they are committing are right or that they are misunderstood. That does not help them. It does not help to put them in detention and have them play pool and watch television. They have to realize this is a harsh world. They know this, but it is from a different perspective.

Young people are really scared. They do not see a future for themselves. They do not see the jobs. A lot of them have problems in school and at home. A lot of them feel society is mixed up. We are not concerned with one another and that bothers young people. Young people do not become cynical and uncaring until they become adults. Young people are concerned that we are not looking out for one another and that we are not listening to their concerns. We must listen.

We have to start with identifying children at risk. We have to look at our society and ask how as Canadians we can help these young people. If we do that we will reduce crime. If we can stop sexual child abuse we will help future generations. We will be working with Canadians of the future. We have to bring forward changes to the Young Offenders Act because society is ahead of us; we have not kept pace with the situation out there right now.

(1100)

It gives me no pleasure to say that we have to create harsher penalties for young offenders; but we have to because of the situation that exists right now. We have allowed the situation to get out of hand. We as parliamentarians cannot allow it to become worse. We cannot allow the situation to escalate.

We have to deal with crime. We have to deal with the causes of crime. We have to say to our young people: "We want to work with you for the benefit of Canada. You obey the laws and we will do our best to understand what you are going through and what your problems are".

Eighteen is the age used throughout the world. It is the age recognized by the United Nations. Rolling the age back from 18 to 16 will not help youth in our society. The government will address changes to the Young Offenders Act beginning in June.

Supply

We also have to address the causes of crime and understanding our youth.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, frankly I have sat through this presentation just shaking my head. I have heard a lot more of the same: what we have heard from bleeding heart Liberals over the past 10 years. I am really concerned about that.

It was reflected in the hon. member's statement about 16-year-olds ending up in the prison system and being abused by 30 and 40 year old prisoners. Instead of dealing with the problem directly by fixing up the prison system, he used that as an argument against our changes in age in the Young Offenders Act. Again and again I have seen problems being dealt with in any way but a direct, head on approach. I think we need more direct dealing with problems head on.

I have a comment and a question for the member. I think he argued in favour of the change we are proposing when he talked about pimps. The hon. member asked what kind of punishment we were giving to pimps. Does he not think that there are more and more 16 and 17 year old pimps who are covered under the Young Offenders Act and cannot be dealt with properly?

That question and the answer to that question support the argument in favour of the changes we are proposing today. I would just ask the hon. member if that is the case.

Mr. MacLellan: Mr. Speaker, prostitution and juvenile prostitution in society are escalating. We could say there are more pimps under and over the age of 18 years than there were ever before. That is a fact in our society; that is happening.

To say that this is a reason for toughening the Young Offenders Act does not make sense to me. There are laws to deal with pimps and those who profit from youth prostitution. We have to look at those laws. We have to examine them to see if they are strong enough. There is no question. That is why I raised it.

The fact of the matter is that we have to look at why we have 16-year old pimps. How does this happen in society? Will punishing them stop it? It has never stopped it before. The only way we can stop it is to try to get to the root of the problem in society. We have to do that.

To say it is simplistic and we are glossing over the problem is the furthest thing from the truth. Crime prevention and citizen participation in crime prevention are everybody's business.

(1105)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoit Tremblay (Rosemont): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Justice and I must say that I agree to a great extent with his diagnosis and the values on which his position is based. Having worked with him for several months on the issue of gun control

Supply

when he was in opposition, I recognize today both his open-mindedness and his concern.

There is one aspect of his approach however that leaves me wondering about what will happen in the communities in the future. While I agree on the whole with his position on youth in general, we know young repeat offenders present specific problems. I think special attention should be paid to that aspect, particularly to adults using young people to commit crimes.

We have seen it happen in the context of cigarette smuggling. It was obvious in that case, but it also exists elsewhere and there are no provisions on this at present. We should look not only at young offenders but also at the adults who exploit them. Perhaps that aspect of the legislation is the one that needs the most to be changed, to ensure that adults who use young people to commit crimes be given punishments commensurate with their actions. So, the problem is not only with the Young Offenders Act, but also with the law as it applies to the adults who exploit them.

We are well aware, in the present belt-tightening climate, and that is my main concern, that public services for the young people in general will not be expanded. Let us face it, public services are undergoing cuts. But at a time when public services do not expand, a special effort must be made to strengthen the mechanisms and tools of community spirit.

Take the current situation in a riding like mine where we have youth centers and, in neighbourhoods where there is more violence or prostitution, we also have streetworkers from community organizations. Do you know what these organizations live on? They live on temporary job creation programs, commonly called DEPs or section 25s.

Right now in Montreal, do you know what the situation is since April 1? We are told there will be no more regular DEPs, and operating funds for section 25 programs will be cut. We are talking about insignificant amounts in the scheme of things, a few million in a \$20 billion budget. Can the parliamentary secretary at least undertake to send a clear message to the Minister of Human Resources Development so that, in an urban area like ours, such inexpensive programs be maintained to support community spirit because these are being chipped away as it is? The very means on which we are supposed to build a better society are being taken away.

[English]

Mr. MacLellan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the hon. member. I must say I agree with a lot of what he has said.

It is a concern. In the province of Quebec a year or so ago they advertised publicly for women who were being abused to come to the shelters or to the available facilities to receive treatment and help. Within a matter of a few weeks the facilities were so overloaded they had to stop the advertising. That gives us an idea of the problem there.

With respect to assistance, assistance has to be maintained. The Minister of Human Resources Development understands that. I have spoken with him on this matter. I made another suggestion which the provinces could maybe deal with. We have a pilot project in New Brunswick where a thousand or so older members of society who are 55 to 65 years of age but not retired are guaranteed so many weeks work in the community. There is no reason the work in the community could not be with young people, dealing with children at risk. We have people with knowledge of computers and various sports organizations who could perhaps work with some young people in society.

(1110)

There are ways to do it. If all members of the House come forward with suggestions and we work together we can do it. With the co-operation of the provinces we can make a meaningful contribution.

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party motion is rather specific in what it is proposing, namely the reduction of the age limits from 12 to 10 years and from 18 to 16 years. We know the tragic case of the young lad who was killed in England by two people under the age of 12 years. If that case had happened in Canada absolutely nothing could have been done.

My question for the parliamentary secretary is rather specific. We know the Minister of Justice will be referring the entire Young Offenders Act to the justice committee. Is he aware whether there will be any restrictions placed on the examination, or will it be a completely wide open ability for the committee to look at everything including the reduction of age limits?

Mr. MacLellan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that question because I think it is very helpful.

The examination by the justice committee will be without any kind of bounds or governors, whatsoever. The committee is free to make whatever recommendations and proposals it wants. There will not be any attempt to try to restrict the thinking or the activity.

I would go so far as to say that the legislation the Minister of Justice will be bringing forward in June and will be passed prior to the report of the justice committee is open for review, even though it would be passed before the actual study by the committee.

Supply

Mr. Allan Kerpan (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, in the member's statement he outlined his concerns for the fact that we may send young people under 18 years to penitentiary or to prison. I do not think that is the issue here. I think crime is the issue and the Young Offenders Act is the issue.

If they are prepared to commit the crime they ought to be prepared to do the time. That is the penalty or the price they pay for antisocial behaviour in this country.

What does the member say to victims of young offenders' crime? The case that comes to mind very quickly is the Martensville case in Saskatchewan. I know personally some of the victims. What does the member say to the parents and the grandparents of two and three year old children? Does he say that we cannot send young offenders to prison because they may get sexually abused or that it is not a nice place? How would the member handle that?

Mr. MacLellan: Mr. Speaker, I do not think we are saying that at all. I said that when we take 16 and 17 year olds out of the young offenders system we are taking them not only for violent crimes. We are taking them out of the system for theft and vandalism. We are taking them out of the system for everything.

For purposes of murder and other serious crimes that is something we have to deal with in the legislation the minister brings forward. Hopefully there will be changes. If not, there will be the ability of the committee to determine any changes.

Sending 16 and 17 year olds to prison and having them sexually and physically abused will not help society when those young people get back on the streets. Punishment has to happen. When we talk about parents who have lost their children because of murder by a young offender, there is no one in the House who has a lock on sympathy and downright remorse for what happened. Anybody in the House, particularly myself, would love to do something that would be helpful to those parents.

This is why I say crime prevention to stop it from happening to somebody else has to be something that we have first and foremost in our minds. Eighteen is an internationally recognized age. Sixteen, eighteen or whatever will be before the justice committee. Every member on the committee will have a chance to examine that aspect of the legislation.

(1115)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert): Mr. Speaker, once again, a reactionary roar full of sound and fury has risen up from the Reform Party benches. This motion tabled by the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is one more skirmish in a hysterical and perverse crusade by the Social Panic Party.

Who are these Prairie crusaders ganging up on now? Young people who are not eligible to vote and who are represented in this Parliament by adults, adults who are running scared and who want young offenders to be punished like adults—who are their role models—for the same crimes. It is clear from all the statistics that juvenile delinquency is marginal in proportion to the general crime rate. However, it takes only a few isolated and unfortunate cases for a pack mentality to develop and demands to rise for exemplary punishments for young offenders. The focus is on punishment.

Reactionaries are swept up in an irrational thirst for retribution. Why? To appease their own adult consciences because they realize these crimes are committed by young people who imitate them. They tell us: These young people have committed adult crimes, so they are adults and should be punished as adults. They tell us: Forget 30 years of research on the treatment of juvenile delinquency. They say: The statistics on the genuine and positive rehabilitation of the vast majority of young people supervised by youth protection agencies are so much garbage. Forget social clemency for children whose criminal tendencies are usually the result of disintegration for which adults are largely responsible.

Echoing this hysteria, the Panic Party is now calling for exemplary punishment under the Criminal Code for young people over 16, for penitentiary terms and even life sentences.

I am shocked and appalled by this motion, a motion that was communicated to us on very short notice, although its tone and substance is what we have come to expect.

I spoke previously on a motion by the Reform Party which stated that criminals enjoyed privileged treatment before the courts and that victims were ignored by the judicial system. At the time, I said that this statement was not supported by any verifiable statistics and reflected a complete ignorance of the facts.

On the same occasion, I reproached the mover of the motion for lending her voice to reactionary groups and for playing along with the media. I also remember how the Reform Party responded to my statements in this House on gun control and the provisions in the Unemployment Insurance Act that discriminate against married women. I must conclude that the Reform Party is entirely consistent in its ideology.

The motion before the House this morning is part of a disturbing trend. I hope that all Canadians will see what Reform Party members perhaps do not see in their political positions. I see all the signs of a nostalgic fascism still unaware of its implications. I see a desire for reverting to a society that our democracy rejects. I hear a call for "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth". But if it were ideological—

*Supply**[English]*

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I wonder if the word or the joining of the words "nostalgic fascism", particularly "fascism", with respect to the Reform Party is not unparliamentary language.

(1120)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): In reply to the point of order raised by the member for Kootenay East regarding words used in debate, first let me make a comment that when remarks are made of a general nature and not specific to any one member, that being one criterion, I would say no, it would not be deemed unparliamentary.

However, I will seize the occasion to remind all members that of course when language and tones sometimes cause disorder the Chair is apprised of that and I would ask all members to keep that in mind in the selection of their words or their statements or their tones.

In conclusion to the point of order raised by the member for Kootenay East, at this time this is not deemed unparliamentary.

[Translation]

Mrs. Venne: Mr. Speaker, some people's sensitivities must certainly be spared. So I will continue talking about the Reform Party's motion.

I said that I thought it was calling for the law of retaliation.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if the time you took to think it over will be given to me to continue after?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Let us say that I will use a rule from the game of soccer. I will take that time and charge it to my account, so I will not take it from you.

Mrs. Venne: Mr. Speaker, I admit my ignorance of soccer, so I will have to trust you.

We were talking about the law of retaliation. If it was ideological, I would say that such positions are disturbing because they arise from convictions that might one day result in laws that could not be enforced. I do not believe that it is ideological. The Reform Party's motion has much more to do with electioneering than with philosophy.

Anyway, just saying that the Reform Party's positions might be philosophically motivated would shock them, I am sure. They are not philosophers but politicians. The basis of this motion is nothing but public sentiment that the Reform Party is trying to use to its advantage. That is very easy.

Riding the wave of public feeling, the Reform Party is declaiming that young people are not charged for the crimes they commit, that young people commit more crimes than adults do, that the sentences imposed on young people are ridiculous and that most violent crimes are committed by young people.

That is the rumour. Even if the hon. member does not say so openly, his whole argument is based on these propositions.

One can present such a motion without believing that juvenile delinquents are a large enough criminal group in society to really threaten public safety.

(1125)

On the contrary, all the statistics available so far show that young people are charged more often than adults for their offences.

According to the 1991 report of the federal Department of Justice, the charge rate for young people was 61 per cent compared with 25 per cent for adults, and the data shows that 16- and 17-year-olds are treated more severely than adults.

On the other hand, according to the same figures, the conviction rate on charges laid against young people is still much higher than for adults. Finally, since it is the most serious offence, young people who commit murders may be tried in adult court.

A young person convicted of murder in a superior court of criminal jurisdiction is liable to life in prison. It is only when the individual is not tried in adult court that the maximum sentence for murder is five years.

If the Crown does not ask that he or she be referred to adult court, he or she will be tried in juvenile court. And even if the Crown makes that request, it will be up to the judge to decide depending on the circumstances of the case. This system works, Mr. Speaker. Unless we systematically challenge the judicial system, we must admit that the judges are in the best position to assess the objective and subjective circumstances of an offence.

I think the law is quite adequate in letting judges decide whether or not the case should be referred to adult court. That is why I think the law should not be amended in any way in this regard. All the parties concerned with juvenile delinquency say that the current system works well. Not perfectly, of course, but well.

That is not good news to the Reform Party, which urges us to focus on isolated cases. Canadian figures are generally consistent from one province to another. I therefore can say without a doubt that juvenile crime is not more prevalent in Western Canada than in Quebec or the Maritimes.

At this point in time, nothing can reasonably justify the hysteria of those who blame young people in their fight against crime. On the contrary, everything shows that crime is a reality of adult society. The proportion of teenagers guilty of Criminal Code offences is quite marginal compared with adults.

I have before me the latest figures from the Quebec public security department, and the same ratios can be applied to the Canadian population as a whole. In 1993, only one out of 51 qualified murders may have been committed by a young person.

The ratio is 6 out of 25 for second-degree murder and 0 out of 4 for manslaughter.

On a grand total of 90 murders committed in Quebec in 1993, young people may have committed 7, or less than 10 per cent. Of 241 attempted murders, 25 or about 10 per cent may have been committed by young people. As far as crime against property is concerned, young people committed 644 out of 3,177 robberies or about 20 per cent and 2,244 out of 21,592 offences against persons or a little over 10 per cent.

With respect to drugs, the facts are overwhelming. The vast majority of drug offenders are adults. Less than 5 per cent of offences for heroin possession, trafficking or smuggling are committed by young people. For cocaine offences, the rate is 8 per cent. Who can argue that the crime rate is higher among young people? Or that the proportion of criminals is about the same among young people as it is in the adult population? Let us face it: While adults represent 75 per cent of Canada's population, they commit over 90 per cent of crimes. Mr. Speaker, the reality is clear. Young people are not criminals. In their teens, that short period from 12 to 18 years of age, a very small proportion of them, less than four per cent in fact, will commit an offence, and that includes any incident, from the most ordinary to the most serious one. The majority of these offences will be assaults following arguments, as well as acts of vandalism and statutory offences.

(1130)

The current Young Offenders Act is based on a long study of juvenile delinquency. We cannot talk about juvenile crime, because the reality does not support that false perception. The overwhelming majority of young people will reach adulthood without any problem, while two adults out of three could one day become part of the statistics on criminality.

Faced with such evidence, what is the relevance of a motion such as the one which is before us and which we will vote on? If the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby looked at the issue carefully, he knows that amending the Young Offenders Act as proposed in his motion would have the immediate effect of making that act almost useless. Since juvenile courts almost always hear cases involving young people aged 16 to 18, why does the hon. member not simply suggest repealing the act? It would be simpler, more honest and more direct. Such a measure would not be hidden behind a pretence of good intentions.

On what philosophical view of human nature is this notion of criminal responsibility based in the case of ten-year-old children? I agree that a ten-year-old child knows the difference between good and evil, but does the hon. member truly believe that a ten-year-old understands the nature of what is evil? Does he think that a child of that age is already corrupted and bad to

Supply

the point of purposely doing something wrong and drawing from it a gratuitous satisfaction related to the fact that he is copying adults?

Who does the member represent? Does he speak on behalf of these paranoiac groups who have nothing better to do than throw the population into a panic? Or those individuals who flood us with hysterical correspondence reeking of hate? Or those new right-wing extremists who think that a jail sentence is still the best solution for young offenders?

In 1984, the new Young Offenders Act was based on a humane approach to juvenile delinquency. Realizing that young people were not criminals and that the dependency on their parents had the effect of reducing the risks, the legislator, after countless consultations, passed a law which favours a helping relationship between the various officials and the young person guilty of an offence.

The purpose of the law—and I repeat it again in case the member for New Westminster—Burnaby did not catch all the subtleties and nuances—is to help the young offender become a responsible person, by ensuring an effective intervention by all the professionals involved.

Instead of imposing a judicial sentence which would immediately turn the young offender into a criminal with a record, the law favours the effective rehabilitation of that young person through a series of actions. And if you read the act carefully, you will see how generous its provisions are in that respect. If that law helps only one young offender stay away from a life of crimes, it will have achieved its goal. The Criminal Code, on the other hand, serves no purpose other than to punish those who are guilty of an offence. If you make a guilty offender out of a young person, he will remain guilty for the rest of his life. However, if you give that person a chance to see what his options are, you will probably save him.

I realize that such a solution is not acceptable for someone who is bent on revenge, but if adults seek revenge, let them first use that solution on themselves. Let them build social, family and political structures adapted to the young before avenging an isolated offence committed by a young person to whom they were unable to teach honesty. This motion is simply deplorable. It might have afforded me the opportunity to discuss the amendments that the Minister of Justice gave us notice of some months ago, if it had had the merit of proposing something substantial in the administration of the Act. I know that there is a strong temptation among the Liberals to yield to certain pressures to make the Act more severe. I know that some day we will have to examine certain situations that the Act did not make provision for when it was adopted because the social reality at the time did not demand it.

Supply

(1135)

I am prepared to admit that the system should be adjusted to new realities, particularly regarding organized crime. I am aware of the danger from bands of young people in certain urban areas. I believe that this is a phenomenon with which we must come to terms specifically, but we will certainly not do so by changing the focus of the Act, by stripping it of all its impact on the practical level and by lowering the age of criminal responsibility. I do not believe that bands of young people have many members between the ages of 10 and 12.

The problem of bands of young people is related to that of adult organized crime. In this regard, we will take a position at the proper time. For the present, I ask this House to reject the motion of the member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul E. Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I have listened carefully.

I want to make this very clear. By our motion today we are not asking for increased penalties particularly. We are not discarding the social help side for those offenders who can take it up. We are asking that the Young Offenders Act, under the concept of diminished capacity for handling young offenders somewhat differently than adults, simply apply to the right group.

Why does the member misrepresent what I have said? Why does she feel it necessary to misrepresent our motion today? I ask what philosophy she has that in view of obvious national concern of what is not working she would essentially defend the status quo.

The big debate in the House the last time when the Young Offenders Act was passed was largely about the upper age, whether it should be 16, 17 or 18 and what the cut-off age should be. The House was essentially divided 50–50 at the time. A decision was made and for the last 10 years we have lived with the consequences of that decision.

I say to the member that she should ask her constituents what they want rather than telling them what they should want. The data is in from the national mood, from what we have been living with. The people have asked for our motion today.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Venne: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but I have in no way distorted the motion put forward by the Member for New Westminster—Burnaby. I commented on his motion. I did not say anything about extending sentences, contrary to what he says. I mentioned the fact that he wants to lower the age from 12 to 10 and from 18 to 16. That is what I talked about.

When he asks me to talk to my constituents about what they think about his motion, I can tell him that right now. We know as a result of many surveys that have been conducted throughout Quebec, and I imagine throughout Canada, that people are reasonably satisfied with this legislation. As I said, it is not

perfect, and there is room for improvement. However, Quebecers are not currently in a panic over the Young Offenders Act.

You hear a great deal about it, as I understand, in the West and in the English-language press. Why exactly are they panicking so? Is the press exaggerating? Or is it the work of a few paranoid people? I am not sure, but people are not paranoid in Quebec. The Member must be aware of what is happening elsewhere, and not just in his area, where he claims there is a general sense of panic.

(1140)

[*English*]

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the hon. member but with great respect I caution that it is not helpful to a reasoned debate to have inflammatory rhetoric.

I represent a riding in the metropolitan Toronto area, not in the west. As recently as May 2 of this year I held a public forum as I do every month. The issue was public safety. I want to tell the hon. member that in the five and a half years that I have had the privilege of representing the people of Scarborough West I have discussed many issues with them and in particular crime issues.

I want to refer specifically to the actual wording of the opposition motion, not what various people think it says. The opposition motion urges a response to the “evident lack of confidence that has arisen from Canadians over the Young Offenders Act”.

As far as I am concerned that is a fact in Scarborough West. I believe that the majority of my constituents have an evident lack of confidence in the Young Offenders Act. As recently as May 2 they asked me, in no uncertain terms and in nothing less than a clear majority what the government was preparing to do about it.

The government is quite aware that there is a problem with the Young Offenders Act. That is why in the red book the government proposed amendments and that is why the Minister of Justice is going to be bringing forward amendments and is going to be putting the entire act to the justice committee for a complete review.

I am satisfied with that action by the government. In fact I applaud it. I have told the people of Scarborough West what we are doing and they are prepared to wait because there is no panic. But make no mistake about it, there is an evident lack of confidence. We have seen motions not from alleged fascists out west but from people on my side of the House bringing forward private member’s bills co-sponsored by Liberals dealing with the age restrictions.

I want to ask the hon. member, are the good people of Saint-Hubert so different from the good people of Scarborough West? Is the hon. member telling me in good conscience that everything is okay as far as they are concerned with respect to the Young Offenders Act? If so, does she still support the justice minister’s suggestion that the act be reviewed by the justice committee?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Venne: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that when I mentioned panic earlier, I did say in the West. I also mentioned the English-speaking press. What I mean is that this panic does not exist in Quebec. It just does not. This is a fact. Again, it may be due to our distinctiveness.

I also wanted to say there is no point causing people to panic, even in regions where, as you indicated, lack of confidence is already evident over the Young Offenders Act. You said lack of confidence had arisen over this legislation. It may be the case, but I do not think that proclaiming it from the rooftops will solve anything. I think a better way may be, as I said earlier in my speech, to open up the act. I said that it needed improvement, not that everybody was telling us all was well with the world. I said changes were required.

For one thing—I did not mention this earlier and this is a very personal point of view—I think the Young Offenders Act should be amended to provide that offenders between the ages of 16 and 18 have to go before adult court when they are charged with murder and only then. That is my own position, and I want to make that clear.

So, I did not say there was general jubilation over the Young Offenders Act, but I did say that it did not produce the same panic reaction as it did in your region.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech by my colleague from the Bloc Québécois and I agree with most of what she said.

(1145)

Since we in Quebec have a definite position on the amendments that could be made to the Young Offenders Act, could she tell us in this House what the consequences would be if Parliament adopted the motion now before us concerning age? What would be the consequences for the whole system that we in Quebec spent years putting in place and which now gives very good results? What would be the consequences of adopting the Reform Party motion on the whole system as far as young offenders in Quebec are concerned?

Mrs. Venne: Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out in my speech, in Quebec at the present time all the parties involved favour the status quo.

So if we change the whole system by modifying the definition of “young person” to mean a person between 10 and 16 years of age instead of 12 and 18, we will certainly clog the courts and the already overcrowded jails. Furthermore, we will not rehabilitate young people by turning them into hardened criminals, as we know very well that prisons are not schools.

Supply

So, to give my colleague a quick answer, I think this would not be a solution for us in Quebec, as all the parties involved really favour the status quo.

[*English*]

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take exception to a couple of things the member for Saint-Hubert mentioned.

Yes, we are here as politicians and not philosophers. We do not live in a dream world that there is a perfect society and a separate nation. The member accuses the Reform Party of being hysterical, of being paranoid, of having knee-jerk reactions to isolated incidents.

I would suggest to her that there is a bit of hypocrisy here with an isolated incident in Montreal that the whole country was horrified about that they are now demanding strict gun control legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Venne: Mr. Speaker, I think that the term “hypocrisy” is unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The term “hypocrisy” in general is not in itself unparliamentary. If an hon. member is unhappy because another hon. member called him or her a hypocrite, I would certainly take the opportunity to remind that hon. member that it is unparliamentary.

[*English*]

Resuming the question, the hon. member had the floor.

Ms. Meredith: Mr. Speaker, I would like to know why the member feels that because we are reacting to a public concern that was indicated by a survey I took with over 3,000 responses received that 90 per cent of my constituents support lowering the age because they are concerned about young people who are falling through the system because they are too young to be given any help because they have made some poor decisions.

How does the hon. member feel that these young people below the ages of 12 will be helped to change the direction they are going if they do not fall under this act?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Venne: Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to say that I did not say directly that the Reform Party was paranoid or everything that she says. I just said that they may have such tendencies, which is quite different.

Besides, when people say now that society is really disturbed about the Young Offenders Act, I do not think that using forums like this, the House of Commons, the media and so on and emphasizing what some say is the weakness or laxity of the Young Offenders Act will help the debate; I do not believe that

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saying everything is wrong in society and in our legal system will help us and move the debate forward, not at all.

I think that we must look at the law, as I said earlier, because basically it satisfies those concerned and the public, but in some cases perhaps it can be improved. I do not think we have to panic.

(1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the whip of the Reform Party I would like to advise the House that pursuant to Standing Order 43(2) our speakers on this motion will be dividing their time.

When I came to Parliament I came with the belief that as a member of Parliament I should be reflecting my constituents' wishes to Ottawa, not the reverse. For far too long the people of Canada have had the impression, much of it correct, that when they elect politicians in their constituency somehow they come down here and take on a particular aura, that somehow Ottawa ends up engulfing them.

I am committed to representing the views of my people in my constituency and they are starting to know that and believe that.

I believe the future of Canada resides in our young people. The young people of Canada truly are the future of Canada because as great and as magnificent as this country is physically with all of the assets that we have from the Atlantic to the Pacific to the Arctic, we are still no more than the spirit of the people of Canada.

I have been going out and making presentations to schools throughout my entire constituency as a first priority. Every day that I have been in my constituency since January I have made it a priority to be in a school because this is where the future citizens of Canada are and our young people are our country's future greatness.

At Fernie Senior Secondary School, Mr. Randy Rae teaches Law 12. In addition to being a teacher he is a rancher and also a director on the regional district of East Kootenay. Randy understands democracy and believes in democracy. Coming to a consensus with his class that the Young Offenders Act is flawed, he directed them to construct a process to try and make some changes to the act. He also told them that it would not be a waste of time because he believes that he has a member of Parliament who will go into the House of Commons and represent his and his students' wishes to Ottawa. He is right.

The assignment identified the present Young Offenders Act, explained what it is and how it works. They got copies of various changes that have been proposed to the act and finally conducted interviews, had discussions and surveyed at least 10 different people each and then summarized their views.

It is interesting that the survey results reflect much of what the Reform Party has been proposing in terms of changes to the Young Offenders Act: stiffer penalties for young offenders, lowering the age at which a youth is considered to be a young offender, holding parents financially responsible for the actions of their children in some cases, and allowing the media to release the names of repeat young offenders.

Within the survey we came across two people who were talking about the inclusion of corporal punishment in the penalties of the Young Offenders Act. This is indicative of the responses that I have been getting on the street.

However, understand clearly this is not the Reform Party position nor is it necessarily my position. All I am saying is that because the present system of justice for young offenders is not working, my personal opinion is that we should be prepared to take a look at corporal punishment after a thorough objective review of all pertinent information gathered from around the world.

As I pointed out before, it was interesting to see that some of the points brought up in the survey were reflective of what the Reform Party has been promoting. This reminded me of something that took place in last year's federal election. The editor of one of our local newspapers slammed our belief that the Young Offenders Act should be amended so that parents and guardians of young criminals should have the legal responsibility to exercise parental control over youth. In fact a great deal of our media attacked the party for this view.

However, this survey conducted by the students supports this line of thinking.

I believe that society has responsibilities, responsibilities to the young people of our community and to their parents. Clearly there has been a fork in the path. The politicians who have come to Ottawa have been going down the fork of permissiveness, whereas society as reflected in the comments gathered by the young people in this survey and comments made by people I come across daily, whether it is at trade fairs I attend or clubs or organizations or in our schools, as people come up to me and communicate to me it is very clear that people who come to this House historically have been co-opted by the system. They have been co-opted by Ottawa and they have ended switching from the path that people in the constituency wanted to the path that was established by the Liberal Solicitor General, Jean-Pierre Goyer, 23 years ago in 1971.

(1155)

My only question is will this government listen? It has promised and promised, but will it listen? Will it actually turn around and start to bring in what needs to happen or will it get engaged in a review of the justice system that is going to take

another 18 to 24 months? Will it meet the demand of the people of Kootenay East and indeed all Canadians?

No one can argue there is not a need for change to the Young Offenders Act. It is clear there is something wrong when we consider statistics from recent years as reported by Statistics Canada in January this year. In 1992 youths accounted for 13.7 per cent of all persons charged with violent crimes, up from 10.5 per cent in 1986. That is a jump of 3 per cent in just six years.

Of the 135,348 youths charged in Criminal Code incidents in 1992, 15 per cent were charged with violent crimes and that figure was up from 10.5 per cent also in 1986.

Even more shocking is the rate of increase in violent youth crime compared with that of adults. Since 1986 violent crime among our youth has risen at an average annual increase of 14 per cent compared with an adult increase of only 8 per cent over the same period of time.

Recently the Liberal member for London West who is also vice-chairman of the committee for justice and legal affairs told this House that when it comes to youth crime we should divorce perception from reality. She went on to say that Canadians would be able to tell their concerns to a committee when the legislation undergoes a thorough 10-year review. If that is going to take another 18 to 24 months that is not soon enough and that is what our motion is all about.

With respect to the vice-chairman of the justice committee and her attempts to dilute my party's thrust and concern about the Young Offenders Act there are many victims and families of victims hurting because of this inept legislation and quite frankly they are not interested in a 10-year review. There are problems we have to confront now.

I would like to read the following incident as was reported by Canadian press news wire this week. The vicious assault which I am about to relate took place in Oyama, a small community of about 500 homes located 30 kilometres north of Kelowna in the Okanagan:

A man whose head was caved in with an axe after he scolded a teenage driver for running a stop sign was in critical condition today and might be permanently paralysed.

Rodney Bell was hit in the head with the blunt edge of an axe in front of his horrified wife and children. Eight teenagers showed up to confront Bell at his secluded lakefront home on Friday just before midnight, a day after he chased them when they sped through an intersection, narrowly missing his car. Bell tried to reason with the teens, one of them grabbed an axe from a nearby woodpile and swung it full force at Bell's head. The gang then fled.

Police have arrested two 16-year olds in connection with the assault but they cannot be named under the provisions of the Young Offenders Act.

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As Mr. Bell lies in a hospital clinging to life, and if he does survive with the possibility of some form of paralysis ahead of him, the greatest injustice is probably the last line of the story:

One teen was charged with aggravated assault and remains in custody while the other was charged with assault and released—

He has gone back to school:

—but of course they are too young to be named under the protection of the Young Offenders Act.

I am committed to the concept that the youth are the future of Canada, that they are Canada. The minimum they should expect is protection by law for themselves, their persons, their property and protection for their parents.

I commend the students in my constituency. I commend Randy Rae and the Fernie Senior Secondary School and I thank them for their diligence, for their project and for the effort they made to communicate with me. It is this kind of communication from my constituents that gives me confidence that I am speaking for them when I speak about the Young Offenders Act. It is this kind of communication that I want from people in my constituency. Your Reform MP truly is different, I am listening.

I want to represent the views of the people of my constituency in this House. I hope the Liberal government gets it through its head that is what we are doing and that is what we are here for. We might not be using the correct political words. We might even be doing things that are politically incorrect. We do not care about political correctness; we want results. Above all we care about representing the views of the people of Canada. In this particular case we demand that the government move immediately so that we protect our youth and our parents by force of law.

(1200)

I implore all members of the House to support the motion to start the momentum toward changing the Young Offenders Act. Our young people, the future of Canada, demand our support and our protection.

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great interest to the debate this morning. I do not normally agree with my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, but I want to stress the point that the member for Saint-Hubert stressed.

If we listened to the questioning in the House during question period over the past several weeks we would almost get the impression that we are in a panic situation in Canada and that crime was escalating. That is generally not the case throughout the area. That is why I agree with the member for Saint-Hubert. In Quebec we are taking a calmer approach. I caution Reform

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members opposite. I find some of the questioning very judgmental and causing a bit of panic where there is no cause for panic.

Let us take a look at what our party is committed to. On the government side we are committed to reviewing the Young Offenders Act. Since the beginning of Parliament the opposition side has requested that it wants to be more participatory in the drafting of legislation. We are going to refer the matter to committee for its recommendation.

I find the motion a bit premature. I am having a hard time understanding how reducing the age to 10 years old or preventing the disclosure of the names of some young offenders will improve the statistics the member opposite quoted. How are we going to improve the 15 per cent or the 135,000 by reducing the age? Is the brunt of the motion to reduce the age to a lower level so that we have more people involved in the statistics? Are there not other ways of addressing the problem?

It is going to committee stage so why do we not wait for the committee to report? Members opposite are part of the committee. What is the panic?

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, there is a consciousness on our part when 3,000 people turn up in Alberta on a sunny afternoon. I believe it was the member for Mississauga West who indicated that this was an issue. It is not a panic issue. It is just that Canadians are demanding changes.

The specific change we are proposing is an indicator that in fact there will be some momentum. With the greatest of respect to the member, to the Solicitor General and to the justice minister, I suggest when we get into this review we all know that Parliament moves at glacial age speed. We are going to be in a 12, 18 or 24 month process. The people who are talking to me are demanding change now. We are simply requesting that members of the House of Commons recognize that people are demanding change quickly, are demanding change now.

I am speaking on behalf of the students whose report I presented in the House of Commons today. In my judgement it is the young people in society who are the most severely inconvenienced and put under pressure by an inefficient, incompetent Young Offenders Act.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Gaspé): Mr. Speaker, I have a short question but first I want to make a brief comment. This morning, I have the impression that Reform Party members have, in their press clippings, a lot of articles taken from *Photo Police*. I do not know if this kind of weekly exists in Western Canada, but this is the impression I get when I hear these descriptions of the terrible things that are happening.

(1205)

I cannot agree with them. The Bloc's position was presented earlier and will later be explained in further detail by the hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm. As far as I am concerned, making criminals of younger children will not solve the problem. Does the member agree that we should have a proactive approach and provide support to young people, so that they do not end up doing things like that?

The question raised earlier by the hon. member was a call for the Liberal government to provide assistance and create direct employment programs to keep our young people busy and give them jobs. Again, I do not think that we will solve the problem by making criminals of younger children. I would like to see the two opposition parties work together and convince the Liberal government to take proactive measures instead of sending young people to jail.

[*English*]

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, in the original presentation of the motion my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby came up with some excellent examples of how young people under 12 years of age had fallen through the cracks when they could have been helped by the process. A whole group of people are currently abusing that end of it. They are involving young children because they cannot be charged.

There has been a change in our society. Looking at the upper end, at the 16-year old end, on behalf of the people in high school I say the problem is that the straight kids need protection and the Young Offenders Act is not doing it.

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley): Mr. Speaker, I wish I had more than 10 minutes. I would like to start by reading the declaration of principle in the Young Offenders Act:

- (1) Young persons should bear responsibility for their contraventions, but should not be held accountable in the same manner, or suffer the consequences for their behaviour as adults.
- (2) Society must be afforded the necessary protection from illegal behaviour.
- (3) Young offenders have special guarantees of their rights to due process.
- (4) Young offenders have special needs and require assistance that is not available in the adult system.

The Young Offenders Act has given young offenders more protection of their rights, but in no measurable way has it provided society with any protection. Our concern is that the balance is not there.

It is time we started talking about reality. The reality is that society has changed. When I was younger we may have had fights but they were not with weapons. We used our fists or

pushed each other around but we did not pull out knives. The reality today is that our children feel the need to arm themselves.

The motion today dealing with age is, as my hon. colleagues have suggested, a reflection of the feelings of Canadians. Although they have heard a lot of talk about changes to the Young Offenders Act and Parliament studying it, they also realize that the deadline of January 16 for proposals is long past and they are no closer to a decision having been made.

Our motion gives Parliament an opportunity to give some indication to Canadians that we are listening, that we care and that we will act to do something to protect society, particularly our children because that is what is being demanded.

I would like to share an example of why we feel we need to lower the age limit to 10 years. I received a letter from a constituent involved in an accident. On Sunday, April 24, he was driving home. He proceeded through a major intersection on a green light but was hit by a stolen car that was running a red light, being pursued by the police. It sounds like a crime was being committed. Actually it was more than one crime, but because of the Young Offenders Act no crimes were being committed. His car was sideswiped by the speeding vehicle. It was just lucky that no one was killed: not the driver of the stolen vehicle and not himself.

(1210)

The driver of the stolen vehicle was 11-year old Michael Smith. Mikey, as he is known, has admitted to stealing over 30 cars. He boasts that he will continue to do so until he is 12 years old. His mother, Bonnie Hartwick, has asked authorities to arrest her son in order to do something about it. She says she does not know what to do with him and has begged for help. Our system does not allow Mikey to receive that kind of help.

What are we waiting for? Are we waiting for the Mikeys of the world to kill somebody before we can help him? We are talking about lowering the age limit so that offenders who are going in the wrong direction at such a young age can be brought into the system and dealt with, so that we can turn them in the right direction before it is too late.

Let us not forget those two ten-year-olds in England who murdered a two-year old child. In Canadian society absolutely nothing could be done in that situation. The problem is with the act and the age limits. It is time we reacted and changed it so that we can address the issues.

Another concern is upper age limits. Sixteen and seventeen year olds know the difference between right and wrong. I speak with considerable experience, being a mother of four boys. My youngest is 14 years old. When we are talking about 16 and 17 year olds like Huenemann, Lord and Gamache, we are talking about 16 and 17 year olds who are not innocent children. They

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are vicious, cold-blooded murders. They are not petty thieves. They are not kids or young people who have been charged with shoplifting, stealing cigarettes or even stealing cars. These cold-blooded individuals viciously murdered another human being. As 16 and 17 years old they knew what they were doing and they should be treated as adults committing adult crime. I also suggest that our courts have the flexibility to move 16 and 17 year olds to adult court but they seem very reluctant to do so.

I share again a case in my constituency. Two years ago 16-year old Jesse Cadman of Surrey was murdered by another 16-year-old. He was viciously stabbed in the back during a fight because his murderer did not like the hat he was wearing. Jesse's killer was apparently told by his friends not to worry, that he was a young offender and could only be incarcerated for a couple of years. That almost happened. Jesse Cadman was viciously assaulted by a 16-year old kid who knew what he was doing and almost got away with a couple of years.

The youth court judge refused to raise Jesse Cadman's murderer to adult court. It was only because Jesse Cadman's parents, specifically his father, organized a group called CRY, Crime Responsibility Youth, and pressured the justice system that Jesse Cadman's murderer was raised to adult court.

CRY has been circulating letters demanding, asking, begging the House of Commons to change the Young Offenders Act. In just three weeks my office received over 300 letters. I went out into my community to see if it agreed with Mr. Cadman's position, a position expressed by others, that the Young Offenders Act needed to be changed specifically with respect to age limits. I wanted to know whether my constituents felt that the age limits should be lowered. In 3,000 responses over 90 per cent of my constituents have said yes, we feel the time has come when we need to change the ages, to lower them to allow the younger offenders to be brought into the system so they can be turned around and lowered at the upper end so the murderers of Jesse Cadman and the murderers of the little Shawns over on the island can be dealt with as adults who are responsible for their actions, knowing what they did.

(1215)

The public is demanding that the House of Commons do something and not just study, not just continue to look at legislation. They are asking, they are begging us to show some sense of concern, some sense of urgency in dealing with this issue.

That is the reason we have put this motion on the floor. It gives us the ability to show Canadians that we are prepared to listen to them, that we are prepared to consider their concerns and that we are prepared to take action, not just to talk about it, not just to study it, but to take action and do something about it.

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I believe it was very unfortunate that last week when the member for York South—Weston introduced Bill C-217 debate was limited to only one hour and it was not votable.

That bill was to change the Young Offenders Act. It is very important that we start giving these kinds of bills the attention they deserve. I do not think we are over reacting. I do not think we are being paranoid. I think the member for York South—Weston and the members of the Reform Party are being sincere when we say we should do something now in the interim before the review of the Young Offenders Act is completed. Why do we not do them? Why not do just a few things to show that we can do something and do it now?

I ask this House, I beg this House, here is an opportunity to show Canadians that we are concerned, that we are prepared to do something concrete. It is not the answer to everything. There are other changes that need to be made. We do need to focus on crime prevention. Nobody is arguing that. However those are the things that will have results in the long term.

Canadians are asking to be given something in the short term. Give us something that will give us hope that changes are actually going to be made so that we can feel that the government believes in the protection of society and the protection of our children.

I have shared a letter with the Minister of Justice from a 13-year old in my constituency. This 13-year old was confronted by a 15-year old who stole his hat. His parents supported him in making that 15-year old accountable. When they confronted the 15-year old he pushed the father aside and said: "Hit me. I will charge you". That 13-year old is terrified. He is terrified that this 15-year old is going to find out where he lives and is going to come after him. He is terrified to go to school. He is terrified to go out on the street because he knows that this kid is going to get even with him.

I received a letter from the mother of a 13-year old girl who was beat up at school by 15-year old girls. She told her mother and because the mother told the school these kids are out to get her. She is no longer going to school because she is terrified that she is going to be victimized again. We have to protect our children and we can only protect them by doing something now.

I beg this House, please support this motion. Let us show Canadians that we are sincere and that we are prepared to do something and not just talk.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make a couple of comments on the hon. member's speech.

I know about the concerns she has with respect to the children in school. I believe we have all encountered them and we have all heard about them, sometimes from our own children.

(1220)

The problem is that what she is saying is not going to, even if we agreed with her, make any difference as far as the Young Offenders Act is concerned because we cannot incarcerate those children for threatening and intimidating other children. What we have to do is work in the community.

There is a lot of hypocrisy by the provinces on this. They want changes to the Young Offenders Act but what they do not mention is that they are responsible for children under the age of 12. They would like to have people believe that there is nothing they can do to help those children through the Children's Aid and other means such as education through the school system. They would like to blame the fact that these children are at risk and not being helped because the federal government will not lower the age. It is the provinces who refuse to do what they should be doing for these children under 12.

I want to ask the hon. member one question. I ask her in good faith because I really want to know and it would be helpful. When we talk about 16 and 17-year olds the examples used are always with regard to murder and violent offences. Does the hon. member feel that is where the changes should be made while keeping 16 and 17-year olds who commit offences that are non-violent within the Young Offenders Act? Is that a possibility? Is she saying that is something that could be done?

Ms. Meredith: Mr. Speaker, no, I do not think that is enough. The courts have discretion as to what kind of sentencing they give. They do not have to send everybody to maximum security prisons for minor offences. The courts have that discretion already.

I think what the member is saying is that only the most vicious of the 16 and 17-year old offenders should be taken into adult court. What we are suggesting is that the courts should have discretion. If they feel that a 16 or 17-year old does not have the capacity to understand what they have done or does not appreciate right from wrong, the courts can lower them to youth court. However, as a 16 and 17-year old they know right from wrong and automatically should be held accountable for their actions.

The courts have the discretion to give them suspended sentences or whatever if the offence is of a more minor nature.

Even in an adult court, the flexibility is there to deal with them in a different manner so that the punishment does not have to be harsh or not fair. The discretion is there in adult court and that is where 16 and 17-year olds should be treated.

An hon. member: Send the right message.

Supply

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that I will be sharing this time with the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

I am pleased to have a chance to address this important issue. The Young Offenders Act has been recognized as one element of our criminal justice system that is in need of some change and some reform. I know I have heard voices somewhere in different parts of the country saying: "Let's get rid of it altogether". However, I am certainly not one who believes that and I do not think that many members in the House feel that way.

The level of crime committed by young offenders appears to have increased marginally. What is more important about that area of crime is that the violence associated with that category of offender appears to have increased perhaps more than marginally. These types of offences are very disturbing to society at large and to the communities where they occur. They feel particularly handicapped in responding appropriately when young offenders commit serious offences because of the shelter from normal criminal procedures given to young offenders, things like non-publication of name and disposition away from the normal criminal court process in young offender courts.

I am one of those who concedes that we have to pay some serious attention to the increase in violent offences among young offenders.

Most of us here have not directed much of our attention to the petty crimes of young offenders. They have been a problem and always will be but we have petty crime problems with adults too. It is the more serious crimes that disturb us.

(1225)

The government agrees there have to be changes in a number of areas of the criminal justice system. Our election platform indicated that in the last election campaign. The Minister of Justice has told the House—I know members opposite have listened—that he will be introducing a bill to amend portions of the Young Offenders Act within the next few weeks. This bill I gather has been a long time in preparation, reaching back into the previous Parliament and he is committed to doing that.

Second, the government is prepared to refer the whole issue of the Young Offenders Act to the justice committee which will review it and report back probably recommending additional changes. They may be sweeping, they may be modest, I do not know, but the decision as to what will be recommended to the government will be in the hands of the members of that committee. I look forward to playing a part in that exercise as do all members of the House.

One of the most important facets of the Young Offenders Act regime is the belief, it is really a premise, that young offenders have an opportunity to salvage the rest of their lives if society will permit them an opportunity to do that. The young offender

is before the court because he or she has made a serious mistake. The premise that somehow society must intervene and provide an opportunity for the young offender to get his or her act organized is very much a fundamental part of the Young Offenders Act.

One of the things that the government has recognized is that in many cases the sentencing of young offenders is too short to enable them any kind of access to treatment. A two or three-month sentence is simply not enough time for the agencies and corrections professionals to offer to that youth some kind of a framework that would permit the youth to get his or her life properly organized.

I met a young offender at Camp Dufferin in Ontario about two years ago. I remember this vividly. I asked him what he would be doing when he got out, having served three or four months. He said: "I guess I'll just go back to the pool hall". That is where the problems all began. He had no place to go. The three or four months in the facility were nice, structured, organized. It was a bit like a boot camp, it was organized, it was disciplined. When it was over so was the regime of treatment.

There are some other perceptual problems with the Young Offenders Act and I want to bring this one to the attention of the House if members have not mentioned it already. Every time an adult says the Young Offenders Act is useless, it is not working, it is not tough enough, that is the message our youth are getting. This is not helpful.

First of all I do not think it is entirely accurate. A lot of the young offender sentencing or dispositions under the Young Offenders Act are quite significant but the youth are not getting the message that it is disciplined, it is significant. They are simply accepting the message that the Young Offenders Act is a zero on the Richter scale of punishment or of responsibility or accountability.

There are a number of areas that we have to look at in the Young Offenders Act. The motion today deals principally with revising the age group from 12 to 17 down to 10 to 15. I have introduced a bill in this House recommending reducing the age to 10. I have done that, having looked at it closely.

(1230)

Different provinces across this country have different types of legislation for those under 12. I was surprised to find that while some provinces have good legislation which can enable the child welfare authorities to intervene for the protection of the public, in Ontario they can only intervene for the protection of the child.

For the young offender who commits a relatively serious offence, sexual assault or robbery—and these things happen involving 10 and 11-year olds now—I am told that all the police can do is take the child home to the parents. That does not do any favours for the child, especially when the parents are not at

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home, which is often the reason the problem began in the first place. There are urban dysfunctional families.

There is no ability on the part of the provincial authorities to take care of our 10 and 11-year olds. The young offenders regime in each province should be able to accommodate an offender who is 10 or 11 years old in the same way it accommodates an offender who is 12 years old. I certainly support that. On the issue of the 16 or 17-year old, I have not made up my mind. I tend to think the issue should be reviewed by the committee, as envisaged by the Minister of Justice.

There are different views on sentencing and on the issue of publication of the names of young offenders. This is a complex area. It involves the interface among privacy, the public interest, the media and information exchange between institutions. Even those institutions which help young offenders are sometimes handicapped by the existing barriers to publication and disclosure in the Young Offenders Act. This area has to be reorganized and I hope it is done at the committee level.

The category of dangerous young offender does not need much justification. I believe the minister's bill when introduced shortly will direct attention to that category of young offender.

I want to indicate from my perspective of sitting on this side of the House, the Minister of Justice and this government are "on the case". There will be ample opportunity to address the issues raised today in the opposition motion and many of the other issues in the Young Offenders Act. I look forward to working with other members in that exercise.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, when I read this Reform Party motion last night, I could not believe my eyes. Here we have a party, the Reform Party, which for several weeks has been standing up in this House proposing prompt and comprehensive action to deal with youth crime. As a matter of fact today the two previous speakers for the Reform Party said we must have prompt action now to deal with youth crime.

What did we get? The Reform Party had an opportunity. It had an opposition day and it could put its specific proposals to the House, but all we get is a simplistic proposal to change the age. That is going to deal with youth crime? That is the kind of prompt, comprehensive action it wants to deal with youth crime, one simplistic proposal to change the age? It is true that in his speech the member for New Westminster—Burnaby referred to other matters which should be changed, but why are they not in this votable motion, if the Reform Party thinks we need action now?

Perhaps the reason we are getting this simple one line proposal is that the Reform Party is not really sure what should

be done about youth crime. Maybe it is because it has no real commitment to any other proposal but this one simple change.

(1235)

Perhaps it is because the Reform Party really does not know what should be done about youth crime that we are getting such a simple one proposal motion. Maybe this one point resolution is a sign that Reform members are beginning to realize this matter is more complex than they originally thought. Maybe they are beginning to realize there is no simplistic solution that we can simply take off the shelf and youth crime will go away.

The tough hard line approach to criminal justice has been tried in some of the United States. Florida, Georgia, Texas and Louisiana have the tough hard line approach proposed by the Reform Party and what are the results?

Florida has 9 murders per 100,000 population; Georgia has 11 murders per 100,000 population; Texas has 12.7 murders per 100,000 population; and Louisiana has 17.4 murders per 100,000 population. In Canada, where we have a more humane, rehabilitative and comprehensive approach to deal with crime, we have 2.5 murders per 100,000. And the Reform Party wants to move in the direction of Louisiana, Florida, Texas, Georgia, and other states. I hear that from Reformers every day in the House.

We in the Liberal Party have said that some amendments are required to the Young Offenders Act and we are going to introduce them. The Minister of Justice said he is going to introduce them within a couple of weeks. But we have also said that this is not the comprehensive solution to youth crime. Merely changing a few words in the Young Offenders Act is not going to stop youth crime.

It misleads the public. I believe certain members of the Reform Party are sincere, but they are really misleading the public when they say they want prompt action now, and they give us a one line proposal to simply change the age in the Young Offenders Act. They mislead the public if they think that is really going to deal with the problem of youth crime.

People who are familiar with the problem say over and over again that if you really want to do something about youth crime you have to address its many, many causes. Whether it is the breakdown in families, whether it is the lack of jobs, whether it is the lack of recreation, or whether as some of my colleagues have said it is that many young people have no home to go to, there are many causes. Unless you address those causes you will not get real solutions.

It appears the Reform Party has based this motion on the presumption that there has been a considerable increase in youth violent crime. That is not the case. There has been an increase in certain categories, but the impression Reform members give is that the situation is out of control.

It is much worse in some parts of the country than in others. But if we look at the statistics, offences resulting in the most serious personal injury, that is the offences of homicide, attempted murder, assault, sexual assault and so on, account for 2.4 per cent of youths charged with a violent offence, and 0.4 per cent of all youths charged with Criminal Code offences. The majority of charges, 62 per cent of those charges against youth, are for property offences.

With respect to murder, the highest rate of murder with respect to young offenders 12 to 17 years old was in 1975 when there were 68 youths between 12 and 17 who committed murder. The lowest was in 1987 when there were 35. There really is no discernible trend. Thirty-five are too many. Sixty-eight are too many. They are all too many. But this sort of panic approach that everything is out of control is completely wrong.

The Reform Party is proposing in its motion that the age be reduced from 12 to 17 years inclusive, which is the age for a young offender under the Young Offenders Act, to 10 to 15 years.

Under the present law persons who are 18 or more are treated as adults and they go before the adult courts. Those under 18 down to 12 years go to youth courts and are covered by the Young Offenders Act. As most of us know, a youth between 14 and 17 years can be transferred to the adult court on a motion presented by the crown to have that individual transferred to the adult court because the crime has been serious, a crime of violence and so on.

(1240)

Let us repeat over and over again that those under 12 years are left to the jurisdiction of the provinces. It is up to the provinces to do something to protect the public and to rehabilitate and take care of those persons under 12 years.

Why did we pick 12 and 18 a few years ago when we did the Young Offenders Act? We did so because 18 was considered the general age of majority, not only in Canada but around the world. Therefore we said that once you were 18 you would be in adult courts and if you were under 18 you would be in the youth courts. We picked the age of 12 because that was the generally recognized age of puberty, and under 12 years you were considered not to have the same characteristics as a person 12 years and older. That is why we picked those ages.

As I said, the Minister of Justice is going to bring in a bill in a few weeks dealing with very specific changes to the Young Offenders Act. It will go much beyond this simplistic motion presented today by the Reform Party. He has also said he is going to refer the entire Young Offenders Act to the justice

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committee of which I am the chair for a complete review, no holds barred. Every part of the act will be looked at. Action will be taken, but action will be taken in a deliberative way.

Again this morning I heard Reform Party members continually asking whether we favour the rights of the offender or the rights of the victim, or do we favour the rights of the offender or the safety of society. These are not exclusive things. This is a false proposition.

It is not a contradiction to be concerned for the protection of society and for the offender. As a matter of fact if we are really interested in protecting society, we have to believe in rehabilitation because the overwhelming number of offences are limited offences and those people will be returned to society. Therefore we have to care about what happens to offenders when they are under our control, whether it is in a prison, on probation or parole, or whatever. If we do not show concern for the offender we are ignoring the safety of society.

We have to be extremely concerned and improve our programs for victims of crime and for protection of society. Sure, we must do that. But to pretend that you do one or the other and you ignore the offender and the offender's rights and the rights of society to make sure that the offender returns to society a safer person is wrong. We must do both. Rehabilitation is in the best interests of society.

In conclusion let me say this. We must deal with the Young Offenders Act and youth crime and the Minister of Justice will present us with a bill in a few weeks. We are also going to get a complete review of the Young Offenders Act. We must do that.

However, we should not deal with youth crime in the simplistic manner suggested to us this morning by members of the Reform Party. It will have no effect on the youth crime rate in this country. It will not solve the problems they refer to and they have raised some pretty serious problems.

They keep raising these individual cases which are horrible examples of crime by young people. Everybody will agree that these are horrible examples. By the way, because these crimes are reported in a spectacular way in the press the public has the perception that the youth crime problem is more widespread than it is. However we admit there are serious problems but we do not deal with them in the simplistic way the Reform Party suggests today.

We are going to get a bill in a few weeks. We are going to have a complete and thoughtful review. We are going to hear from individuals and organizations from all parts of the country.

That is the way to do it. We hear from all sides. We get input from experts and ordinary citizens. We get input from the police. We get input from correctional officers, social workers,

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teachers, psychologists, the whole gambit of people who have some interest in this matter.

We will do it that way. That is the way we should do it. I invite the public during that review to work with us in Parliament to improve the situation and have better laws and a better situation with respect to youth crime.

(1245)

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. colleague opposite. Members would know that my hon. colleague opposite has a long history in this Parliament and has been involved in the criminal justice system as far as Parliament is concerned for many, many years.

As a matter of fact as my hon. colleague mentioned he is at this time the chair of the Commons justice committee, a very important and powerful role within the Commons. I would point out that the chair of the justice committee has a particular perspective on crime as evidenced by the fact that recently the member is on record of having suggested that perhaps 15 years is the maximum that anybody should be in jail for any crime no matter what that crime might be, no matter what their age.

The member opposite will also recall that in this Parliament on October 7, 1971 as a continuation of changing the incarceration system, the jail system, a very needed change, the government of the day directed the emphasis away from the protection of society to the rehabilitation of criminals, which is just fine. The Solicitor General of the day is on record of having said: "From this day forward we will put rehabilitation ahead of the protection of society". That was October 7, 1971. This was a quantum shift in direction of the correctional service. It was a quantum shift in direction of attitude of this Parliament.

Perhaps after 23 or 24 years we might revisit this and say "Wait a minute. Let us back up. Maybe we should ensure that we have a concentration on rehabilitation because we know how important that is and we do not want people to reoffend. We also have to protect society".

At any rate, the hon. member asked: "Since we have this opportunity to present a votable motion, why would we make it so mild?". The reason we made it so mild is that it was only by having the mildest of possible motions that there was any hope at all of getting any support from the Liberals who got us into this mess in the first place. We want to move this debate incrementally down the road. We wanted to make this motion so mild that it would be virtually impossible for anyone in this House to disagree with it.

How wrong we were. If the hon. member opposite does not like this motion, would the hon. member opposite, the chair of the justice committee, tell this House and Canadians what is his number one priority? If he were going to introduce a motion today what would that motion be?

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer the questions of the hon. member. First of all, the proposal he is putting before the House today is not mild. It is harsh and ineffective. He is including 10 and 11-year old children under the Young Offenders Act who should be dealt with because they are below the age of puberty under child protection acts and other legislation under provincial jurisdiction.

We are against it because it is a harsh piece of legislation and it will be ineffective and it will not solve the problems he is referring to.

Second, with respect to the quote attributed to Mr. Goyer, the Solicitor General on October 7, 1971, all I can tell him is that I was appointed Solicitor General in 1972 and I took the completely opposite point of view. If he wants quotes I can give him many quotes in which I said over and over again that our principal goal and our priority is protection of the public in everything we do in the Solicitor General's department. That was the policy from 1972 right on. I can put on record if he wants—not today but any day he wants—speeches made in this House, legislation, speeches outside the House which are totally contrary to the quote attributed to Mr. Goyer. I do not know whether that quote is complete or not. Let us forget about the quotes of Mr. Goyer. I can give him quotes from myself, Mr. Fox and Mr. Blais, many Solicitors General over the years who have not supported that simple quote that was cited in the House several times.

The members of the Reform Party talk about bringing a new approach to Parliament and taking a more honest and fair approach with respect to things. Yet today the hon. member has accused me of saying that 15 years should be the maximum for criminals of all kinds. I never at any time said that and I would never support such a proposal, never. However, I see there is a letter campaign going around Parliament to all members which accuses me of saying murderers should be released automatically after 15 years. It is completely false.

(1250)

What I said was that for first degree murder the parole eligibility date should be 15 years and we should do away with article 745 which gives the possibility of release after 15 years and that for second degree murder it should be 10 years. There is quite a difference from what the hon. member said and what that letter says. He should correct that. He should apologize for suggesting that I said there should be automatic release or release for all prisoners no matter what their crime after 15 years. He is wrong.

When we had parole eligibility at 10 years less than 50 per cent got released on that date. If he looks at the statistics, parole eligibility does not mean that you are released automatically. As

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a matter of fact you have to prove that you are rehabilitated and no longer a danger to the public. That is not easy to do.

The purpose of parole eligibility is to ensure that those who are really rehabilitated and are not a danger to society can go back into society, pay their own way, take care of their families and not be taken care of by the state.

Let us make sure that when you cite me or you quote me that you quote me correctly. I do not mind your disagreeing with me on what I really say, but do not distort what I have said.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I know that members have very strong views on a very important subject, but in wanting to give everyone the opportunity to speak, as many as possible during the course of the day, I have to respect the timeframes.

Mr. McClelland: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. To the member opposite, I unreservedly withdraw that remark in impugning his character. I thank him for the opportunity of setting the record straight.

Mr. Allmand: I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I thank the hon. member for his assistance.

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to join the debate on the Young Offenders Act today.

In starting out, my party and my constituents and I look forward very much to seeing the results of the bill being drafted by the justice minister to be tabled in this House. I would express the idea that it is unfortunate that the extensive review process and recommendation process that the former speaker spoke of would not take place before the drafting of the bill so that there would be some real opportunity for change.

I believe the Young Offenders Act was an attempt to balance the approach of the socialistic juvenile delinquents act and the demand to protect society from crime.

I am not advocating the repeal or the abolishment of the Young Offenders Act as some members in society are today. After consulting with individuals within the RCMP and corrections field it is my belief that the fault lies more in the administration of the legislation than in the legislation itself.

Perhaps legislated sentencing grids or mandatory minimum sentences providing less discretionary powers to the courts might be more of a deterrent to young offenders.

I am here to advocate amendments to the act to deal with the 20 per cent of the young offenders this act does not work for. One of the better aspects of the juvenile delinquent act was the ability to charge individuals who contributed to the delinquency of youth. If we brought this measure back it would bring back

the responsibility to the parent and would not allow adult criminals, i.e. drug offenders or car theft ring leaders, to hide behind young offenders.

There have been a lot of statistics thrown around here today in the debate and I have a few of my own that I would like to throw into the pot. According to Statistics Canada in 1991, 22 per cent of all federal statute charges were laid against youth. Of the 146,000 charges against youth, 13 per cent or 18,800 of the charges were violence related. Since 1986 the violence related charges have increased by 102 per cent despite a 1.8 per cent decrease in the population of this age group. I think there is a crisis here.

(1255)

Of all the youth charged approximately 53 per cent were over 16 years and approximately 46 per cent had prior records. Of this 46 per cent 19 per cent had five or more prior convictions. It is this 19 per cent that are the problem we really want to address. This particular group appears to be flaunting the law and hides behind the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The victims of youth offences have been left out in the cold and are not included in the legal process. We all would agree that the victims and families of victims suffer greatly and feel violated, abandoned and unprotected by the Canadian justice system.

I can only ask the previous speaker for the Bloc and a number of other speakers I have heard today how they would feel if their own family were torn apart and destroyed by a repeat young offender with no respect for authority.

I think the recent introduction of youth justice committees and victim service units in parts of my constituency in Alberta is making a difference. For the first time the victims and the community are having a say in the process. I would strongly encourage more victim service units to be developed throughout the country as victims have the ability to have their voices heard in the sentencing of their assailants through the use of victim impact statements and it is making a difference. Victims as well should be financially compensated by their assailants, the guilty party, to the greatest possible extent. It is Reform Party policy that the Young Offenders Act be amended to include: the lowering of the age of eligibility of being charged from 12 to 10 years of age as stated in our motion; offenders aged 16 and 17 would be considered adult offenders; offenders aged 14 or 15 who commit serious offences should be transferred to adult court; the release of names of offenders to the public and to the news media; the holding of parents responsible where it can be shown that a lack of parenting control is evident; that offenders in custody should be required to enrol in adult life skills upgrading programs.

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The justice minister and some members opposite suggest that to solve the problems of youth crime we must attack the root causes. These root causes are poverty, permissive social attitudes and the perceived lack of opportunities. I say certainly we must continue to work to resolve these problems but these problems will be not solved quickly if ever.

Society more and more is losing faith in our justice system and demanding immediate change. This demand for quick action is becoming more and more urgent as we witness the dramatic increase in the instances of brutal violent crime like the recent stabbing of a young mother in her home in the city of Edmonton, or the stabbing death of a 16-year old youth in Hull only last week, or the series of drive-by shootings at locations all across the country.

Only two days ago the theft of a large semi-trailer truck by a young offender who went on a joy ride ended in the killing of a mother and daughter right here in Ottawa after trying to escape from the police.

I would wager that almost every member here today knows an example in which an overlenient treatment of a repeat young offender allowed uncontrollable youth to thumb their noses at the system.

Last summer I travelled through my constituency. I recall a particularly alarming example of a juvenile habitual property offender who was sentenced to do community work as retribution for his crimes. This youth was escorted to the community cemetery with a lawn mower and a can of gas and was instructed to cut the grass. When the supervisor returned some time later to check on the progress, not only was the young offender gone, but so was the lawn mower and gas can which was later found to be sold some piece down the road. Sometime later rumour has it that in an expression of frustration this youth was last seen leaving the community bound and towed behind a pick-up truck. This youth went on to reoffend and eventually moved on to adult court, but he never did reoffend in that particular community again.

This example not only demonstrates in a real way the disregard many of these repeat offenders have for the system but I believe it is also an ominous sign of the direction communities and individuals might go if they continue to lose confidence in the criminal justice system to protect their property and their families.

(1300)

I am sure all members here would agree that vigilante justice is not something that we want to see. Therefore I urge the government to respond to this growing public concern as demonstrated by the huge criminal justice rallies taking place across the country and to move quickly in order to restore public confidence in this most vital criminal justice system.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech of my colleague from Athabasca and I think that it was made with sincerity and honesty.

I note, however, that the examples given concern specific cases, and the member asked what would be the reaction of Bloc members or Government members if their child had to experience particularly painful situations caused by young offenders.

No doubt the reaction would be one of outrage and it would be a strong reaction concentrating on punishment and resentment. It must be noted, however, that as members of the Parliament of Canada, we have the responsibility to look at things in perspective and a little more coldly, perhaps.

I note with interest that the member for Athabasca pointed out that it is necessary to attack the roots of the problem, which are poverty and the problems of drugs and poor schooling. There is no doubt that the often excessive reactions or the crimes committed by young offenders can be explained by a particular sociological context. But I particularly liked what the member for Athabasca said at the start of his speech.

He implied that the problem may not be the Act, but the administration of the Act. It is indeed my impression in looking at the Act and, frequently, in looking at what judges do, it is my impression that it might, in some cases, be applied with more severity.

For example, unless I am mistaken, young offenders may be brought before adult courts under the current Act. So, I would like to ask the member for Athabasca this question: Does he not think that if judges, those who apply the Act, and also the people who apply it in the prisons, those who are concerned with issues of parole, if these people paid a little more attention to the concerns of some and applied the Act with more severity, perhaps we would not be obliged to amend the present Act?

[*English*]

Mr. Chatters: Mr. Speaker, it would appear that the member and I are in agreement in much of what he said.

I very much agree that more vigorous enforcement of the regulations that are there now would be a giant step in the right direction. Certainly having said that, there is a small percentage of offenders the legislation now is not working for. I would suggest from my statistics that would be some 25 per cent of the offenders who are repeat offenders. A number of them repeated many times and the legislation simply is not working for them. There has to be a real deterrent put in the system to deal with those offenders.

Let us not lose perspective. The legislation that is there is working for 70 per cent or 75 per cent of the offenders who go before the courts. I really hope that we do not throw out the whole act, that we bring in amendments to the act that will deal

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severely with the percentage of young offenders the act is working for.

I would not go so far as perhaps some of my colleagues or constituents who made some remarks lately about the youth in Singapore who got caught writing graffiti on cars and the punishment that was applied to him is perhaps severe in most Canadians' eyes. However, that particular youth I am sure will never write graffiti on cars in Singapore again.

(1305)

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest): I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the House for the opportunity to speak to this very topical and important debate today.

What we are talking about today is the confidence that Canadians have in their legislatures to be aware and to be part of what is going on. For instance, we cannot have rallies in Edmonton and Calgary of 5,000 people and then our parliamentarians here in Ottawa pretending that there is not outrage in the land over the perception of the Young Offenders Act, or criminality in general.

The debate today is focused on one aspect of the Young Offenders Act. In reality what we are talking about here today is whether or not Canadians feel safe in their own homes, whether or not Canadians have security of the person, whether or not Canadians have a sense of safety with their property. When you leave your home and come back, what is left?

All of us knocking on doors in the last election can recall walking down street after street where people are hostages in their own homes, paying monthly remittance to burglar alarm companies. Why? Because people can break into a home, walk down a street, break into another home, and if they are under certain ages all they ever get is a slap on the wrist.

The statistics that we have had here today will show that crime by those who have been accused and convicted is not particularly high. Let us talk about the number of crimes committed, not the number of convictions. Let us talk about the number of people who are convicted on one crime but who have done perhaps a half dozen or 15 or 20, or perhaps two.

Statistics are not always the measure of the security that people feel in their homes. Perhaps better security would be the growth of the private protection agencies in Canada, growth of the industry in providing protection in people's own homes and their own businesses.

We have to have balance in this debate. As we go forward over these next weeks and months as the government introduces its Young Offenders Act and the changes thereto, we need to have balance. To do so we need to know where we started and have some idea of where we are going to go.

I will read the motion for those viewers who might have just tuned in.

That this House urge the government to respond to the evident lack of confidence that has arisen from Canadians over the Young Offenders Act, and recommend modification to the definition of "young person" in section 2(1) of the act to mean a person ten years of age or more, but under 16 years of age.

The effect is to lower it by two years. This, as other hon. members have mentioned, would serve on the upper end to ensure that there is a venue for more strict retribution, and on the lower end to bring people into the system so that they can be helped at an earlier age.

This motion responds to a very evident concern in my constituency. Fully 80 per cent to 90 per cent of my constituents are calling for a strengthening of the Young Offenders Act; fully 80 to 90 per cent of my constituents want stricter penalties and harsher penalties in the courts.

We are talking in this House about gun control laws, the potential changes to gun control. Yet our courts do not enforce the rules we have now. That is the primary problem, the primary cause of the crime that we have in our society today.

If we are going to do anything about crime, young offenders or adult offenders, there must be three certainties. These are the three certainties that we have when raising our own children: the certainty of detection, the certainty of a swift and fair trial, and the certainty of retribution.

(1310)

I would submit that many Canadians feel that our criminal justice system, particularly as it applies to young offenders, not only does not have one of these pillars to make it successful, it has none of the pillars.

When your home is broken into, when the police finally get there they do a report and you submit it to your insurance company and that is the end of it. Once again we are hostages. We are paying increased premiums for insurance because we accept the fact that our homes are going to be broken into. A swift and fair trial—how many of these instances ever come to court? And retribution, give me a break.

Here we have a criminal justice system particularly as it applies to young offenders which has none of the pillars that would be required to change attitudes, not one. It is not the way we would respond or react in our own homes with our own children.

If our children did damage to our own property and came home would we be upset? Would there be detection? Would there be a swift and fair trial? Would there be retribution? You bet there would. Why is it then that while we would take this responsibility personally as a nation we absolve ourselves of this responsibility and we say because a child may have wet the bed, they therefore have the right to do whatever they want to do to society, it is society's fault.

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An extension of that argument, logical or illogical as it may be, could well be that every child who is born and lives in modest circumstances would naturally go on to be an offender of some description and every child born into more privileged circumstances would never get into trouble. We know that is not the case. Offences, whether young offenders or not, cut across all demographic lines, across all racial and linguistic barriers. It has to do with societal values and what we as a society have decided is okay and what we as a society have decided is not okay.

My colleague who just spoke said that he does not agree with the fact that this young fellow in Singapore doing whatever he was doing, abusing the law, ended up getting the punishment of the day in Singapore which is caning.

I would submit that there is one heck of a lot less crime in Singapore than there is here. I would question where people would feel safer, in downtown Ottawa, downtown Toronto, downtown Vancouver, downtown Edmonton or downtown Singapore.

I am not suggesting we go all one way or all the other but I can remember from my personal experience a brush with the law. I got involved with the Reform Party at a very young age. I went to reform school I think when I was about 11. I was at a camp with other young boys and we decided we had had about enough of that so we ran away. I guess we were 11 or 12 or something like that. We were on the loose for three or four days.

I can look back at it now and imagine the pain and suffering that caused to everyone associated. I would have gone crazy if one of my kids had done that.

In any event, we sort of lived off the land. If we had had the brains we would have been able to figure out how to steal a car but we could not, which is not to say we did not try. What we were doing was mischief. It would be perceived as mischief today.

I will never forget walking along a street and feeling the hand of the law on the back of my neck as he picked me up. He could probably be arrested for that. There I was walking along the street. The next thing I knew my feet were off the ground and I had this hand around the back of my neck holding me up, a voice saying: "Get in the car, kid". To this day I have trouble eating Shreddies because that is what they served us at the detention home. That is not to say that every kid who gets in trouble as a youth is going to turn out all bad. They may end up being members of Parliament, perhaps a logical extension. I throw no collar on hon. members opposite. I am speaking strictly about myself.

(1315)

How are we as parliamentarians going to get somewhere with this perception, not just of youth crime but criminality in general? I submit it goes much deeper than changing or applying the law. It has to do with the values that we treasure in our society. It has to do with things like family values, with a sense

of community. It has to do with accepting personal responsibility. It has to do with leaders leading. It has to do with people who are responsible taking responsibility.

We have heard today of students in school being wild and doing whatever they want to do. Do the teachers like that? I submit they do not. The teachers will tell you time and time again that they are handcuffed. We have put them in handcuffs so they cannot do anything. They cannot touch the children. They can say: "You are a bad little Johnny, you are a bad little Sue. You should not be doing that". Saying that is not going to change a thing.

We have to change our values. We have to make personal responsibility and personal accountability, whether you are a young offender or a mid-sized offender or an adult offender, the primacy.

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis): Mr. Speaker, the member for Edmonton Southwest took the liberty of relating a story which, in my opinion, shows how a young person who commits a minor crime or offence can turn himself around and become a model citizen. Not only can he do so, but we must make every effort to ensure that this happens.

My colleague, the member for Saint-Hubert, indicated to us this morning that young people commit 10 per cent of all crimes, regardless of their seriousness. This means then that adults are committing the other 90 per cent. I feel that we must always keep in mind the fact that crime is primarily the work of adults, and it is often organized.

As the Bloc Québécois's spokesperson for young people, I think we have to send a very positive message to our young people, and tell them of our intention to crack down on crime. Figures provided by the Library of Parliament indicate that despite the addition of police officers and security personnel over the past 30 years, things have not improved.

A short while ago, I repeated what my colleague, the member for Saint-Hubert, had said, namely that in Quebec there were few protests and few movements and no mobilization of people demanding major changes to the current legislation. However, we are led to believe on listening to the members of the Reform Party that this is not the case elsewhere.

I would like to ask the honourable member if he can give us statistics or survey results from his region or even crime rate statistics to support his own position and his party's position on this legislation, because we confess that we, from Quebec, do not understand.

[English]

Mr. McClelland: Mr. Speaker, in my presentation I spoke briefly about statistics, their value and what they say or what they do not say. The statistics we received at the justice briefing had to do with the number of charges and convictions but it had nothing to do with the number of offences and break-ins. If the

number of break-ins and the number of offences are combined, those statistics are up dramatically.

(1320)

What I am responding to and the statistics that I quoted came from surveys in my constituency of people who are specifically concerned about the effect of crime.

It is absolutely essential, as we proceed with this debate, we do not make the blanket statement that all young people are bad. They are not. The vast majority of them are great. The vast majority of them are inspirations. We see them coming through here on tours and we are involved with them. It is something that we need to be very cautious about as we get into this debate and as we proceed down the road that we do not suggest for a moment that all kids are bad.

However there is a time when we have to recognize things as they are, not as we wish them to be. There comes a time when young people, regardless of age, show by what they have done that they need special treatment, that they need the care that society has to give them or that society needs to be protected from them.

In my view we need to draw a distinction between people who make a mistake and people who make the same mistake over and over again and do not learn from it. If you make a mistake once and learn from it that is experience. If you make the same mistake over and over and over again that is character. We have to make the distinction between those who need a nudge to get themselves on the right track and those who are a danger to society. We have to be very careful that we do not paint everyone with the same brush.

Mrs. Georgette Sheridan (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

I rise today to respond to the motion under debate respecting the Young Offenders Act. The government is very much aware of Canadians' concerns respecting youth crime.

During the election we campaigned on the need for reform of the Young Offenders Act. Since the election the Minister of Justice has indicated on several occasions his desire to proceed expeditiously to respond to some of the key concerns in this area with an amending bill in the very near future.

In addition, the minister has also indicated his commitment to a review of the entire act. This will be undertaken by the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs over the course of the coming year.

I am a member of the justice committee and I am particularly pleased to be part of the committee that will be doing the review

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of the Young Offenders Act. The act is now 10 years old. As it happens I had just finished law school at the University of Saskatchewan when the Young Offenders Act was introduced. Our class was among the first to do a very detailed study of what was then a new act so I am pleased to be part of the group that will be reviewing the act after 10 years of practice.

One aspect of the committee will be to listen to the viewpoints of all Canadians, to listen to the concerns that are certainly very real.

The Young Offenders Act creates a separate system of justice for young people. It has a unique spirit and philosophy which seeks both the protection of society and takes into account the special needs of youthful offenders.

The Young Offenders Act provides for a balance between the imperatives of assuring public protection and meeting the needs of our young people who run afoul of the law. We should not forget that the interests of society do include the objective of rehabilitation of young people as well as for the protection of society itself.

The interests of society also dictate that we should allow young people to mature and, as the hon. member just mentioned, to learn from their mistakes and that is a need for a separate juvenile justice system. We believe that the protection of society entails two obligations: preventing young people from committing criminal offences and helping young people who commit crimes to become law-abiding citizens again.

As a parent I subscribe to the principle that young people are responsible for their actions. I am also cognizant of the fact however that young people are not on an equal footing with adults in terms of their degree of responsibility and if they were I would probably not need to be a parent.

Owing to their state of dependence and the level of development and maturity of young people they have special needs. These needs include counselling and support as well as supervision, discipline and guidance. The adequacy of the Young Offenders Act for youth involved in very serious offences however has become a major public issue in Canada.

(1325)

From a public perspective there is a strong lobby for increased sentences in the belief that they would offer enhanced protection to the public, provide general deterrents and reaffirm fundamental norms regarding the sanctity of life and societal repudiation of the crime of murder. Canadians must have confidence in the laws designed to protect them.

One of the major concerns of the public relates to minimum age of criminal responsibility which under the present legislation is 12. Many would like to see it lowered to 10. Under the

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previous legislation, the juvenile delinquents act, the minimum age of criminal responsibility was seven years of age.

Support for lowering the age to 10 is not new. In the consultations and debates leading up to the passage of the Young Offenders Act, some observers made much the same argument we are hearing now, that we should have a lower age of 10. Others suggested it should be as high as 14. The age of 12 finally received broad support in the belief that, generally speaking children under 12 would not have the knowledge and experience to appreciate fully the nature and consequences of their actions, nor would they be able to participate meaningfully in the proceedings against them. These capacities of course are fundamental to a fair and just criminal prosecution.

Another concern of the public relates to the maximum age of criminal responsibility, the upper end of the scale under the Young Offenders Act. It has been suggested to lower to 16 years the maximum age under the Young Offenders Act. The issue surrounding the maximum age also received a great deal of attention in the debates that preceded the passage of the Young Offenders Act in 1982. The inclusion of 16 and 17-year olds in the juvenile system was done in the belief that it was in the best interests of youth and Canadian society that young persons be dealt with in this manner.

For the vast majority of young offenders, particularly those committing less serious offences, the current age limit allows them the time to mature away from the influence of older, more hardened adult offenders. I think this is the point that was being made by the member from Edmonton.

The government is committed to a juvenile justice system which will effectively seek to provide protection for our communities, to hold young people responsible for their illegal acts, but also to take into account any special needs a youth may have which are pertinent to the youth's offending behaviour and therefore relevant to the goal of rehabilitation.

The issues of minimum and maximum ages are very important to the operation of the act and Canadians' belief in it. Consequently this issue will be looked at in the context of the broad based review of the juvenile justice system. This will allow all views on the issue to be examined in the context of an overall examination of the act.

Another public concern has to do with the publication of the name of the young offender. It has been suggested that the name of the young person who has committed or who is alleged to have committed an indictable offence where this youth has been previously convicted on at least two separate occasions be published. There is scope under the current Young Offenders Act to allow for the details of an offence or a trial to be reported. Broad coverage of the youth justice system, the trends, the

profiles of youth and successful programs is permitted under the present act.

It is important however to distinguish between perception and reality. The current emphasis, particularly in the media on extreme or exceptional cases, creates a distorted picture of juvenile crime and its treatment by the justice system. In view of that it is important to understand that there are a number of reasons that support the prohibition on publication of information serving to identify young accused, including such things as the protection of innocent siblings of offenders from shame and possible ostracism, encouragement to youth to comply with a disposition and to remain free from further involvement in crime, prevention of barriers arising that may stand in the way of a youth becoming more positively involved in a community, including employment and educational opportunities.

We must also remember the families of young offenders are often part of the rehabilitation process and the prohibition on publication may enhance their capacity to move forward positively for the benefit of the youth, the family and the community.

In the context of public safety the publication of a youth's identity may foster an illusion of public safety. The media however can only offer selective publicity rather than full reporting of all cases to a limited segment of the population.

Balanced against this however is the protection of society. The Minister of Justice has indicated in his response to the throne speech that he is in favour of a greater sharing of information about convicted young offenders with those who need to know for reasons of safety. He has also indicated that he intends to include provisions related to information sharing in the June bill.

(1330)

I would like to comment quickly on an important election proposal to increase the maximum penalty available in youth court for first and second degree murder. Again the Minister of Justice has indicated he is committed to increased sentences for certain violent crimes, including murder.

In the June bill, the Minister of Justice will develop his proposals in a way that will seek to improve the juvenile justice system and to promote more effective and efficient measures to help young offenders while providing protection for the public.

In many cases the criminal behaviour of youths appearing before the youth courts constitutes an isolated and often not very serious act. For a much smaller percentage of youth however, their criminal behaviour is part of a pattern of more serious difficulties. It is essential to understand the special needs of these youths if their interests and indeed the long term interests of society are to be met.

Canada's Young Offenders Act has received international recognition by the United Nations as a model for juvenile

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justice. It clearly takes a bold step by delineating the parameters of criminal law for youth and permitting resort to criminal law sanctions only for behaviour which is clearly criminal.

In doing so however, it has firmly entrenched the recognition that adolescents are to be distinguished from adults because their needs are distinct and therefore warrant a distinct response. This distinction must not however detract from the principle that society is entitled to protection from the criminal activity of youth.

Canadian courts have interpreted interests of society to mean both protection of the public and rehabilitation of offenders. This dual interpretation places a very heavy onus on the juvenile justice system to deliver on both fronts. The magnitude of this task is best illustrated when youths are involved in violent crimes or chronic reoffending. These classes of offenders reveal the multidimensional nature of the challenge facing those involved in the juvenile justice system and the challenge that lies ahead of us.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member in referring to our motion of lowering the age from 12 to 10 under the law said that many people support this. My question is how many?

In a situation like that which happened in Britain where two 10-year olds murdered a two or three-year old, how would she suggest we deal with that situation in our society under our law?

Mrs. Sheridan: Mr. Speaker, I believe what I said was that prior to the passage of the original bill there had been arguments on both sides as to whether the age should be 10, 12, 14 or some other age. The consensus was that 12 would more adequately meet the needs. Therefore I cannot answer directly the member's question of precisely how many supported 10 years, if I understood the member's question properly.

On the tragic situation in England with children of that age involved in a brutal murder of a baby, I would like to be able to tell the hon. member that simply by cranking up the Young Offenders Act we can prevent that kind of thing but that simply is not true. It is not possible for that sort of abhorrent behaviour to be legislated away.

What we must keep foremost in our minds is the dual aspect of our juvenile justice system which is to have a system that will protect people from repeat offenders and at the same time to look at the underlying causes of the kinds of behaviour we saw in the tragic British case. Only by dealing with it as a complete package can we provide any solutions to these kinds of things.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is a member of the justice committee would she not agree that when this matter is referred to the committee there is a fairly high probability we will not see any recommendations from the justice committee at least until 1995?

There seemed to be some references earlier in this debate that everything is wonderful in Quebec according to the Bloc members and that we are talking about a regional matter. As the member comes from western Canada perhaps we do not have that communication barrier.

Would she not agree that on the basis of the representations she has had with her own constituents, is there not a real groundswell of concern on the part of her constituents as there are on the part of mine? This very simple thing of doing something that very logically is going to happen, would she not agree it would be a good strong indicator to the people of Canada and her constituents that the House really was serious about doing something?

(1335)

Mrs. Sheridan: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian public will realize this government is very serious about doing something by the fact that the justice minister has moved swiftly to introduce immediate changes in June. That is something he has committed to do from the beginning. Also the entire act will be turned over to the non-partisan parliamentary committee for a thorough review which will involve a careful study of what works and does not work in the act and what can be improved upon.

I know the hon. member opposite enjoys giving us his views on how we should listen to the constituents by referendum and other measures. I can think of no better way than to ensure that the parliamentary committee system is following that process by permitting Canadians to bring forth their views, people who are involved in the criminal justice system from all aspects. Canadians will be reassured to know that the justice minister is committed to providing a process by which their concerns can be heard and action taken.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard): Mr. Speaker, the Young Offenders Act is extraordinary because its application is not general.

It is extraordinary because it provides for different conditions for young people. It is extraordinary because its approach and philosophy are unique. And finally, it is extraordinary because it recognizes the specific needs of our young people.

The Young Offenders Act strikes a balance between protecting society and meeting the needs of the young person. We must remember that the rehabilitation of young offenders is as important to society as protecting society itself. Society also has an interest in letting a young person acquire the maturity he needs to cope with the realities of life.

Protecting society, to us, means two things: an obligation to prevent the young person from committing criminal offences and an obligation to provide the help he needs. Of course, young

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people are responsible for their actions, but they cannot be expected to assume the same level of responsibility as adults.

Because of their dependent status and their level of development and maturity, they have special needs and require not only counselling and support but also monitoring, discipline and supervision. The treatment of young people who are in trouble is something we should not just accent but actively promote, approve and support.

Mr. Speaker, the question of youth rehabilitation is not an easy one. It is clear that the existing legislation has its shortcomings, and the tragic incidents that occurred recently are an indication that it must be improved. Criticism of this legislation is becoming increasingly vocal and widespread. Many factors contribute to a general lack of public confidence, including a poor understanding of the phenomenon of youth crime and of the provisions of the legislation.

For instance, the public does not realize that in youth court, sentences may be for the same period as sentences given in adult court for a similar offence, and proportionally speaking, more offenders are convicted in youth court than in adult court, and this applies to practically all types of offences.

I agree there is a very genuine public concern about the increase in violence among young people, but when we talk about youth violence, we must also consider the broader social and cultural context in which it occurs. Poverty, low self esteem, unemployment, little education, isolation, lack of decent housing and early exposure to abusing treatment, often in the young person's family, are all factors that in many cases will cause a young person to become violent.

(1340)

Throughout the election campaign, the Government promised to proceed quickly with reform of the Act. It adopted a comprehensive and balanced approach to criminality among young people, with a number of leading ideas, including recognition of the importance of preventing the particular problems of Aboriginal youth and the defence of a separate but strengthened system of justice for all young people, except the most dangerous.

In order to adopt the best approach to reform, the Government is taking into consideration a number of factors that are deemed important. It is clear that the system of justice for young people cannot be assessed in isolation from other systems, that is, youth protection, health and education, which are essential to the prevention of crime among young people and which interact with the justice system when an adolescent commits an offence.

The confidence of the public must be re-established, but the federal government will not achieve this on its own. It is useless to blame the Act blindly without taking a look at the shortcomings of its application and the inadequacy of services.

[English]

The Minister of Justice announced recently the strategy chosen to reform the Young Offenders Act. The proposed new justice strategy has two phases: first, a bill which shall be tabled during the month of June; and second, a parliamentary review which will examine the nature and extent of youth crime.

The review will also look at the age limits, parental involvement and alternatives to criminal responses. In fact the old justice system applicable to youth will be under review. The review will examine ways the federal government can better prevent child and youth crime and promote integrated responses to child and youth problems at the federal level with health, immigration and employment.

The bill will focus primarily on murder and other serious personal injury offences. Other changes to the act are also under study to better respond to youth who are involved in criminal activities. These changes may include amendments to court provisions, custody provisions, and the evidence provisions of the act.

The government wants to strengthen the effectiveness of intervention in the interests of greater protection and enhance rehabilitation in the youth justice system. The government is also looking at alternatives to custody for less serious offences.

These changes will represent important improvements to the act. They target two distinct categories: youth whose behaviour shall be addressed by the youth system in the community; and youth involved in the most serious offences who may require longer sentences.

The proposed changes remain true to the ideal of an individualized approach which permits the youth court to make the most rational choice in the individual circumstances of each case. I believe that the modifications will be well balanced, will recognize the principle of rehabilitation and will encourage community based sentences.

It is true that Canada is having problems with a minority of youth who are involved in serious and violent crimes. But we must not lose sight that the vast majority of youth who are dealt with in the juvenile system do not reoffend; they become contributing members of our society.

Our youth justice system is geared to dealing with the particular needs of young people who are still developing and maturing. The youth justice system benefits from a specialized judiciary with expertise in dealing with young persons. It allows pre-sentence reports which allow for a more holistic approach than that pursued in the adult system. It also allows for specialized medical and psychological reports which may be ordered when the judge is of the view that the young person may be suffering from problems such as learning disabilities or

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emotional disorders. It has the capacity to involve families at all stages of the process.

It is obvious that youth crime requires a multifaceted response. Legislative change alone will not solve the problem, but it is an important first step to restoring public confidence.

(1345)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few comments about the remarks by the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard. I would also like to make a few comments, because I personally have the pleasure of having teenagers who say things sometimes that I find a little annoying, such as “You know, Dad, if I’m arrested, no problem. They won’t do anything to me until I’m 18.”

That reflects to a certain extent what young people are saying. They say that even if they do things that are wrong, the police cannot arrest them in any case or charge them, because they are minors. This is one of the aspects, when we talk about enforcement, as the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard mentioned, that I feel we should consider, in this respect in any case, without penalizing young people unduly. We should at least inform them of their responsibilities.

He also mentioned the fact that young people often behave the way they see adults behave. If we misbehave, chances are our children will do the same. In my opinion, we should maybe think a little about changing the laws as they apply to adults and the way in which adults are judged in order to create a better society and to ensure that our children can behave as well as possible when they have to accept responsibility. We should ensure that we adults set a good example.

We should also talk about violence on television. We should also talk about giving young people hope. As long as young people do not have any hope, they will more likely tend to give up on life, not really care and not show any respect for society. It is in this spirit that, in my opinion, we have to respect these young people who, basically, are not really guilty of these crimes. This does not mean that we have to let them do as they please, but I feel we have to be very open, as the law stipulates. I feel that we have to be very open-minded in the way in which we judge these young people.

I would like the member, since I have the opportunity to ask a question, to tell us what he thinks we could do to improve the way in which we mete out punishment to young people.

Mr. Patry: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Longueuil for his question. As a parent, I too am always being told, even by my own family, that parents should never strike their children because they could be hauled off to youth court.

In answer to your question, I think the problem today is the fact that the current legislation is poorly understood. Young people often rationalize that if they commit a crime, a minor one, it will not be a problem for them because when they turn 18, they will not have a criminal record and they can do whatever they like.

That is the impression young people have. The reality of the legislation is, however, quite different. Which is not to say that this government is unwilling to make changes to the act. I am sure that the changes will be aimed first at broadening people’s understanding of the legislation as it will be defined in the future and second, at ensuring that young offenders face up to the reality of what they have done.

[*English*]

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether the hon. member is trying to defend the Young Offenders Act or not judging from his speech.

I would like to ask the hon. member a few questions here. First, does the hon. member know or could he tell this House what the sentence is right now for a young offender, say age 16, committing rape or murder? He says that they may consider longer sentences. I certainly hope they would do more than just consider it.

(1350)

The vast majority of youth are very respectful, hard working and are trying to get ahead. I wonder if the member realizes that the majority of children going to school today and trying to learn are going there in fear of the minority creating these problems. I would hope they would also take into account and listen to some of the youth today about the problem that the minority is creating before they make any decisions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Patry: Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member’s question. It is not a matter of defending the Young Offenders Act as it now stands, but rather of amending it and improving it. There are problems in this country today and we must deal with them. As was mentioned, gangs of youths are terrorizing other young people in primary schools, high schools and CEGEPs, and they must be brought into line. The answer, however, is not simply to drag them into court and sentence them. I am a bigger believer in social reintegration with the help of psychologists, doctors and experts. If we do nothing but send young offenders to jail, we will end up with hardened criminals on our hands.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, for once this House cannot be said to lack consistency; it has shown great singleness of purpose. About ten days ago, the hon. member for York South—Weston, a government member, introduced Bill C-217, a public bill to lower age limits for the

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purposes of the Young Offenders Act, to increase maximum penalties and allow the publication of the names of young offenders.

Today, the opposition motion moved by a Reform Party member from British Columbia calls upon the House to urge the government to respond to the evident—as far as they are concerned—lack of confidence over the Young Offenders Act by recommending a change to the definition of “young offender” in Section 2(1) of the said Act to mean a person to be ten years of age or more, but sixteen years of age or less.

Again, we are falling back on lowering the minimum age. I say it is somewhat similar to what Bill C-217 called for because, as indicated earlier in this debate, lowering the age to 16 does not change the rigour of the act. They said: “We simply lowered the age limits” but the fact of the matter is that lowering the maximum age of young offenders to 16 means that those between the ages of 16 and 18 who will be tried by adult courts will incur adult sentencing. That is where the change will hurt, in terms of sentencing.

Why? Why an approach reflecting such intolerance, an intolerance that seems to come mainly from English Canada but which unfortunately is echoed in this House? As I said earlier, by dint of being alarmists, you end up colouring facts. Some members have been crying wolf for so long that they are seeing its tail. Let us stop telling ourselves horror stories and face facts. The sad reality is that delinquency is probably here to stay. We will always need legislation to crack down on actions society considers as unacceptable but in a civilized state legislation must also seek to have a positive effect.

In the young offenders’ case, we need an act that will not turn this young offender into an old one and this, for the rest of his or her life because such is the wish of an intolerant society. A modern state must search for the causes of this criminal behaviour and if possible, try to eradicate them from the young offender’s heart. Could we not do this in a non-partisan way, without shaping the entire act around a senseless murder, focusing instead on striking a balance between punishment, in the form of the sentence, and rehabilitation, that is to say the young delinquent or offender’s social reintegration?

To do so, we must look at the statistics, which mirror reality back to us. We must not settle for the headlines on the front page of sensationalistic papers or their legal columns. I believe that this feeling of insecurity is magnified by the information widely disseminated by the press. Reassuring statistics are seldom published. But statistics can be reassuring and indeed they are, particularly in Quebec.

(1355)

According to a study by Jean Trépanier, criminology professor at the University of Montreal, only one out of six offenders is a minor. That is a far cry from the 50 per cent suggested by today’s debate and the emphasis on amending the Young Offenders Act.

According to the study, juvenile crime even fell to about 8 per cent in Quebec in the last 15 years, and even in Montreal there was a substantial decline over the same period. The number of young offenders in Montreal went from 10,145 in 1979 to 6,679 last year. I will be honest with the members of this House and say that what is a problem is that the proportion of crimes against persons committed by young people, which are more visible and get more media coverage, climbed significantly during the same period.

Despite the higher figures, the number of crimes against persons committed by young people is still small in absolute terms. That is why I think that the motion presented today by the Reform Party is wrong. The perception in Quebec is quite different. What do we do differently for young offenders in Quebec so that our perception of this problem is apparently different from that of the other provinces?

In Quebec when a youth commits an offence, his case is immediately taken over by social services and not by the judicial system. We immediately and completely de-criminalize the legal process. It is important to remember this because Quebec seems to be the only place in Canada where young offenders are looked after by social services from the beginning of the legal process to the sentences handed down by the courts.

Quebec has a list of offences. When a crime is not on this list, it is up to the police to decide whether or not charges should be laid. If the offence is listed, law-enforcement authorities must refer the case to the judicial system by lodging a complaint against the young offender. The youth protection director then becomes responsible for the minor. As I told you, if I am not mistaken, only Quebec does things this way.

In Quebec, and this may surprise some people, the maximum sentence is three years plus two years on parole. Having studied the problem of young offenders, I can tell you that even in Canada the majority of juvenile crime workers recognize that Quebec does things differently. And this distinctiveness is felt in the way it treats its young offenders.

With the Young Offenders Act in effect and the whole system serving young offenders in Quebec, things are working out quite well. I think that the figures are encouraging. One only has to look at the report to be convinced—

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The Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but he can continue later. A point of order has been raised by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

The Speaker: It being two o'clock, pursuant to Standing Order 30(5) the House will now proceed to Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, with the unanimous consent of the House, I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), concerning forestry practice in Canada and clear-cutting, the House authorize the Standing Committee on Natural Resources to travel from May 23 to 26, 1994, to British Columbia and Alberta and in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick on May 30 and 31, 1994, and that the necessary staff do accompany the Committee.

(Motion agreed to.)

(1400)

[English]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, again with unanimous consent of the House, I ask leave to revert to the presentation of reports by standing and special committees for the purpose of tabling in the House the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees.

I would ask to dispense with the reading of the report.

[Translation]

It deals with substituting Mr. Leblanc for Mrs. Debien on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

[English]

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I would move that the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CANADIAN PRODUCTS

Mr. Morris Bodnar (Saskatoon—Dundurn): Mr. Speaker, many of us heard reports a few weeks ago that the coconut oil used by movie theatres was not as healthy as originally thought.

Last week American movie chains decided to switch from coconut oil to a healthier Canadian canola oil. Cineplex Odeon, a Canadian company, declined to make this switch preferring to wait and study the matter further. This answer is not good enough. A Canadian company should be supporting healthier Canadian products before it supports inferior foreign products.

However this seems to be the rule in Canada rather than the exception. We have seen this problem before involving Canadian wines and innumerable other Canadian products. When will we start buying superior Canadian products and putting Canada's unemployed back to work?

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL NURSES' DAY

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond—Guiral (Laval Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud today, May 12, International Nurses' Day, to pay tribute to the 264,000 nurses in Canada and especially the 65,000 nurses in Quebec. More than ever, these professionals of whom a lot is asked deserve recognition for the outstanding quality of service they give the public.

Today's theme is "nurses make all the difference". I thank these men and women whom I know well, from having been around them for a long time, for their contribution and their faithfulness. Their skill and their ability to listen are what make our health services as good as they are.

As we recognize this fact, we recognize the essential contribution of nurses to maintaining the basic values of our society.

* * *

[English]

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, a 44-year old forestry worker and family man lies in critical condition in hospital today because a group of teenagers split his

S. O. 31

skull with an axe Saturday night. The wife of the victim said he had hollered at the teenagers for running a stop sign the previous day.

The government suggests that poverty and unemployment are to blame for youth crime. If poverty and unemployment were to blame, why was there no noticeable increase in crime during the dirty thirties? Why does Newfoundland, with Canada's highest rate of unemployment, nevertheless have the lowest rate of crime?

This assault took place in the beautiful orchard growing community of Oyama, B.C., with a population of less than 1,000, no inner city, no slums, no gangs. The students at George Elliott High School are organizing a car wash to raise cash for the victim's family. This demonstrates that they are responsible young adults.

When will the government shoulder its responsibility by reforming the Young Offenders Act?

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations recently decided that beginning in 1994, May 15 of each year shall be observed as the International Day of Families.

In spite of the hectic pace of the 1990s, the importance of family must not be taken for granted nor underestimated. It is the family unit which passes on culture and tradition from one generation to another. It is the family which provides the primary source of caring and nurturing for our children. Indeed our future survival depends on the family.

(1405)

The Canada Committee for the International Year of the Family feels that we must support our families in order to maintain a compassionate, productive and tolerant society.

We must resist the forces that threaten to tear our families apart. Instead we must embrace the family ties that make Canada a strong nation.

This Sunday it is worth reminding ourselves that despite all our differences we have family ties that bind us locally, nationally and globally.

* * *

TECHNOLOGY TRIANGLE

Mr. John English (Kitchener): Mr. Speaker, the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and Guelph, known as Canada's Technology Triangle, had the honour yesterday to host the federal Minister of Industry.

During his visit the minister announced a new government program to help the economy's engine of growth, small busi-

ness. As a result of an ongoing dialogue with this sector, the minister announced a \$50 million program providing financing in addition to bank loans.

It is appropriate that the minister should discuss small and medium sized business in Canada's Technology Triangle since this area is one of the country's success stories in the new knowledge based economy in which this sector is key.

I join with the members for Cambridge, Guelph and Waterloo in thanking the minister for his recognition of the needs of small and medium sized business.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, next week, May 15 to 21, is National Police Week. Police Week was started in 1970 by the Canadian police community to increase knowledge of the police in Canada and to stress the need for co-operation between the community and the police.

[English]

National Police Week is an occasion for all Canadians to recognize the professionalism, personal sacrifice and dedication shown by members of Canada's many police services in carrying out their duties.

As police services continue to adapt to new demands in our society, all of us within this partnership will have to work together more than ever if we wish to fight crime in the most effective and efficient manner.

We in government recognize the dedication and pledge our continued support for the work they do. I invite all Canadians to join us in saluting our fine police men and women.

* * *

[Translation]

HAITI

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert): Mr. Speaker, another dramatic turn of events in the Haitian tragedy took place in Port-au-Prince yesterday. A few days before the May 21 deadline set by the UN Security Council for the military dictators to leave power, they appointed a puppet president as head of state instead.

The Bloc Québécois protests and vehemently condemns this masquerade. The Canadian government must stop waffling on the Haitian issue. Has Canada obtained all the assurances it wanted from the Dominican Republic that that country will respect the total embargo and how much longer must we wait for Canada to take a clear and unequivocal position? Canada must stand ready to intervene, in co-operation with the international community, to end what is going on in Haiti once and for all.

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*[English]***NURSING**

Ms. Margaret Bridgman (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, today I join my colleague from the Bloc to pay tribute to nurses on this International Nurses Day in National Nursing Week.

Since the days of Florence Nightingale the nursing profession has improved upon the knowledge base and standards of bedside nursing as well as expanding the nursing practices and principles into health care areas such as research, education, counselling and administration.

Nurses are the backbone of health care by participating in nearly all aspects of health and providing service seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Nurses continue to meet the challenge of providing their services with less funding. They extend the extra effort needed to help maintain the excellent nursing service standards we enjoy.

Let us on this occasion not only recognize the invaluable work of nurses but also pledge to take the necessary steps to solidify financing of health care in Canada.

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*[Translation]***INTERNATIONAL MYALGICENCEPHALOMYELITIS DAY**

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard): Mr. Speaker, May 12, 1994, is International Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Day, a disease better known as chronic fatigue syndrome. This terrible disease generates more and more interest because of the professional, social and emotional problems it causes to its victims, and also because of the enormous related costs to society. This syndrome is very difficult to define. Indeed, there is no definite criteria to diagnose this condition.

(1410)

Researchers have concluded that it may be caused by various agents associated with several diseases.

Whatever the future holds, we do hope that research will find a physiological explanation for the chronic fatigue syndrome.

* * *

*[English]***SMALL BUSINESSES**

Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians should know that the small business sector in Canada is responsible for the creation of well over 80 per cent of all new jobs. Clearly the renewal of our economy depends on strong and vibrant small businesses.

Our government has recognized this fact and is working toward a stable climate so small business can grow and thrive. We will achieve this by improving the Small Businesses Loans Act, working with the banks to make capital more accessible, and lowering payroll taxes. Further we will reduce the burden of government red tape that chokes small business growth. After all government must work in partnership with the business community, not pretend to be its master.

Small business owners in my riding have often told me they are anxious for the day when the onerous bureaucratic load imposed on them by government is a thing of the past. For example, the government remains committed to the goal of replacing the GST with one that is more efficient and fair, easier to administer, and much more convenient for small business. The government takes its commitments seriously and will fulfil its promises.

* * *

RAILWAYS

Mr. Paul DeVillers (Simcoe North): Mr. Speaker, Canada needs a comprehensive railway strategy that ensures the country is well served into the future.

[Translation]

Railways make a positive contribution to our country's economic development. It is important to recognize that main lines and branch lines serving Canadian communities are essential to our economic infrastructure. Several thousand jobs depend on railway transportation, and many others could be created if the government adopts a proactive approach in that sector.

[English]

Recently CN indicated that it wishes to abandon yet another line servicing industry in Simcoe North as it has done in many areas of eastern Canada. Every short line closing represents lost jobs and lost potential.

On behalf of all Canadians I ask that the government lead the campaign to keep our important rail infrastructure intact.

* * *

*[Translation]***RAIL TRANSPORT**

Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the initiative of the Rural Dignity and Ralliement gaspésien organizations, hearings are currently being held in Bonaventure and Gaspé regarding the maintenance of the railway service.

Several groups and individuals expressed their views and supported the idea of maintaining the Chaleur, the only pas-

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senger train still in operation in the Gaspé Peninsula and a vital tool for the region's economic development.

Given the fact that the Liberal Party is not represented at these hearings, I want to draw to the attention of the Minister of Transport the legitimate concerns expressed by residents of that region. Will the minister pledge to hold official public hearings on this issue, as recommended in the Liberal Party's report on the future of the transportation sector in the Gaspé Peninsula?

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL REVENUE

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, from the inception of the GST, Joe Arling's motel in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, has remitted payments as instructed in Revenue Canada's guide which states that lodging rentals for periods exceeding 30 days are GST exempt.

An auditor has now informed Mr. Arling that the exemption only applies if more than 90 per cent of the rooms are rented long term. This is not in the guide and only recently became known to Revenue Canada staff, let alone to taxpayers.

Revenue bureaucrats acknowledge that Mr. Arling tried to be compliant but maintain the ignorance of the law, even when agents of the crown provide misinformation, is no excuse. They will not consider a negotiated settlement and are determined to play hardball at any cost to the department and to my constituent.

Businessmen who do their best to serve as unpaid tax collectors do not deserve shabby treatment by unyielding bureaucrats.

This case was brought to the attention of the Minister of National Revenue two months ago, and I am still awaiting a response.

* * *

CANADA HEALTH DAY

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, today is Canada Health Day, dedicated to the theme of building a healthy future.

The Canadian Public Health Association, the Canadian Hospital Association and other community and volunteer health organizations will showcase their work across the country with justifiable pride.

Canadians are being reminded today of the milestones in health our nation has achieved and what more as a people we can do to ensure the health of all.

(1415)

That International Nurses' Day is also celebrated today is a happy coincidence. Nurses have always played a pivotal role in the building of a healthy Canada and a healthy world.

I salute the organizers, both associations and individuals for their initiatives. I salute this government and Parliament on their unwavering commitment to the mission of all health care professionals and volunteers to keep Canadians and all world citizens healthy.

* * *

TRACEY FERGUSON

Mr. Jag Bhaduria (Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to congratulate one of my constituents for her outstanding athletic achievements and dedicated community work.

Tracey Ferguson, a resident of Markham, was honoured last week with the YMCA's Young Woman of Distinction Award. The sponsors of the award selected Ms. Ferguson, citing her as a stellar role model for the youth of my riding.

Although only 19 years of age, Tracey has achieved an exceptional list of athletic and volunteer awards. As an Olympic wheelchair athlete she has won gold medals for basketball at the 1991 World Games and the 1992 Paralympics. She has also received the 1993 Terry Fox Humanitarian Award for volunteer work.

On behalf of my colleagues in this House I congratulate Ms. Ferguson.

* * *

THE LATE JOHN SMITH

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise today on behalf of the NDP caucus to pay tribute to the late Mr. John Smith, leader of the British Labour Party.

It is often said that in Britain the left owes more to Methodism than to Marxism. John Smith, a Christian socialist, exemplified this tradition, a pragmatic Scot whose political beliefs were shaped by both Christian faith and ideological analysis, who was cut down at the zenith of his popularity with the British people.

To his family we extend our condolences and recall the words of the biblical tradition: "Well done thou good and faithful servant".

To his comrades in the British Labour Party we say the struggle continues. To the United Kingdom we say a fine alternative Prime Minister has been tragically lost. To his fellow Scots we invoke the words of the famous Scottish song: "O flower of Scotland when will we see thy like again".

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

POLLS

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Public Works.

As various observers sound the alarm on the disturbing state of public finances and the federal deficit, the government announced that this year, it will blithely spend \$67 million on polls to which Canadians will not have access although they pay for them through their taxes.

Considering the present state of public finances and the federal deficit, what justification can the minister give us for the fact that his government will squander as much as \$67 million on polls conducted by friends of the government, since the contracts will be awarded at the discretion of the ministers?

[*English*]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for his question, but he is factually incorrect.

The \$63 million that he refers to is an expenditure of the Government of Canada which will be made for the purposes of advertising and polling. It is something that governments, since the beginning of Confederation if you will, have spent money on in order to inform Canadians of the various programs that they have and how Canadians can take advantage of those programs.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I think the minister would be more factual if he told us that the government's real reason for deciding not to reveal polling results is that it does not want Canadian taxpayers to know it has already started on a massive series of polls in Quebec in preparation for the referendum on sovereignty. Will the minister admit as much?

[*English*]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that the Leader of the Official Opposition would not find favour with the new guidelines that the government has produced.

I want to quote for the Leader of the Opposition as well as other members of the House: "I am delighted to note that the processes and the review of the principles to provide openness and transparency and to avoid concentration of an excessive amount of business in one region or to one supplier is good

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news". That comes from Claude Boulay, president of the Association of Quebec Advertising Agencies.

(1420)

I say to the Leader of the Opposition that it is important for governments, whether they be provincial or federal, to have the benefit of providing information to Canadians across this country on the variety of programs and the various things they are doing on behalf of their constituents.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that things are not what they seem. The government claims that its policy is to inform Canadians. In fact, it made a commitment during the election campaign to promote transparency in government, but now this policy, which is apparently so transparent, will let the government keep the facts and information under wraps.

Specifically, I want to ask the minister how he can reconcile with previous commitments the government's decision to hide from the taxpayers the results of countless polls that will be conducted to fight Quebec's sovereignty.

[*English*]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member opposite was a member of the previous administration I did an examination of the guidelines that the previous administration had and I want members to know that is the extent of the guidelines—

The Speaker: Order. I hate to interrupt the hon. minister but I would remind him that it is better if we do not use any props in Question Period.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, I say to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that this is the first time that a cabinet, federally or provincially across this country, has dared to put in place guidelines procedures which address the fundamental issues of accountability, competitiveness, openness and transparency.

What I expected from the Leader of the Opposition was that he stand in his place and say he wished to apologize, that he wished he could have done it when he was a member of the former Tory cabinet.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): Mr. Speaker, the state of the Government of Canada's public debt remains a matter of extreme concern, while the financial community has reached negative to the government's budget and deplored the timid expenditure reduction measures it contained. Never-

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theless, the government insists on turning down requests for a much needed examination of all public spending.

My question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Considering that Canada's debt represents 84 per cent of GDP, while in other G-7 countries, with the exception of Italy, the debt represents less than 33 per cent of GDP, would the minister agree that the government should clean up public spending by eliminating waste and duplication?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, we certainly agree that waste and duplication should be eliminated. In fact, that is one of the reasons why we asked the minister responsible for public service renewal to initiate a program by program, line-by-line analysis of government spending.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Finance agree that the way to stop wasting public funds—and I am thinking of the government's decision to spend \$67 million on polls—would be to have a special committee analyse public spending item by item, as we have been asking since the beginning of the election campaign?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, a system already exists, and I am referring to the committees of the House when they consider the Estimates. If the hon. member were sincere about what he is asking, he would ask his colleagues to go to committee meetings and, as part of the process of considering the Estimates, analyse the budgets of all government agencies.

[English]

Committee by committee there is a way of looking at government expenses. It is called the estimates and what I would suggest to the hon. member opposite is that if his colleagues would go to committee and do their job maybe they can examine these expenses.

* * *

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of Indian affairs.

In a response to a question put to the minister on May 5 the minister told my colleague for Calgary Southwest categorically: "In the legislation that will be before the House dealing with aboriginal people he will see clearly that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms will apply".

(1425)

Yesterday, however, the Minister of Justice said that application of the charter within self-government remains an open question.

Who speaks for the government on this issue? Will the minister guarantee this House that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms will apply under self-government for aboriginal people, yes or no?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, let me make it plain that the federal government believes that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms should apply to all Canadians, including aboriginal Canadians, under self-government arrangements.

I emphasize that this government remains committed to ensuring that the individual rights and freedoms of all Canadians will continue to be protected even under new aboriginal self-government arrangements.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, my supplemental is for the same minister.

Yesterday the Minister of Justice said that the question of human rights is a priority for federal negotiators. There is a big difference between a guarantee and a priority.

Does the minister consider the charter rights of aboriginal people to be a bargaining chip in the process of self-government negotiation or will he offer an ironclad guarantee that the government will not enter into any arrangement that does not ensure full and complete charter rights for all Canadians?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I cannot add to what I have said. I think it was very clear that this government remains committed to the proposition that the charter applies to all Canadians.

As we embark upon the negotiations for the implementation of the inherent right of self-government our intention, our resolve, will be to assure and guarantee that human rights are available to all Canadians including aboriginal persons in any self-government arrangement.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, we have been assured over and over again of that fact and yet we seem to be getting a mixed signal from this government. My final question is for the minister of Indian affairs.

Yesterday the minister admitted he does not fully understand self-government, he does not know where it is going and that many aboriginal people including chiefs do not approve it. In spite of this minister has said that once the machinery of self-government gets rolling there will not be any way for anyone to stop it.

Oral Questions

What right does the minister have to conduct this uncontrolled experiment on Canadians when he admits that he has no idea of the consequences?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, if my good friend had come to our Liberal convention yesterday he would have heard the speech, but there is hope some time maybe in the future he will cross over the floor and he will get the benefit of hearing—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Irwin: Well, there is always hope. He would get the benefit of hearing the entire speech in which we laid out the things that we have done from the B.C. tree process to co-management starting in Saskatchewan, to dismantling in Manitoba, to the Labrador Inuit and Nunavut, throughout the country, all in a six-month period. We also were very clear that it is difficult.

When Liberals make a promise, even if it is difficult, we keep that promise.

* * *

[Translation]

BIOVAC

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canadians will receive two million doses of flu vaccine made in the U.S.A. this year. The federal government as broker has so decided. The other vaccines will come from BioVac, which says it is dissatisfied with the agreement because it must lay off 26 people in addition to cancelling a major investment project.

My question is addressed to the Solicitor General. Can he tell us whether it is a new provision of his code of ethics that led his Minister of Public Works himself to send a draft letter in which BioVac should express its satisfaction to him with regard to his decision to separate into two parts the contract for supplying vaccines, and does the Solicitor General support such a procedure?

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is raising the issue once again of BioVac and Connaught Industries in terms of what the Government of Canada did on a particular contract which provided a vaccine primarily for the purposes of provincial governments across this country.

I want to say to the hon. member that we believed then as we do now that the arrangement was a very equitable one. It was in the best interest of all of the various stakeholders. With regard to the reference about a requested letter, I have no knowledge of this information and will be happy to take it under advisement.

(1430)

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member should wait until the end of question period to ask that question.

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides): Mr. Speaker, how can the Minister justify the use of such a procedure with respect to a supplier to the Government when his responsibility to award government contracts is absolutely incompatible with such behaviour?

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has once again made another factual mistake with regard to the contract between BioVac and Connaught Laboratories.

If the hon. member has evidence that BioVac or Connaught has done anything incorrectly or inappropriately, she should bring it to the attention of the House. If that is the case, we will examine it. I have no information before me to suggest that.

The member knows that the contract that was let was fair, equitable for the participants and all the stakeholders. Yes, I can understand the hon. member's desire to have 100 cents on every dollar. She has to realize there is much more to her concerns than just having the contract go to one company.

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POLLS

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

Many Canadians will remember that the Liberals protested when the Tory government kept poll results secret and many Canadians will remember the Liberal election promise of open government. Unfortunately the government does not seem to remember any of these things.

My question for the minister is this. Can he outline what specific criteria other ministers must follow when contracting polls in secret? What specific criteria will determine whether poll results are to be kept secret or is that information secret as well?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): The hon. member has asked several questions but let it be said that the guidelines are very clear. We are the first cabinet ever to put guidelines in place in order to try to address this situation.

I want to quote for the hon. member Frank Graves, the chairman of the industry and government liaison committee of the Canadian Association of Market Research Organizations when he said: "On behalf of the Canadian Association of Market Research Organizations, I would like to express our approval of the general direction and principles stressed in the new policy.

Oral Questions

We strongly support any moves to a more transparent and competitive process which will stress best overall value as the key to the selection of suppliers”.

In essence that is the purpose of the guidelines, to have a competitive process, to make sure that it is open and transparent and that there is accountability. That is what the guidelines do.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert): Mr. Speaker, I also asked whether the results of the polls would be kept secret. According to the guidelines, they are to be kept secret at the discretion of the minister. Perhaps the next government will also find an empty book when it goes looking for the rules. There do not seem to be any.

My question for the minister is this. If the government is elected by the people and uses money that belongs to the people to ask questions of the people, why is he going to keep the results secret from the people?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member obviously has not read the guidelines.

The guidelines say quite clearly—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Dingwall: I want to thank hon. members for their support.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that the guidelines say very clearly that the bulk of polling information will be made available to the public. The hon. member should understand, and I know it is difficult, that the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled repeatedly that there are certain confidences that cabinet can and must preserve to protect the public interest, to protect Canada's interests.

(1435)

If the hon. member is suggesting that there can never, ever be a situation where a poll should not be released to the Canadian people, that it could never, ever offend the best interests of the public, he is living in a fairy tale world.

* * *

[Translation]

SOCIAL PROGRAMS

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

The Ontario Legislature yesterday passed, almost unanimously, a resolution calling on the federal government to negotiate with the provinces concerning its reform of social programs. In addition, the Premier of Ontario, who is concerned about the budgetary impact of reform on his province, said that many of the programs targeted by the federal initiative come, for the most part, under exclusive or shared provincial jurisdiction.

In view of the major objections raised by Quebec and now Ontario concerning the centralizing objectives of the government's reform proposals, when will the Minister of Human Resources Development finally sit down with the provinces and negotiate directly with them? When will the meeting slated for April 18 finally take place?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the commitment to full discussion and consultation with the provinces was our idea, not that of the provinces.

When we first announced this initiative in January we said that we wanted to do it in full partnership with provincial jurisdictions as well as with a wide range of Canadians and all the stakeholders and interest groups. I am certainly pleased that the Ontario legislature endorsed the principle of sitting down to have a fair and open discussion.

As an example of that, about two weeks ago I met with the Ontario ministers of education and community services to have a close, direct discussion concerning the very important initiatives we want to take.

I am very pleased that the Government of Ontario, along with all other provincial governments, are prepared to co-operate with us in undertaking a major forum. I just wish the Bloc Quebecois would be as co-operative.

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): The question asked was: When will the meeting slated for April 18 be held with all of the provinces to initiate a process?

Can the Minister, under these circumstances, and because the meeting did not take place and a new date has not been announced, confirm that his action plan, originally slated to be ready at the end of April, will be tabled before Parliament recesses as scheduled on June 14?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, it is very important to ensure that before there is a full meeting of all the ministers involved that we are able to agree on agendas and work on a number of the initiatives.

Oral Questions

We are trying to put in place developments that would lead toward a proper child care policy. We have to examine a number of strategic initiatives that would be part of our \$800 million program.

As a consequence I have asked the deputy minister of my department to be in touch with his counterparts across the country and to sit down and arrange those agendas. That meeting will be taking place at the end of the month, I believe the date is May 30, at which time all the deputy ministers of all the provinces will come together so that we can work out the kind of agenda and program that will be required for federal-provincial discussions and consultations.

I want to report to the hon. member and to the House that we are carrying forward this process in a very deliberate, very careful and very consultative fashion. I know that will make her very happy.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Since the federal budget in February things have changed. Real and nominal short and long term interest rates have risen. This and next year's growth projections are down. Unemployment has remained dismally high and, in short, every economic indicator has turned rather sour.

(1440)

Yesterday we learned the true reason for this. According to a recently released study, Canada places below Poland, Ethiopia, Brazil, New Zealand, and even war-torn Rwanda—

The Speaker: Would the hon. member please put his question.

Mr. Speaker (Lethbridge): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Now that we have classed ourselves among the third world nations of indebtedness, will the finance minister admit that the debt problem of Canada is the number one economic problem we face.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, the member seems to have a set of statistics which may well have been written by Lewis Carroll but they certainly have very little relationship to reality.

In the last three months we have created 115,000 jobs, the help wanted index is up by 2 per cent in both April and March, an increase of .7 per cent in the leading indicator, consumer and business confidence is up more than 13 per cent in the first quarter, housing starts are up 5.9 per cent in April, retail sales are up .9 per cent.

The International Monetary Fund has said that next year in terms of employment, productivity, growth and confidence Canada is going to be either first or second of all the G-7 nations and I will take the IMF.

The Speaker: I thought for a minute there we were going to get into quotations again.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance certainly can be optimistic but Canadians are very concerned about the deficit and the debt and I am sure the minister is as well.

The minister has acknowledged that the number one item at the finance ministers' meeting in June is to be a national strategy on deficit reduction. Is the minister willing to do that with the intention of emerging from that meeting to set national targets for deficit reduction?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in the House—I believe to a question from the same member last week—I am certainly prepared to suggest to my provincial counterparts that the deficit and debt reduction be an important item for discussion at the forthcoming finance ministers' conference.

However, I would like to remind the hon. member opposite that when we made the deficit projections for the year just ended we set out a target of \$44 to \$46 billion, a very unfortunate and very high target. That was based on a continuation in January, February and March of the unfortunate figures that the nation suffered in terms of employment and growth in the months of October, November and December of the previous year.

I am delighted to say that as a result of the very large scale job growth which is much higher than we projected that the deficit will come at the lower end of that scale. In fact it may well come in lower.

What that demonstrates is that while cutting government spending is certainly a very important objective of the government and is an essential part of deficit reduction, what it also demonstrates is that getting Canadians back to work is the most important thing we can do.

* * *

[Translation]

SALES TAX

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance.

Yesterday, after reiterating his intention of harmonizing the various sales taxes, the Minister confirmed that he wanted to put in place a single tax, and I quote: "We want to introduce a sales tax—because that is what the business community, consumers and provincial governments want". In addition, the Minister of Finance refused to promise that he will not encroach upon provincial jurisdiction where tax matters are concerned.

Oral Questions

(1445)

Regardless of the alternative to the GST, is it in the Minister of Finance's plans to have his proposed single tax combining all provincial and federal taxes administered and collected by the federal government?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that consumers as well as the business community in all of the provinces really want a harmonized tax to reduce administration charges and make life much simpler for consumers. That is what we want and what I believe the vast majority of provincial governments want as well. Of course, how we go about harmonizing the tax is certainly open to discussion and we are quite amenable to that.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has stated that provincial governments want a single tax. Can he confirm whether negotiations are under way with provincial governments to combine provincial sales taxes and the GST into a single national sales tax?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, the answer is no. Negotiations have already taken place. In January, finance ministers met in Halifax and discussed this option. Everyone is eagerly awaiting the finance committee's report on the GST.

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OLYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. As he knows, Quebec City has filed an application to host the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Given the dual responsibilities of the Minister of Foreign Affairs as Minister responsible for Quebec and head of the Canadian diplomatic corps, what does he intend to do to support Quebec City's efforts to host the Winter Olympics?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to announce that the Government of Canada will appoint as ambassador a career diplomat whose only mandate will be to help Quebec City in its bid to host the 2002 Winter Olympics.

The Department of Foreign Affairs will provide logistical and technical assistance to Quebec City, as we did in the past for other Canadian cities that wanted to host the Olympic Games. I am convinced that this ambassador, who will be appointed after consultations with Quebec City's organizing committee for 2002, will be an invaluable asset to Quebec City in its bid to host the Olympic Games.

[English]

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod): Mr. Speaker, politicians in Canada are well looked after by the health care system, thanks to the extravagant extended benefits plan enjoyed by political and bureaucratic elites. Maybe that is why the Minister of Health thinks that medicare is free.

Will the minister admit that health care has two tiers, one for regular people and one for the political elite?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, the short answer is no.

If the member is referring to the fact that additional coverage is provided for members of our health plan, it is provided for all employees in the public service. There is an extra \$10 charge for people who want supplementary service, the same as is done in the private sector. Therefore we do not believe in that two tier system the member is talking about.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod): Mr. Speaker, the health minister has stated over and over again that she believes in one tier health care in Canada. To quote her: "You should have access to treatment according to need instead of the size of your wallet".

Could the minister explain why people can jump to the front of the line if their wallets contain a card identifying them as members of Parliament?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): That is absolutely not true, Mr. Speaker. The services we provide for our public service employees are in accordance with what is provided by most employers in the private sector. We want to be a good employer for the public service.

* * *

(1450)

[Translation]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, referring to the dispute between the Quebec government and Mohawks in Kanesatake over the collection of gas taxes, the Minister of Indian Affairs stated it might not be a bad idea for Mohawks to go to court to resolve their conflict with Quebec that has shut down gas stations on their reserves.

Oral Questions

How can the Minister of Indian Affairs, in his capacity as a responsible member of the federal government, incite people to attack the validity of legislation falling under the jurisdiction of the Quebec government?

[English]

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, there are now two ways that we can get solutions. One is through litigation and one is through negotiation. There is a certain frustration among the aboriginal people. For instance, the Williams case was decided in 1983 and keeps being deferred and deferred with no solution.

To answer the question: Should they go to court? That is an option. If the aboriginal people do not feel we are addressing their concerns in a prompt and efficient manner, then perhaps the courts might be the option but they are not mutually exclusive. We have to deal with the aboriginal people to reach just solutions and if we are not just, they can always go to the courts.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Indian Affairs not realize that by interfering in this matter instead of contributing to its resolution, he is in fact inflaming an already tense situation between the Mohawks and the Quebec government? Does he not realize that?

[English]

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the reverse is true. For the first two months that we sat here, we heard continuous Mohawk bashing from the members opposite. I see they have discontinued that, which I am thankful for.

We have tried to work with the Mohawks meeting with them at the round table. Mr. Sirros from Quebec is meeting with them regularly. Ministers from across the country will be meeting with them next week.

I will be discussing with Mr. Sirros not only the problem brought up today, but also the problem of what we are going to do south of highway 344. The Bloc has not only said that should be our concern, it has invited the federal government to go into Quebec to solve it.

* * *

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Paul E. Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

The minister has heard the debate today in this House on behalf of Canadians demanding immediate action on the Young Offenders Act. Although the throne speech did not indicate that

the juvenile justice system was a government priority, the minister has said he will make a start in June.

Will the minister take his cue from today's debate and introduce an immediate change—

The Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member could rephrase his question. As the matter is before the House at this time it should not be a matter for Question Period. If the member could rephrase the question it would be appreciated.

Mr. Forseth: Mr. Speaker, will the justice minister introduce an immediate change to the age parameters of the Young Offenders Act?

The Speaker: The question deals specifically with the debate we are having today. It is rather pointed. I would permit the hon. minister to answer the question if he so desires, but if not I will go on to the next question.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, I said as recently as yesterday that we will be introducing legislation in a few weeks dealing with the Young Offenders Act in terms of making changes immediately. Also the statute will be referred in its entirety to the justice committee for a thorough review after 10 years of experience with the act. It is my view the question the hon. member has raised would be best dealt with before the committee during that careful and methodical review.

Mr. Paul E. Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, will the minister admit that the law is educative, that general deterrence is important and that the message sent matters? Will the minister assure this House that he will not defer any longer with more studies and consultations but will act and introduce his amendments soon?

(1455)

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we are going to be tabling legislation in June to deal with specific changes to the statute. That is our intended course.

* * *

CANADIAN FORCES BASE SHEARWATER

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

Yesterday members of the Union of National Defence Employees produced a letter signed by a senior official of the Department of National Defence indicating it was the government's intention to completely shut down CFB Shearwater in Nova Scotia as soon as a replacement was determined for the Sea King helicopter fleet.

This statement is completely contrary to assurances given by both the Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister on this matter.

Oral Questions

I ask the minister today: Was this official relaying current government policy and if not, what is the policy of this government with regard to the future of CFB Shearwater?

Hon. David Michael Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I was as shocked as the hon. member when this letter came to my attention. Certainly that was the position of the previous government, but as you know we cancelled the EH-101 helicopter contract. Therefore the position as stated in that letter no longer is government policy.

I am sure there is a future for all military installations in Nova Scotia, including the greater Halifax area. However that will have to wait for the defence review which is under way.

My colleague and I visited the repair this week and the work being done at CFB Shearwater especially with the Sea King helicopters is ongoing. It is good work and will serve the Canadian Armed Forces well in the months and years to come.

* * *

[Translation]

ALIMONY

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Quebec): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. We learned this morning that the government was considering appealing the Federal Court decision in the Thibodeau case regarding alimony. Apparently, the Minister of Justice and Minister of Finance have already informed the Liberal caucus of the grounds for appeal the federal government will set forth.

My question is as follows: Can the Minister of Justice confirm that his government intends to appeal before the Supreme Court and, if so, what are its grounds for appeal?

[English]

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the government is considering an appeal of the judgment of the Federal Court of Appeal in the Thibaudeau case primarily for practical reasons.

The government wishes to make it clear and emphasize that we do not repudiate the result in the case in the sense that tax equity particularly for single parents and those providing for children is among our principal priorities. As we made clear in the budget documents and as we have made clear in the policies of this party, the government is committed to ensuring we have tax policies which get the maximum amount of dollars into the hands of parents who are looking after children, which is our ultimate concern.

The judgment last week came at a time when the policy is being developed. We are concerned that the situation at the moment in Canada has been destabilized by this judgment in a sense that those who are paying support and those who are receiving it are not certain of their rights. The judgment was

unbalanced in the sense that the result dealt with those who received the money but not those who deduct the payments. We have those practical concerns.

Let me say in closing that we are dedicated to a tax policy and a fiscal approach that will properly provide for children and for single parents who look after them. At the same time we are considering an appeal so that indirectly this judgment does not redound to their detriment by causing confusion about their rights.

[Translation]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Quebec): Mr. Speaker, does the minister realize that by appealing this decision, his government perpetuates tax discrimination affecting mainly women, by continuing to consider as taxable alimony paid to them for child support?

[English]

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): As I have said, Mr. Speaker, the government is considering an appeal and no final decision has been made.

On the question of discrimination, this government has made it clear and the Minister of Finance has said on more than one occasion that we are prepared to discuss and consult broadly with those most affected by this tax policy to ensure that we improve it to the point where it gets the dollars into the hands of the people who are looking after children. Our purpose in all of this is to achieve that result.

* * *

(1500)

FISHERIES

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

The west coast fishery is on the brink of disaster. The department of fisheries has reduced its number of officers from 153 to 85, with a further 25 per cent reduction over the next three years.

Some have been replaced by native fisheries officers whose only mandate is to monitor the fishing activities of their own reserves. As a result of this and other closures fish stocks are being decimated.

Given these facts why is the minister closing the fisheries office in Sooke, B.C., and decreasing the number of fisheries officers who are on the front lines of the war on poaching in this area?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely nothing so trying, nothing that tests the patience of reasoned, rational, kindhearted and gentle people more than the constant barrage, the constant complaint, the constant call for cuts to reduce the deficit most days of the week

and the occasional call for more expenditure on other days of the week.

The Reform Party really should make up its mind.

* * *

VIA RAIL

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John): Mr. Speaker, VIA Rail's Atlantic train between Halifax and Montreal is well used and important to the people of Saint John. My question is for the Minister of Transport.

There is an expectation that a private short line company will purchase and operate the main line railway from Saint John, New Brunswick, to Sherbrooke, Quebec, under provincial jurisdiction. It appears that a proposed amendment to the NTA may be required before VIA passenger trains may operate over such a provincial railway.

If this is correct how soon would the government be able to enact this legislation, if requested, and what procedure would be carried out to accomplish same?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the question put by the hon. member is an important one for people in New Brunswick.

Although it is very speculative in its nature, I can assure the member that as Minister of Transport we will expedite whatever legislation or modifications to existing rules are required to accommodate good railway service, both passenger and freight, in New Brunswick and in the rest of Atlantic Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Dear colleagues, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in our gallery of the hon. Marcelle Mersereau, Deputy Premier and Minister of the Environment of New Brunswick.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

BIOVAC—TABLING OF A LETTER

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides): Mr. Speaker, could I have the unanimous consent of this House to table draft letters of satisfaction to be sent to BioVac by the office of the Minister of Public Works?

The Speaker: The House heard the hon. member's request. Is there unanimous consent to allow the hon. member to table her draft letters?

Supply

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, as is the custom, at this point I would like to ask the hon. Leader of the Government in the House to tell us what is on the agenda, not for the next few days but, rather, for the weeks to come.

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I have to confirm that the House will not sit tomorrow and will not sit next week. In fact it will resume on May 24. The work that hon. members do—and I am sure they have work to do—will have to be done outside the Chamber during that period.

On May 24 and May 25 the House will begin work on Bill C-28 regarding student loans followed by Bill C-27, the income tax technical legislation. If there is time we will also call Bill C-26, to amend the National Library Act.

Pursuant to special order on May 26 the House will consider report stage of Bill C-17, the budget implementation legislation.

(1505)

After the House leaders meet again the week we are back, we will have further information for them and for the House.

Mr. Milliken: I rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker. I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

[Translation]

That the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs tabled in the House today be concurred in.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Supply

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm): Madam Speaker, before carrying on, could you tell me how much time I have left?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Thirteen minutes.

Mr. Bellehumeur: Madam Speaker, before Question Period, I was explaining the Boscoville report to the House. For those of you who are not familiar with it, Boscoville is an institution for young offenders in Montreal. You probably knew that, Madam Speaker.

From 1968 to 1983, a very serious study was conducted with 25 young people who had committed homicides. It was found out that those 25 young people, thanks to the treatment and help they received in Boscoville, were rehabilitated once they left that institution and did not commit other offences. Moreover, the study shows that these results were obtained over a period of about three years.

So, it took three years for young offenders treated in Boscoville to be turned into responsible persons.

In Boscoville, a great deal of emphasis is put on rehabilitation and reintegration. I used that institution as an example because I have here with me this very serious study which was used by several committees. Statistics and details are available. There is a definite trend in the rehabilitation process of young offenders in Quebec. This study is an extremely important document. I could have chosen another institution, since there are several similar ones in Quebec.

This rehabilitation effort is a team effort involving educators, as well as the family, which plays an extremely important role when a young person has committed a crime such as an homicide, but also young offenders themselves, because a lot of work is done by these young people in the course of the treatment.

The objective is to rehabilitate the young person, who must recognize that he has changed by accepting those whom he will meet following his stay in the institution.

Rehabilitation means first and foremost the explicit recognition of a profound moral transformation which makes the young offender feel that he has regained his dignity as a person. It also means that he must reassert himself on a social level, so as to deserve to be accepted everywhere, without any reservation, as an honest and responsible citizen.

Can that objective be reached by lowering the legal age of young offenders?

(1510)

To ask the question is to answer it. I can understand that the perception of juvenile delinquents in English Canada is different, since they do not have the whole protection system that we have set up in Quebec in recent years.

In some provinces, we can even say that young people are practically treated as adults once they are found guilty of an offence, except that there is one wing for young people and another for adults. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the young offender spends time in prison, which is a school for crime.

It is to be expected that people in western Canada see things differently than we do. The whole approach to young offenders is completely different. Only in Ontario have they really begun in the past few years to acquire facilities similar to those that exist in Quebec for looking after juvenile delinquents. But even so, Ontario's experience is fairly recent; they still do not have the full program and do not have complete results from setting up such a system.

You must understand that stiffer penalties such as those called for in this motion or lowering the age limit for the Young Offenders Act is not a solution to the problems facing society today. Instead, we must take a very clear political option, namely giving the whole legal system facilities for treating juvenile delinquents. That is what we must realize and that is the way to go.

I have already said that Private Member's Bill C-217 is simplistic. Of course, it is much easier for society to try to crush or wipe out the rebelliousness of a young offender by imprisoning him, isolating him and putting him out of circulation for a period of time. That definitely solves the problem while he is in prison, but what happens to the young person after? What does he become?

I think that we must instead really look at the young person's problem. We must know why that individual committed the crime of which he is accused and how he can really be helped to return to society.

I think that most citizens of Quebec and of Canada are prepared to listen to those who have spent their career, their life, in this cause, those who have received training in this area, who have met with offenders every day and try to help them. We must listen to them, but we must also ask ourselves the right questions. We, as legislators, have the obligation to ask the real questions. Such as, what can I do with them? Not for them, but what can I do with them, with the young offenders? Why has this offender committed these crimes? What can I do to ensure that at some point he or she will be able to re-enter society as an honest citizen who does not require constant supervision?

The motion that we have before us invites the Government to lower the age for considering a young person a young offender under the Act from 18 years less a day to 16 years less a day.

I do not know whether the proponents of this amendment are aware that nearly 80 per cent of the clientele who are currently treated and monitored in the reception centres under the authority of the Quebec director of youth protection are precisely

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between the ages of 16 and 18. These figures are surely not different in the other provinces of Canada.

What is dangerous to Quebec, and that is why I am fiercely opposed to any amendment of this nature, is that such amendments directly affect the philosophy and the entire system of rehabilitation that we have developed in Quebec.

By lowering the age to 16 years less a day, the desire no doubt is to ensure that young people are automatically referred to adult courts. But such referral already exists in the present Act. If the Crown prosecutor believes that the young person should be brought before the adult courts, he can do so when the person is between the ages of 16 and 18, and this is not done. The system hardly ever does it. According to the statistics, only 5 per cent of referrals are made to adult courts. This means that we must not attack the consequences of a disastrous social phenomenon, but rather attack the cause, the root of criminality. That is what is important and that, I believe, is what the motion has completely ignored.

The causes must be attacked, as I just said. But perhaps we may wonder what are the causes, because today I rarely heard reference to the causes of criminality.

There was a discussion panel that examined this question, and I will list some of them for you. Crime is caused, among other things, by the weakening of the social fabric, unemployment, poverty, the disintegration of the family, social isolation and the loss of community spirit, the lack of a collective sense of responsibility, violence in the media and on television, drug and alcohol use, the slowness of the judicial system and uncertain sentences.

(1515)

Those are all the true causes of crime, and that is what we are trying to forget with the kind of motion we have before us this morning.

I said a few moments ago that I was opposed to changes of the kind being proposed in the motion. I am opposed as a member of the Bloc Québécois. However, it goes farther than that, because the Quebec National Assembly took a stand on this issue on May 4 and 5 in a debate that was non-partisan and sincere. During the debate, the government and the opposition parties tried to determine what should be changed in the Young Offenders Act and what should remain the same.

In this non-partisan debate, the members unanimously passed a motion, which reads as follows: "This motion is to the effect that this Assembly insists that any amendments to the federal Young Offenders Act comply with the laws and policies of Quebec with respect to youth protection". Through this short but explicit motion, Quebec has made its position very clear.

From now on, no one in this House can claim to be unaware of Quebec's position in this regard.

In conclusion, I will summarize the Bloc's position with respect to this motion in these terms. I have ten points that I will make very quickly.

First, we are against the motion presented by the Reform Party, because the motion is basically repressive. With it, we forget the ultimate objective of the criminal justice system, which is the rehabilitation of the offender. Second, crime statistics do not justify the lowering of the age from 12 to 10. Third, the motion does nothing to deal with the problem of youth crime. Fourth, the increase in criminal offences by young people is largely due to acts of minor assault against peers. Fifth, in 1992, according to the latest figures, the crime rate rose less than in previous years, which may indicate that the changes suggested in the motion would be unnecessary.

Sixth, an increase in crime statistics and media interest in crimes committed by young people have amplified the problem of juvenile crime. Seventh, a general increase in the number of violent crimes, largely due to minor assault. Eighth, many intervenors maintain that the problems concerning the referral of young people to adult court are caused by the attitudes of the various parties, not by the legislation. Ninth, the motion overlooks the whole issue of rehabilitation and social reintegration, and tenth and last, according to the information we have so far, there is no indication that more severe sentencing and lowering the age under the act have any deferent effect whatsoever.

For all these reasons, Madam Speaker, as you may have guessed, I am against the motion and any bill that would ultimately undermine the entire rehabilitation and social integration system we set up in Quebec years ago for the benefit of young offenders.

[*English*]

Mr. Morris Bodnar (Saskatoon—Dundurn): Madam Speaker, the dissertation just given deals quite succinctly with many of the areas in dealing with some of the problems of young offenders.

I am wondering whether the hon. member would consider that perhaps a reduction of the age from 18 to 16 would be reasonable so long as the young offender who is of the age of 16 or 17 could still apply to the courts to be placed in young offenders court, thus eliminating the repeat offender from being able to be in young offenders court but allowing the young person who seldom gets into trouble to remain in young offenders court.

If I am not clear on that, perhaps I can put it a different way. At present the crown must apply to elevate young offenders into adult court. Would perhaps the reversal of that onus be more appropriate by having the young offender apply to be placed in young offenders court?

Supply

(1520)

[Translation]

Mr. Bellehumeur: Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, according to the statistics I analysed, more than 80 per cent of young people in youth court are between the ages of 16 and 18. The reversal of the onus, which make it incumbent on the young offender to apply to be tried under the Young Offenders Act instead of in adult court, would have two implications. First, the considerable number of applications will increase the burden of the courts. All, or at least 80 per cent of young offenders will ask to be tried under the Young Offenders Act, which will put an additional burden on the courts.

Second, at the present time a young offender may be referred to adult court, but only 5 per cent of such cases are actually referred. So this would create an additional burden and more work all around for nothing, since we know that 95 per cent of the applications by these 80 per cent will be approved by the judges who make the final decision on the basis of the jurisprudence, their own experience and the merits of the case and the available evidence, and decide not to transfer these young offenders to adult court.

I think that putting the onus on young offenders between the ages of 16 to 18 to apply for a referral to youth court instead of the reverse, which is the case now, is not the answer. I do not think that is a good way to deal with the problem.

[English]

Mrs. Georgette Sheridan (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by making the following comment. I am concerned that my hon. friend is operating under certain false premises in terms of his feeling that the motion put forward by the Reform Party is speaking for all westerners.

As a westerner I would like to tell the House and my colleague that the policies that underlie the motion we have heard from the Reform Party which seem to favour punishment over any kind of analysis of the problems facing our young offenders are certainly not the policies or the approach favoured by western Canadians and certainly not by me or my other western colleagues in the government.

I would like to invite him to visit us in the west and I personally will tour him to meet various people who will show him another side of western viewpoints on this issue.

Second, I can understand why my hon. friend would come away with this notion, assuming he sees the Reform Party as speaking for some westerners, given the nature of the motion put forward which are debating today. I say that because this motion offers simplistic solutions to complex problems. It reflects the Reform Party's obsession with cuts and saving a penny no

matter what the cost. It also reflects a rather slogan approach to solving very complex difficulties that face us as a society.

I come from the west and I also have a Scottish background. No one could be more concerned with saving a few pennies than my ancestors from Scotland. Therefore, I would like to say to this House and my friends in the Reform Party that I would put to them three slogans for their consideration of this very serious problem. One is that we consider the old comment about being penny wise and pound foolish.

I would also ask them to consider another slogan dealing with money, pay me now or pay me later. The third slogan is haste makes waste. I feel quite qualified to speak on all three of those and to expand on why I mention those.

On penny wise and pound foolish, certainly we may throw a few young offenders into prison today and maybe that will make us feel that we are saving money in some ways because we do not have to bother rehabilitating them, but we will ultimately pay the price because, as my learned friend points out, they go to the university of crime in prison and they learn very well. If there is no money to help with their difficulties we end up with more serious criminals.

Pay me now or pay me later is on the same theme. I will not bother repeating myself.

Finally, on haste makes waste, we are dealing here with young offenders who have a multitude of problems. As my friend from Quebec has pointed out it is not a simple matter of saying this person wanted to steal a car, lock him up. To proceed in an analysis of this issue in a hasty manner, possibly a knee-jerk response to such things as the tragedy in Britain which was brought up earlier today will only make us pay a much higher price down the road.

(1525)

I congratulate my friend from Quebec for his thoughtful analysis of the root problems. I agree with him that careful study is warranted. I congratulate the Minister of Justice on taking this kind of approach to the young offenders. I urge the minister and this government and all thoughtful members of this House to proceed on a slow and steady course to analyse the root problems, to balance the dual concerns of protection of society and dealing with the problems facing our young people.

I would conclude by saying I am pleased to have my friend from Quebec on the justice committee with me and I look forward to working with him to provide solutions to all of these very complex problems.

[Translation]

Mr. Bellehumeur: Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to speak after such laudatory comments from a government member. We do not hear that every day, and I will take it with pleasure today. I am also pleased to know that there are people in

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Western Canada who think differently from the Reform Party. I congratulate the member for rising to say so.

Currently, what is heard in this House is amplified by all the media attention surrounding the issue that we see in the newspapers and the whole issue of young offenders. I see that in Western Canada there may be people who think somewhat as we do in Quebec. I therefore invite the Minister of Justice to pay attention when he wishes to amend the Young Offenders Act. It seems there is a position in Quebec that may in some respects be reflected in Western Canada.

The Young Offenders Act can be amended if there is felt to be a need to do so. As for me, in Quebec, we do not see the need to amend the Young Offenders Act, but the need to apply it fairly and provide the resources for it to be applied throughout Canada.

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil): Madam Speaker, I found it interesting when the hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm spoke about the Boscoville Institute. I would like him to say a little more about this institute which plays an important role in Quebec. It could serve as an example for the rest of Canada.

Mr. Bellehumeur: Madam Speaker, I had planned on talking about it in my speech but as I was interrupted, I skipped a few passages dealing with the Boscoville Institute. What is interesting about this institute is that individuals are assessed as soon as they arrive. A case study was done to draw a profile of young offenders.

I think it is important for Reform members and those who support lowering the age limit to know what the 25 young offenders treated at the institute were like. There were very few repeat offenders; it was usually their first time in court.

Second, the offence seems to be the result of a set of circumstances rather than of a life focused on crime. Most young offenders come from a very deprived environment at every level. Again, bells rang when I heard some members deny that most young offenders come from poor families. The statistics say otherwise. Let us look at the statistics and we will see what the situation is. Of course, there will always be black sheep but the vast majority come from underprivileged backgrounds.

Third, the motivation to go to an institute such as Boscoville is very high. People know one another. Young offenders think it is to their advantage to be treated under the Young Offenders Act when they can be re-integrated. It is extremely important to them, which may explain why in the end there are almost no repeat offenders.

There are roughly two treatment phases at Boscoville. I think I will eventually have the opportunity to discuss it in greater detail. I see that my time is running out. I will eventually have the time to describe the two phases. I think I will submit this

document to the Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs because it is extremely important.

(1530)

If the federal government wants to intervene, if it has money to invest in young offenders, it should perhaps consult with the provinces in order to invest in the right places, like the Boscoville Institute, where it is extremely important to emphasize self-respect and make young people acknowledge their actions.

After the second phase—the process is actually much longer—, they acknowledge their actions and learn to live with the consequences. In the end, however, they can re-integrate society as better and anonymous citizens who pay taxes and support the system.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Madam Speaker, allow me to congratulate the hon. member on his speech.

[*English*]

If I may say so respectfully, it was a very helpful analysis of the issues we face in respect of this legislation and in the debate today.

As we discuss this resolution, Canadians have made it clear that community safety and crime issues are high on their agenda. Concerns about youth crime particularly in light of the tragic events in recent months have made this subject one of particular importance for the House of Commons.

I know that members of all parties would want me to observe at the outset that when we speak of youth crime and young offenders, we speak about a small segment of young people in Canada today. By far the vast majority of young Canadians are dedicated toward improving themselves and leading productive lives as citizens of this country.

Nonetheless, members of the public have expressed growing concern about how the Young Offenders Act works and how it deals with youth who do commit crimes. I believe in the act; I believe in its fundamental principles and the model of juvenile justice it creates for Canada. And while I believe in the focus on both public protection and youth rehabilitation, I recognize and this government recognizes there is a need for changes in the act now.

[*Translation*]

As I said, I will be introducing a bill to amend the act in this House in June. This bill will reflect the commitments made during the election campaign to improve the act's provisions as they pertain to youth crimes, particularly violent crimes of a serious nature.

Let me just say, however, that amending the legislation is not in itself a solution to youth crime in Canada. To say so would be to mislead Canadians.

*Supply**[English]*

It must be clear that progress in dealing with youth crime means not only initiating more effective criminal justice responses but it also means crime prevention in a broad and constructive sense. It means addressing the causes of crime as well as an acceptance of the need to address the culture of violence in which our children and youth are growing up in Canada today.

In my capacity as Minister of Justice I co-ordinate on the Prime Minister's behalf the efforts of nine ministries of government which are addressed to the question of violence in Canadian society. It is a broad effort which includes ministries as disparate as: Heritage Canada, with responsibility for broadcasting and which deals with violence on television and in movies; the Ministry of Health, which deals with programs for young people, programs for pregnant women, and government undertakings to ensure the provision of social services in the health context to deal with some conditions that breed crime in this country; and the Ministry of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, because the criminal justice system fails so profoundly in dealing with the needs of the aboriginal peoples.

(1535)

These efforts are made in recognition of the fact that we must not only make the Young Offenders Act more effective, we must also adopt a wide ranging approach to the entire question of crime and youth crime in particular.

I am fond of speaking of the root causes of crime. I respond to questions in the House about crime in that way and I stress a two track approach to the challenge of crime in Canadian society: Amend statutes like the Young Offenders Act and the Criminal Code to ensure they send a stern message that there is to be accountability, that there is punishment and it will be certain and effective. At the same time acknowledge and communicate that the criminal justice system by itself is not going to be able to overcome this problem in our society.

If the answer to crime was simply harsher laws, longer penalties and bigger prisons then the United States of America would be nirvana today. Surely that is an abject lesson for us all that that approach alone will not and does not succeed. Surely it is plain that the causes of crime must be addressed.

When I am asked about the causes of crime, I surprise no one when I refer to dysfunctional families, to the abuse of children, to the fact that some children do not have a hot meal once a week, to the fact that schools and their curricula have become irrelevant for many children. Young people in large numbers feel they do not have a stake in our economic system and have no future to look forward to. They lose an interest in preserving and

enhancing the status quo because for them it is something in which they have no part.

Therefore I say that the Minister of Human Resources Development, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Industry have as much to do with crime prevention as the Minister of Justice. We are only ever going to be able to have long term and effective results if we create a society in which we minimize the conditions which breed crimes.

Almost 30 years ago Lyndon Johnson became President of the United States of America. I was reminded recently by someone who made reference to a study done I believe it was by the Eisenhower Foundation, in respect of the great society. This was the program of legislation President Johnson introduced in 1964 or 1965 by which the Government of the United States of America undertook a broad initiative in terms of education for young people, strengthening of the health care system, headstart programs for the disadvantaged, the kind of integrated comprehensive approach of which I speak today.

The study done some 25 years after the programs of the great society were introduced demonstrated the effect of those initiatives and the positive consequence of putting the emphasis on that aspect of government as well as criminal justice.

Those studies showed that for the beneficiaries of the great society, for those kids who were brought up with the advantage of those programs, the contrast between their lives and the lives of those without those programs was very stark. There was a higher degree of employment, a lower crime rate, a greater degree of stability among families, a greater degree of health. These are demonstrable consequences of enlightened approaches which recognize the linkages between social programs effectively designed and administered in the criminal justice system.

In developing our responses to young offenders we must also keep youth crime in perspective. Let us bear in mind it is adults in this country who continue to commit the majority of crime. Seventy-nine per cent of crime is committed by adults. Adults commit 86 per cent of all violent crime in this country.

While there is no doubt that some youth crimes of violence are on the increase, the increase in youth violent offences is for less serious offences. The number of youths charged with homicide and attempted murder for example has remained relatively stable over the years.

The vast majority of crimes committed by youth are property crimes. Sixty per cent were property crimes in 1992. More than half of those crimes were for theft and most of those involved property with a value of less than \$1,000. Only 14 per cent of young people charged in 1992 were charged with crimes of violence, including homicides. That is an increase of only 6 per cent since 1986.

Supply

(1540)

Let us not lose sight of those facts when we propose changes to the law. But we do propose changes and let me speak to those now.

[*Translation*]

As far as amending the legislation is concerned, we are considering the possibility of increasing the maximum sentences handed down by a youth court for the crime of murder. Judges would also be allowed to hand down longer sentences if they felt such action was necessary to ensure reintegration and to better protect the public. Maximum sentences would include periods of reintegration into the community to ensure that youths receive some supervision and support when they return to the community. This is a determining factor both for the young person and for the safety of the public.

[*English*]

We also believe that the adult system may be more appropriate for dealing with some 16 and 17-year olds who commit violent offences causing the most serious personal harm. In addition, public safety concerns may require that the act be clarified to allow for information to be shared with professionals such as police and schools and with select members of the public when violent offenders are involved.

We are looking as well at longer retention of records in the cases of young people convicted of personal injury offences. Furthermore we acknowledge that crime victims often feel that the justice system fails them. One response to that concern would be to allow victim impact statements to be considered by the court in sentencing a youth, similar to the adult system.

May I observe that too many of Canada's young people, disproportionately aboriginal and minority youths, are ending up in custody. Currently one-third of youth cases with guilty decisions result in custodial sentences and nearly half of those sentences involve property offences.

When we put lower risk youths in custody, we use up expensive and limited resources that are better directed at youth posing a danger to the public. It may also increase the likelihood that those persons will reoffend upon their release. Where appropriate, such youths should be held accountable to communities and to victims through community based sanctions, away from the influence of more antisocial offenders.

I should emphasize that in designing the changes that I will introduce in the House in the coming weeks, I have attempted to take into account the views of the provinces and the territories. The provinces and territories administer the statute. The federal government shares the cost, but it is primarily their obligation to administer it.

At the same time as we introduce the changes to which I have referred, I have also made it clear that the government proposes to initiate a broad public review of the Young Offenders Act in this its 10th year since proclamation. The review which will involve Parliament will be comprehensive in scope. Speaking to the resolution which is before the House today, may I say it is the view of the government that the age at which the application of the statute should begin is a matter which should be considered by the justice committee when it undertakes its broad and comprehensive review.

[*Translation*]

I hope that with this in-depth review, we will succeed in achieving a much broader consensus on the most effective way of resolving the numerous, difficult problems associated with youth crime.

In closing, I would like to say a few words about the importance of crime prevention, particularly as it concerns young people.

[*English*]

I emphasize, as I have already, that we approach our task from a broad based perspective acknowledging that our traditional response to crime by itself is inadequate. We are committed to a comprehensive and an integrated approach that looks to reducing opportunities for crime, improving enforcement efforts and addressing social factors.

(1545)

I call upon all members of the House to work with the government to improve the Young Offenders Act so that we can ensure that our youth, the nation's greatest resource, grow up as law-abiding and fully participating members of Canadian society. That is a challenge for all of us.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East): Madam Speaker, I think the minister knows that I and all the rest of us on this side of the House are very respectful of his approach to many of these issues and I wish to phrase a question in that spirit.

It has been said there are lies, damn lies, and statistics. When I use statistics I recognize that as being a problem. The statistics that I have which seem to be somewhat reflective of what the minister has used, although giving a different impression, are that in 1992 youth accounted for 13.7 per cent of all persons charged with violent crimes, up from 10.5 per cent in 1986. That represents a 30 per cent increase in that very short period of time.

Of the 135,348 youth charged in Criminal Code incidents in 1992, 15 per cent were charged with violent crimes and that figure was up from 10.5 per cent also in 1986 which represents a 50 per cent increase.

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Even more shocking is that although there have been increases in terms of the percentage of violent crime charges by adults which was an increase of 8 per cent in that period of time the average annual increase has been 14 per cent among youth.

I feel that perhaps there has been a reflection today on the part of some Liberals and certainly many of the people from the Bloc who have spoken on this issue that perhaps, and the word has been used, the Reform Party is panicking or the Reform Party is not being reflective, or the Reform Party is exaggerating the issue. I suggest with the greatest of respect to the minister that the people in my constituency, and I believe all across Canada including the great province of Quebec, are deeply concerned about what is going on.

I ask the minister if there might not be some place in the way in which this Parliament of Canada works for there to be something such as we have suggested in our motion, at least one thing that this government, this Parliament, would go ahead with as a hard and fast solid indicator to the people of Canada of just how seriously we respect their opinion, that in fact there are changes coming.

I respect that there has to be a full look at it by the justice committee. I respect that and I would not want the full legislation to be anything other than well thought out. Is there not some way such as we have suggested that we could take at least one small step in good faith to the Canadian public and say we do see this as being serious and yes, we are going to do this and regain the confidence of the people of Canada as I am sure the minister and the government would like to have.

Mr. Rock: Madam Speaker, dealing first with the concern that the hon. member refers to, I acknowledge and I respect the concern and I make every effort to communicate that to Canadians and indeed to members of this House.

I do not suggest for a moment that there is not concern out there. There certainly is. I think that the changes we are going to propose reflect this government's awareness of and response to that concern.

(1550)

I ask the hon. member to bear in mind that in the campaign document on which we saw an election last fall we expressly said that changes were needed to the Young Offenders Act, including longer maximum sentences for crimes of serious violence, adjustments to the transfer provisions and a greater sharing of information between police forces, school boards and other appropriate authorities as well as greater treatment and rehabilitation efforts and other specific measures.

This is not something to which we come at the eleventh hour. It is an awareness that we reflected in our campaign documents and these are changes to which we are committed.

I acknowledge the concern and I respect it. The changes we will propose not only to the Young Offenders Act but to the Criminal Code and in the crime prevention council will be intended to address those concerns.

I do think, though, as I said in my speech, that it must be kept in perspective. The perspective to some extent is furnished by facts and some of those facts are statistical. The hon. member has referred to some statistics of his own in response to mine and I can only tell the hon. member that the best information available to the Department of Justice is reflected in the statistics I gave which include for example that 14 per cent of those charged with violent crimes in 1992 were in the age bracket 12 to 17 and that is an increase over 1986 of some 6 per cent.

The hon. member has different statistics, as least they sounded inconsistent when he gave them, and perhaps we should compare our sources and find out just how one explains the disparity. Regardless of the statistics, surely we have enough evidence for concern and its concern that we are going to address.

My hon. friend asked about two other specific matters that I would like to deal with. The first is what can we tell the public about concrete changes we propose. I tried to do that in the course of my remarks and perhaps too obscurely. In the course of my speech today I mentioned that we perceive the need for longer maximum sentences for crimes of serious violence; that we perceive that for some 16 and 17-year olds charged with crimes involving serious bodily harm or death adult court might be the more appropriate place for the trials to occur.

I mentioned as well the sharing of information, by which I mean that when a young offender has been convicted of a crime of serious violence the community should protect itself by being aware of that fact. We should provide responsibly for the dissemination of that information from police forces to school boards and others who need to know for the protection of society. I mentioned victim impact statements in the youth court among other things.

I offer those as some indication of the directions in which this government intends to go in the changes it will introduce.

Let me address the other thing that the hon. member raised which is process. The hon. member asked how is it that we can reassure Canadians that these changes and the initiatives of which I spoke are going to be undertaken at a reasonably early time.

I propose, as I mentioned, to introduce this legislation in June. In the regular course of events it will be referred to the justice committee for consideration and then it will be brought back to the House for debate and for a decision.

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I see that process as something quite separate from the long term review. A long term review may take six or eight months of committee hearings during which they will entertain witnesses, they will gather evidence and take the views of Canadians and they will report back in due course after a methodical and intensive examination of Canada's juvenile justice system. That may not be back before the House with recommendations until some time next year. That is separate and apart from the short term bill, the concrete proposals for specific changes in the statute that I will propose in June.

I fully expect that legislation will go through the process of the committee and back to the House without delay, without awaiting the longer term review.

(1555)

With the collaboration of parties opposite, this week we passed a piece of legislation in two days and sent it to the Senate for consideration. I am not suggesting that is going to happen with this bill, but I use it as an example of parliamentary action which is directed and which is effective in producing early results.

I see the bill which I will propose in June being considered and returned here for a decision I hope by early in the fall so that it can be put into place. Then, in the fullness of time, the committee will conclude its methodical examination and report with its recommendations.

I hope that responds to the points made by the hon. member.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I will allow a short question from the member for Matapédia—Matane.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane): Madam Speaker, I would have a question for the hon. minister.

Having been a teacher all my life, I have spent a lot of time in juvenile court. I have come to the conclusion, and you said so yourself a moment ago, that unless prevention is undertaken very early on, at the elementary or secondary level, drastic legislation, much too drastic legislation has to be passed, the price of which society will have to pay sooner or later.

In my region, politicians have visited schools and worked very hard. But then, the funding—provincial funding of course—was cut. I have also heard that the RCMP's prevention budget was cut as well.

Should we not put emphasis, much more emphasis, on prevention, in fact give it all we have got in terms of money as well as highly qualified staff to try to nip this problem in the bud, so to speak?

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The hon. Minister of Justice as briefly as possible, please.

Mr. Rock: Yes, Madam Speaker, I will be brief. I respond by saying absolutely, I fully agree.

There is an organization in my riding called the George Hull Centre for children and families. It is a collection of professionals, psychiatrists, counsellors and social workers who direct their efforts intensively toward intervention with high risk children and families in trouble.

I visited that centre a month or two ago to meet the people and talk to them about their work. They made that very point very persuasively, that unless we intervene effectively with children at risk at the earliest stages then we are ignoring a problem which will blossom into an expensive and tragic one with the passage of time.

I know time is very short but let me just say to the hon. member that I fully agree with the sentiment he has expressed that when we create the crime prevention council we may not have a lot of money for it immediately but the hon. member will find in me a strong advocate for making it effective by funding it properly and by using I hope at least in part the proceeds of crime and if need be private funding from the corporate sector.

We must co-ordinate and refocus efforts across the country toward prevention in the fashion that the hon. member has described.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North): Madam Speaker, last night I listened with interest to an address given by Justice Lilles of the Territorial Court of Yukon to a conference self-named Youth Justice in Crisis. Judge Lilles used the opportunity to argue that in his view the present system is working quite well and that tougher measures are not the answer.

Indeed, we have heard those sentiments expressed here today in this House.

The only solution this judicial expert offered was that kids should not be taken out of the home and that families in communities ought to be empowered.

In her summation of his talk, the conference co-chairman asked the participants the rhetorical question how do we combat the let's get tough attitude.

Canadians need to realize that the current youth justice system has energetic defenders within the system. Some of these people are so strongly opposed to substantial change that the word "combat" comes naturally into their discussions.

(1600)

The conference is named, Youth Justice in Crisis, but the word crisis does not appear to be applied by participants, certainly not by Judge Lilles, to describe the failures of the system. Rather the crisis seems to be that some people want to change the existing system.

The demand for change, it is stated, must be "combated by those within the system". If the youth justice system itself

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really is in crisis, Judge Lilles defence of the present system did not indicate that he felt any sense of crisis.

Unfortunately this is the view our political decision-makers all too often appear to be influenced by. For too long we have bought the line we heard yesterday in the House that, "crime is caused by poverty, dysfunctional families, abused children and hopelessness". Why do we persist in feeding this kind of nonsense to rational human beings?

Members of the House have personally suffered from degrees of poverty, dysfunctional families, abuse and have at some time or other in their lives suffered from feelings of hopelessness. What made us law makers rather than law breakers? On the other hand how can we explain the fact that many offenders are from homes where they are comfortably well off, loved and cherished and have unlimited opportunity?

Simplistic rationales for lawless behaviour just do not help the situation we find ourselves in today. Yes, we should work energetically to combat poverty, family breakdown, abuse and loss of spiritual stability. However these realities have never been and will never be eradicated completely. We have to offer help to members of our society who have been wounded by such circumstances but make it abundantly clear that these factors will not make us tolerant of violations of the rights, safety and security of law-abiding citizens.

What is at the root of the current public concerns about the justice system in our country is not the level of crime so much as the lack of firm and unequivocal response to it.

When my home was broken into and thousands of dollars worth of hard earned goods stolen, the police told me: "It was probably juveniles and even if we catch them it will do little to solve the problem because we have seen third time convictions for break and enter get off with probation".

Canadians are concerned that the message keeps going out to our youth that disrespect for the rights of others and resulting crime is a low risk activity. Canadians are outraged and now frustrated to hear our law makers and law enforcers say openly and consistently to youth who threaten others' property and safety: "Do not worry. We are just here to help you, not make things unpleasant for you. We really understand it is not your fault. If you had a nicer home or parents or community we know you would not do those things".

What Canadians want to hear from our law makers and justice system is this. "We know life is tough sometimes and it hurts. We want to help. But let us get something straight right off. You do not hurt other people or their property. We do not allow that. If you choose to violate that simple standard of our society the personal consequences to you will be unpleasant. Harming others' property or lives is a high risk activity in our society. It is something we just do not tolerate".

The present Young Offenders Act sends just the opposite message to young offenders. It says: "Whatever you do we will pretty much excuse you and not hold you personally responsible. Instead we will challenge your home, family and community to meet all your real and perceived needs so you will want to be a nice person. Providing of course that they do not give you any physical discomfort or do anything to lower your self-esteem or interfere with your freedom to act on your own opinion and values". Increasingly young people in our society are expressing frustration at the lack of responsible and appropriate societal values and limits. Fortunately many, even the majority, continue to be given those needed societal constraints by their homes and the larger community. Most young Canadians are decent, responsible, law-abiding and a credit to their families and to all of us.

(1605)

As they struggle to make good choices in the stress and challenge of a rapidly changing world, we need to affirm our approval and appreciation for their hard work and self-discipline. An important way to do this is by demonstrating the opposite response to unrestrained, disrespectful and unlawful acts by their peers. Since they are most at risk from youthful criminals, at the very least we owe them simple, personal protection and safety.

These are the reasons I support the motion before the House today. The chief of police for the city of Calgary, my own city, Chief Borbridge, has confirmed that the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police supports lowering the age of operation of the Young Offenders Act to those under age 16, as has been proposed.

Over half of young people charged with violent offences are aged 16 to 17 at the time of the offence and violent offences involving youth have increased significantly since the Young Offenders Act was passed into law.

I do not believe that the Canadian public is asking for an unconsidered swing to harsh, punitive measures that are devoid of compassion or uncaring about the need for rehabilitation. However it is very clear that they want a great deal more accountability in the youth justice system. They want young offenders held accountable to society. They want the rights of law-abiding citizens protected. They want to take the fun and thrill and ease out of threatening the property and safety of others. They want the consequences for deliberate lawless choices to be strong and unpleasant enough to inject a healthy dose of caution and disincentive into the minds of youths considering offending the rights of others.

We can legitimately debate the nature and quality of such consequences. However there is no doubt whatever that the vast majority of people we all represent, the people who sent us here,

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the people who are footing the bill, want changes in that direction.

I suggest we do our job as law makers in responding to the demand for greater protection. This motion is a small step in the right direction. I urge members to give it their support.

Mr. John Bryden (Hamilton—Wentworth): Madam Speaker, I quite appreciated the remarks of my hon. colleague. However I must ask her a question.

The hon. member said she did not feel that poverty or social circumstances were the cause of youth crime and illustrated this by saying that there are many people who come from similar circumstances, poverty and dysfunctional environments, who are honest, and even cited members of the House.

I am curious to know if she could explain whether she feels that all people are essentially the same. Does she not feel that we are all individuals and that as individuals we might react differently to the circumstances of poverty, and consequently some people might be prone to crime whereas other people might be prone to honesty given the same circumstances.

Further, I might ask the hon. member if she would explain that bit of logic but if she might go further and define what she thinks is the cause of young people turning to crime?

Mrs. Ablonczy: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my hon. colleague.

It is clear that poverty, family dysfunction, abuse are factors in crime. That is not something I would dispute. What I am disputing is that it is an excuse for crime. I do not believe that we should excuse choices to violate the rights of others based on the fact that these elements are present in the life and background of a citizen. That is not a legitimate excuse.

(1610)

We have to recognize that it is difficult to make good decisions when these factors are present but we should still demand that those decisions be made. We can point to the fact that many people who struggle with those very same circumstances still are able and can make good decisions.

As for the causes of crime, I would probably be elevated to sainthood if I could outline those in a short answer. Rather than looking at the causes, we have to look back at a little thing called personal responsibility. In some ways, we can all find reasons for doing what we are doing but what we have to do as a society is say: "I do not care what the reasons are. Those choices are not acceptable" and that is the focus we have to put on those kinds of activities.

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West): Madam Speaker, the hon. member talked about having her house broken into, probably by youths.

I have had my house broken into and the person was not brought to court. I do not know who did it. It is very important when we have these discussions that we not generalize, passing the blame on to youth. It could very easily have been an adult. I know the member qualified her remarks by saying that it was the police but it is important that we these generalizations.

We can deal in fact in this instance. We do not know who broke into my house, we do not know who broke into the member's house. I would like the member to have an opportunity to say that, talking about reality and perception.

Mrs. Ablonczy: Madam Speaker, I was not intending to cast aspersions on youth. I was simply reporting what the police told me. They told me that based on the goods that were taken, on the modus operandi of the break-in, they believed it was juveniles involved.

Based on that belief they went on to tell me that there was essentially nothing they could do, even if by some good fortune they found the people involved. If they were juveniles, the message to me was to accept it, that nothing was going to happen that would deter or stop this kind of activity if it has been committed by juveniles.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Bourassa, Refugees; the hon. member Vancouver Quadra, Pacific Salmon Treaty; and the hon. member for Davenport, Rwanda.

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Madam Speaker, in speaking to this motion on the Young Offenders Act I note that there is a difference between the public perception of what the problem is and a difference in perception on the government side.

I think the public perceives that something is wrong and that something should be done about it. The government acknowledges this to a fair degree. When I listen to the Minister of Justice, I get an acknowledgement: "Yes, something is wrong, we will do something about it" but perhaps not with the urgency that some of us would put on it.

Between these perceptions, what is the reality? When I look at the news media coverage of young offenders and what is going on there, I have to wonder if there is not some exaggeration.

(1615)

To try to answer the question of what is the problem I have gone back in my life and asked how were things when I was a kid. As a child or a young person in Vancouver things were different. We did not have many privileges in those days and I surely did not see the police very often. If you saw the police, wow, that was something to be very apprehensive about. To be

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sure we had a few bad kids in the neighbourhood who tended to get into trouble.

That is my recollection of what actually was going on. There must have been offenders, young offenders, in those days as well as there are today.

I say fine, now project ahead, Bob. Are the children or the youth of today any different from what they were in my day? My answer to that has to be no, how could they be that different. Surely we depend on evolution for differences of any major nature so my basic conclusion is the kids must be the same essentially, so what is different? The answer to that I reckon has to be society. The whole society around the children of today has changed and that means all of us. We have changed. We are the society that surrounds our children. What are we doing that is different?

One of the changes of course is with parents. Parents today both tend to be working, they are out. Children at home do not have the same parental guidance and care.

The other big change that I perceive is the view of responsibility versus rights. Today it is all my rights, my rights, my rights. I do not hear my responsibility is so and so. That I presume is partly a question of law, of the charter of rights and such like. It is also a perception of society and society has put the emphasis on individual rights rather than individual responsibilities. I think therein lies part of the problem.

In trying to address this whole thing we should not put the blame just on government, just on the law, just on the predisposing causes in society for young offenders. I think we have to look generally at society and ask where the problems are, what are the faults that we individually must accept part of the responsibility for.

Certainly philosophy I put at the top of the list. I do perceive that maybe the pendulum of change has swung quite far enough and that society generally is ready to see it go back again. I dislike extremes and I would not like to see it go one way too far any more than the other.

The other thing that really came to mind when I looked back over my life are the good number of years that I put in the army. We had a thing in the army called service detention barracks. There used to be a number of them across the country. I think there is probably one left today in Edmonton. The SDB was quite an institution and is today. Here is the experience that I have had with SDBs.

(1620)

I have never fortunately been an inmate but if any of my young soldiers broke the law to a sufficient degree that they would be put on summary trial, not a court martial, the commanding officer could award them 30 days in the service detention barracks.

I am witness to the fact that any young lad who came back from 30 days in the digger, in the glass house, in the SDB, was changed for life. He never wanted to go back to the detention barracks. He would behave. He would change his character if he had to to avoid getting that 30 days in the digger.

What did they do in the digger? Did they beat him? No, they did not. There was no corporal punishment even for privates. What they did in the SDB was disciplined the young fellow within an inch of his life. When he entered the detention barracks his hair was cut to the standards of the provost corps that ran the barracks. He was not asked how long he would like it.

If we do the comparison today of young offenders going in they might get six months or whatever, they are allowed to do what they want to do. They are allowed to wear their hair long, wear their own clothes, speak when they want to, watch colour TV. It is a great old thing.

Thirty days in the slammer was not like today's six months. Thirty days they went in, they got their hair cut, they were told when they could speak. They were not mouthing off because they were not allowed to. They were told precisely what they would do in shining their shoes, including the sole. They were told precisely how to shine their brass, how to make their bed. Every detail of their existence for 30 days was under a microscope and under a sergeant who knew his business in administering discipline. They were not beaten, but they were made to do everything precisely for that period of time.

As I said earlier it changed them for life. They said: "No more of that for me. I will behave".

I suggest to this House, I suggest to society, that if a punishment works, and that is what it is, surely we can invoke it again. What is to prevent us as a society from saying even if we run a test case on it, let us get a platoon of old provost corps types and say: "Boys, run at it". I bet we would get results.

To conclude, in supporting this amendment I would call the attention of the House and even of the nation to a referendum trial that is going to go on in North Vancouver, British Columbia in June. Watch it. It will be a referendum available on official—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am sorry the hon. member's time has expired. The hon. member for Hamilton—Wentworth on questions and comments.

Mr. John Bryden (Hamilton—Wentworth): Very briefly through you, Madam Speaker, I believe Amnesty International defines solitary confinement as a form of torture. I wonder if the member would comment on that.

Mr. Ringma: Madam Speaker, it is not solitary confinement when they are put through this routine in the detention barracks. They are there with other inmates. They are made to go out and do the drills and such like. This is just a severe form of discipline.

(1625)

If you disagree with it that is fine. I suggest that it really worked. I would like us to have a trial and just see if it would not work with the young fellows. I bet it would.

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York—Simcoe): Madam Speaker, while the hon. member on the other side suggested that this was not a form of physical abuse, I would suggest that there are many forms of abuse such as psychological abuse. It does sound very severe.

The member also suggested that these individuals were changed for life. I would suggest that people who are subjected to severe forms of psychological abuse would be changed for life. We all know what happens when we beat a dog regularly and the kinds of things that can happen with that.

There is very strong evidence that is well substantiated that many of these young children who get in trouble with the law had trauma at birth, are suffering from severe learning disabilities, and I am not entirely sure what this kind of treatment would do to help these children who are not loved and not healthy.

Mr. Ringma: Madam Speaker, I would have to agree with the last comment of the hon. member. Indeed, if there is illness then special account has to be taken of that. Nevertheless, there is probably some middle ground that could be found to say: "We excuse you for your illness, we will help you with that. In the meantime here are the rules we are going to establish that you in your turn must obey".

Mr. Gordon Kirkby (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Madam Speaker, just a quick comment. There probably are some distinctions that could be drawn with the situation when people are put in army detention and regular detention. One certainly being that there would be the desire on the part of those put in army detention to get back and to continue serving in the military. They have something to lose if they do not obey.

I think what has to be recognized is that many of our young people do not have anything to lose and would not be helped by this type of treatment.

Members of the Reform Party are talking about fiscal restraint. We are talking about reducing the age to which the Young Offenders Act would apply. We are talking about reducing the minimum age and we are also talking about reducing the maximum age. This is going to put a much greater burden on both the adult prison system and the young offender incarceration system.

I would suggest that if we go across this country we would see that the jails are already overburdened. When we talk about fiscal restraint how are we going to build many more jails and prisons in a society that has difficulty affording what we have now? How are we going to afford to staff them? As usual it is a case of proposing solutions but forgetting about the cost on the other hand. How does the member answer that?

Supply

Mr. Ringma: Madam Speaker, I answer the question of the hon. member with a great deal of pleasure. If you institute a system in which there is a form of punishment as I am suggesting you reduce the number of inmates. They do not want to go back. You can accomplish in 30 days in the digger what six months or a year would not accomplish in today's modern facility where they are given all the amenities of life. Make it undesirable for them to do 30 days time and they will not be back. You will reduce the number of people in that facility and thereby exercise fiscal restraint. There will be less need for a facility in the long run. Give it a try. I am quite sincere in the proposal.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

(1630)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, it seems an auspicious moment to move this very important motion. I move that the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

I believe Your Honour will now find unanimous consent for the motion.

(Motion agreed to.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West): Madam Speaker, dealing effectively with youth crime is a priority of the government. Canadians including young people are very concerned about their safety. Violence in our nation's schools is of particular significance. I have three children attending elementary schools, and I am certainly not indifferent to the issue.

What is the answer to the problem of young people who commit crimes? Is the Young Offenders Act the problem? Does a single age change correct the problem as the motion suggests? Clearly there is a need to improve the way in which the act responds to youth crime, especially serious violent crime. As we consider changes to the law, however, it is critical we begin with a sound understanding of the law and of the nature and extent of the crime. As I stated earlier this week in the House, we must divorce perception from reality.

Supply

Many Canadians believe that the Young Offenders Act has no teeth, that there are no consequences for a young offender convicted of a criminal offence. The reality is actually quite different. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, its circumstances and the youth before the court—we must remember it is the individual before the court—the consequences may range from fines, community service orders or probation to the deprivation of liberty through incarceration for a young person. Roughly one-third of the cases before the courts receive a custodial disposition.

Transfer to adult court is also a possibility under the act. If convicted of murder in adult court after a transfer today, a youth could spend his or her life in custody. An example is useful. A 16-year-old who was convicted of murder in adult court and lives until he or she is 75 years of age could spend 59 years in jail. Yes, parole is a possibility but it is only a possibility.

People including youth do not understand that convictions in youth court means a record will remain with the youth for many years with implications for both education and employment opportunities.

At present for less serious offences the record is held for five years from the date of the conviction. For indictable offences it is a time period of five years after the completion of the sentence as long as there is no other intervening indictable offence.

Many people also believe that the hands of the police are tied when it comes to youth because of the Young Offenders Act. That belief goes hand in hand with the belief that youth have too many rights. In fact police have all the same powers regarding investigation and arrest where youth are concerned as they have for adults.

The Young Offenders Act actually strengthen police powers by making it clear that fingerprints and photographs could be taken and criminal records kept. Conviction rates in youth courts are considerably higher than those in adult court across a range of offences.

In terms of the nature of youth crime, it is critical that we keep violent youth crime in Canada in perspective. Eight–six per cent of violent crime is committed by adult Canadians. Fourteen per cent of violent crime is committed by young people under the age of 18 years. About half the youth crime that is termed violent in our national statistics is for common assault, for example a slap, a shove, a push or a punch often in the school yard. The average number of youths, though, charged with homicide under the Young Offenders Act from 1986 to 1992 was 46 annually.

In the 1970s, when the majority of provinces treated 16 and 17 year olds as adults, there were 60 cases of young people under the age of 18 years charged with homicides. In short, fewer charges of homicide have occurred under the Young Offenders Act, on average.

(1635)

We must realize that many murder charges do not result in murder convictions. In 1992–93 youth court heard 40 murder cases. There were 16 convictions in youth court for murder and six cases transferred. Eighteen cases were stayed, withdrawn or dismissed.

These comments are not to minimize the importance of violent crimes. Any violence is too much violence. Neither are these comments to suggest that we cannot improve the act. We can and we must do so. We must ensure, however, that changes to the law will be meaningful ones in terms of better protecting our communities in both the short and long term and in better rehabilitating our young offenders.

No single change such as is suggested by the motion in question will improve our youth justice system. Although I am prepared to evaluate all the evidence when the justice committee reviews this legislation—and I sit as government vice–chair of the justice committee—I am not predisposed to changing the ages under this legislation.

In my riding of London West, the London Family Court Clinic has a 1993 report stating emphatically that the current ages of 12 to 17 are adequate and appropriate. Dr. Lescheid from the London Family Court Clinic advised me that in fact they could find no research or clinical support indicating that criminalizing 10–year-olds through the justice system would ensure community safety. Rather, it is the insurance of programs that can take place outside the justice system that can promote community safety.

Canada's youth justice system is at a critical juncture. While legislative change is important, it is not enough. We must improve our crime prevention efforts. We must improve the way our youth justice system operates in conjunction with child protection, health and education. We will need provincial co-operation to do so.

We must carefully study how parents could play a stronger role in preventing both their children's involvement in crime and in assisting the youth with rehabilitation after a criminal offence has come to their household. A multi-disciplinary approach rather than surface solutions will be a more responsible and responsive reaction to this issue.

We must listen carefully to the professionals in Canada who are meeting with success. We must pay attention to research findings that demonstrate to us that success can be achieved. These same professionals are also able to reveal to us patterns for youth who engage in violent crime.

While there will always be cases that could not have been predicted, a great many are predictable and many of these are preventable. We must not close our eyes to the facts of these patterns of behaviour as they reveal vital insights as to how

certain problem behaviour could be checked earlier and why such behaviour should and must be checked earlier.

The signs of unacceptably aggressive behaviour often emerges early as preschool and certainly by five, six, seven and eight years of age. The most effective way to help children who show aggressive behaviour is to respond as soon as it appears. Otherwise aggressive behaviour will become established and very resistant to change. Aggressive behaviour in childhood, if unchecked, will be more difficult to counter once the child has reached adolescence. Clearly collaboration by parents, educators and, where required, clinicians is key.

Core messages must be delivered consistently to Canada's children and adolescents. There must be a value basis to these messages which promotes racial and gender equality and fundamental respect for the integrity of all people regardless of age.

Our children and our young people are getting the wrong messages from family violence and the violence and efforts at ownership, control and abuse of authority some adults engage in. I look forward to amending the Young Offenders Act. I look forward to evaluating the legislation that our justice minister will place before us shortly.

I also look forward to the thoughtful and broad based review of our youth justice system by the parliamentary committee. I am very optimistic that one product of this review will be a cohesive plan to engage Canadians to collectively work together in the interest of our youth, in the interest of our children, which will result in safer Canadian communities.

(1640)

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Madam Speaker, I appreciated everything the hon. member said to us this afternoon.

I was at the criminal justice rally in Calgary last weekend and had an opportunity to spend time with the families of victims. I spoke to several of them. One in particular was a new Canadian. Her son had just died of a gunshot wound 10 days before, a crime committed by a young offender. Her son is no longer with her. She has no husband here. There was just herself and her daughter.

I have a question for this mother in Calgary about some of the content of the hon. member's presentation. The member mentioned that we needed a multi-disciplinary approach. This afternoon the Minister of Justice talked about a two-track approach. It seems to me there is some confusion either in the semantics or in understanding exactly where the government's intentions lie.

Supply

We have a mother who is asking for action. She is looking for answers. She no longer has her son. And we have a government response that somehow is not saying the same thing to me.

I wish the hon. member would respond to those comments and tell us exactly what is the difference between the multi-disciplinary approach that she spoke of and the two-track approach the Minister of Justice mentioned in his remarks earlier this afternoon.

Mrs. Barnes: Madam Speaker, I am very happy to respond to the question of the hon. member opposite. The multi-disciplinary approach is the integration of all departments of the government and all levels of government. An interdisciplinary approach could be health.

When I was visiting Vancouver recently I made a trip to a core city public school. That school not only served breakfast; it also served lunch. I venture to say that was most of the nutritional value those children received. It was a very difficult teaching environment. It brought home to me the multi-disciplinary approaches that were required in the classroom, literacy training being one. I saw a divergence of cultural backgrounds. That school was very different from many schools in my riding.

We must not manage all our problems with individual lines where departments do not talk to each other. Health must talk to education and education must talk to employment. We have to understand that poverty is the link to a lot of crime. Violence begets violence. With family destruction and its changing nature it is impossible to have the same family picture as a "Leave it to Beaver" commercial for a TV program when I grew up. It does not exist.

There are many poor families in the country in which children are not properly cared for and are left unattended. There are many single parent families where the wife leaves an abusive situation and takes her family with her into a poverty situation. That is what is happening.

It does not matter whether we are talking about guns because there are multi-disciplinary aspects to justice. Maybe it is time to re-evaluate gun control legislation so that they are not around to create devastation for families and victims.

I must say no one party in the House has ownership of concern. We are all concerned as parliamentarians about the victims in society. They are regarded with respect by this side of the House.

(1645)

It is important to remember we must deal with all the facets of this problem, and there are many. We will have time to deal with that in this Parliament. I certainly will be making it one of my aims to work very actively in this area.

Supply

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member on her fine speech. She brings up a number of very good points, but I think she is only looking at half of the equation.

What irritates my constituents and myself very much is that nobody apparently wants to speak out for the rights of society as a whole. We continually talk about the rights of the accused, the rights of the convicted, and we make beautiful speeches about the rights of the victim. But unfortunately and tragically, in the recent history of this country, the rights of the victim have been subjugated to the rights of the criminal.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am sorry, the time has expired. Do you wish the hon. member to make a very brief response?

Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Madam Speaker, I would like to know from the hon. member exactly what she and her party are going to do to guarantee that the rights of society will be protected over the rights of the criminal.

Mrs. Barnes: In answer to that question, Madam Speaker, I am going to guarantee that the Young Offenders Act will look at the rehabilitation of children. When they come out at the end of the process they are going to be better citizens than when they went in. That is not just by punishment; it is by changing behaviour and behaviour modification. If we target our resources smartly we can achieve that and not just hold people in a pattern.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot): Madam Speaker, I want to thank all hon. members who have contributed to this debate. I have some comments I would like to make on this subject. Of course I rise in support of this motion.

I grew up in a large family. Corporal punishment was used in our family. We knew the rules and we knew the consequences of breaking those rules. I know today what the consequences are of breaking those rules.

I do not use corporal punishment in my home. I have four children. They know if the rules are violated in our home there are consequences to be paid. The rules very seldom are broken in our home. Of course, the greatest weapon I use against that kind of behaviour on the part of my children is I show to my children the love and concern I have for them and I provide for their needs.

In 1984 the Young Offenders Act came into force repealing the Juvenile Delinquents Act. Since 1984 on average 46 homicides a year have been committed by children age 12 to 17 years. Figures reveal that in 1991, 22 per cent of the 679,000 federal statute charges laid were against youth. Of the more than 146,000 charges against young people, 13 per cent were violence related. These 18,000 violent offence charges marked an increase of 102 per cent from 1986. However, over the same

period the size of the youth population decreased by 1.8 per cent.

I ask those people who advocate that the Young Offenders Act is working: Do 46 murders per year represent a victory? Does an increase of 102 per cent in violent attacks prove success? If the system is working of course there is no need to change it, but if it is not working, then we ought to be earnestly engaged in looking at ways to reform the system.

I do not think this represents a success. Anyone who believes it does has no idea of the anatomy of a murder. They do not know the fear, pain and anguish inflicted upon a murder victim by the criminal. They are unaware of the acts of desperation and the pleas for mercy by the victim in their futile attempt to survive.

Those figures I have just quoted represent a failure. It is a failure to respond to the criminal behaviour of our youth. Those figures represent the utter contempt and disregard held by the criminal for your right and my right to live. They represent a contempt for our laws and our justice system, a system that does not hold them accountable for their criminal conduct in any meaningful way.

(1650)

These figures are why members on both sides of the House want action and they want it now. We do not want to wait a year because that means perhaps another 46 deaths. We do not want to wait six months for another 23 murders to occur. We want to move as speedily and as expediently as is possible. We want to start now to introduce reforms that will provide greater protection to the people of this country.

We are asking that the government amend the Young Offenders Act to ensure greater responsibility and accountability among our youth for their delinquent behaviour. We are recommending that the minister give kids a choice and a message: Behave or pay the price.

We all have the power to make choices. When we make the wrong choice there are consequences to pay. That is a fact of life, a fact that our justice system has failed to teach many of the youth of this nation.

The original intent of the Young Offenders Act was to balance society's demand for protection with the need to protect the rights of the young offender. What right does a young offender have? This is a question we must address before proceeding with any changes to the Young Offenders Act.

Convicted murderers, rapists and others regardless of their age who take it upon themselves to vandalize or to murder another human being throw their rights away the moment they launch their deadly attack upon the life of another. This is made clear by the fact that we as individuals have the right to administer death to an assailant in order to protect our lives. The assailant casts away all his rights including his right to life the moment he attacks, provoking the defendant to either retaliate or give up his own life.

Supply

The Young Offenders Act and other laws have improperly restored the rights to the murderer. That should be the guiding principle of the Young Offenders Act; that should be the guiding principle of our laws and our criminal justice system and for our legislators: that the rights of the individual are extinguished by their criminal act.

The balance that was to be struck by the Young Offenders Act has been tipped in favour of the local high school drug dealer and rapist and murderer. Lenient sentences, unpublished names and the belief that 10 and 11-year olds do not know right from wrong are the considerations that have skewered the justice system. The Young Offenders Act has allowed the rights of the offender to outweigh those of the victim.

Let us examine the question of rights. When individuals burst into your home and attack you or your family, you have the inherent right and responsibility to defend yourself and your children. If that requires using deadly force, then you have that right within our society.

The delinquents who shot and killed defenceless Nicholas Battersby did not consider his rights. They did not consider his right to life, his right to live in peace in his own home, his right to experience the joys of his future. The state failed to protect these rights of Nicholas Battersby and they were extinguished by his assailants. We cannot say Nicholas Battersby's murderers have been denied the same rights. Under the current Young Offenders Act they will continue to enjoy the rights they have so brutally denied their victim.

The question we must ask is: What more must individuals do to forfeit their rights and freedoms? If taking the life of another does not extinguish all their rights except to a fair hearing through our courts of law, then it destroys the meaning of individual rights and it extinguishes the meaning of life itself within our society.

I say with respect, the bleeding hearts in this country who have restored the rights of the offender after he has taken the rights from his victim do not comprehend, I believe, the rights associated with human life. They have erroneously made the criminal the victim by suggesting that the criminals are not responsible for the choices they make that lead to their criminal acts. They read into the circumstances of the criminal's life justification for the brutal and sadistic acts committed by them.

Regardless of our upbringing, no matter how deplorable the conditions of our life, we all have the power to make choices. We all know the difference between right and wrong and we are all responsible when we make the wrong decision. We cannot blame anyone else. We must be accountable for our own actions.

(1655)

Millions of Canadians every day make decisions to be honest, to be fair and to respect the property and the lives of others. Therefore there is no justification in saying that one's past

experiences or environment is the cause of one's criminal behaviour.

However our justice system particularly in regard to the Young Offenders Act says that young people are not responsible for their choices and their actions. This has been a major blunder in the creation of the laws protecting the property and lives of the people of this nation, that somehow someone else is responsible for the choice made by the criminal.

What these legislators are saying is that we do not reap what we sow. I find this unreasonable and unacceptable. The injustice in this country, the major flaw within our justice system is that we have legislated to restore the rights of criminals, rights which were lost at the time the depraved person launched their deadly attack upon the rights and the property of another human being.

Ms. Judy Bethel (Edmonton East): Madam Speaker, there can be no doubt that many Canadians are concerned about youth crime and more specifically about how the Young Offenders Act deals with youth who commit these crimes. Recent horrifying events in Ottawa, Toronto, Edmonton and elsewhere have understandably increased the national attention focused on this issue.

I wish to state clearly that individual events even if there are a number of them do not necessarily amount to an epidemic. The vast majority of Canada's young people are ambitious and hard working young citizens who respect their fellow Canadians. The vast majority are maturing into productive and law-abiding members of our society. We do a disservice to all young people if we cast them in the same light as the minority who turn to crime.

Over the last few years youth crime in Canada in fact has not increased in a significant way statistically. Adults, not youth, still commit most of the crimes in Canada. In addition, it should be remembered that most of the crimes committed by youth are non-violent. They are crimes against property, not against people. Nevertheless it is true that some youths do indeed commit crimes. It undoubtedly is an issue that is important to the fabric of our society and it must be addressed squarely by this government.

Last fall a major national public consultation paper was released by the Department of Justice on the Young Offenders Act. This paper was distributed to about 40,000 groups and individuals in Canada. It asked for their opinions on several issues relating to the act.

These issues included: whether the minimum age under the act ought to be lowered; whether the maximum age under the act ought to be lowered; and whether there ought to be more transfers of youth to adult court. The issues also included: whether the identities of young offenders ought to be published and if so, at what stage of the proceedings; whether judges ought to be encouraged to sentence only violent young offenders to

Supply

custody; and whether the Young Offenders Act ought to allow greater flexibility for youths to get access to treatment.

Finally, the consultation paper included a series of questions on what changes ought to be made at the community level and elsewhere in our society to prevent youth crime. It also asked what additional steps ought to be taken to ensure that young offenders are rehabilitated and therefore do not become reoffenders and go on to a life of adult crime.

I have taken some care to explain the content of the consultation paper in order to make the following points. This paper directly sought the opinions of Canadians on most if not all of the key and pressing issues that currently relate to the Young Offenders Act, including the subject of today's motion which is whether to change the upper and lower age brackets in the act.

It is encouraging to note that over 1,000 people took the time and trouble to send in written responses to the consultation paper, all of which were read and are being considered. It is also encouraging that the majority of respondents were thoughtful and many offered interesting and helpful suggestions for change.

(1700)

At the same time there is no doubt that the responses indicate that Canadians who responded are concerned about the Young Offenders Act in general, about how well and evenly it is enforced and about whether it is effective against youth crime.

More specifically, they are concerned about the age brackets in the act, publication of names of young offenders, transfers to adult court, length and types of sentences, treatment and rehabilitation and about how to prevent youth crime.

This government has already made it clear that it intends to address the issues relating to the Young Offenders Act. In fact, it was just over a year ago in April 1993 that the crime and justice package was released. Therein it stated that this government's proposed changes in the act include increased sentence lengths for young offenders convicted of murder to ensure full treatment, improved access to rehabilitation programs for young offenders, and increased release of information on the identity of young offenders.

Not all the changes that may be needed can be made quickly and easily. The issues surrounding the Young Offenders Act and the youth justice system are difficult and important. Furthermore the responses to the public consultation process on the act indicated clearly that regrettably on several issues there is no consensus among Canadians on what changes should be made to the Young Offenders Act.

Nevertheless I know my colleague, the hon. Minister of Justice, agrees that the amendments to the Young Offenders Act that are most pressing and can successfully be made at this time must be made as soon as possible, indeed before the House rises for the summer.

Accordingly, I gather that the Minister of Justice intends to present this House with a bill in the near future. It will be obvious to members that this will leave some issues relating to the Young Offenders Act unresolved. To deal with these issues the Minister of Justice has already stated publicly that he intends to initiate a broad and all encompassing review of the Young Offenders Act and the youth justice system.

It is expected that this review will be undertaken by a parliamentary committee and that the review process will include consultations with interested groups and individuals from across Canada. In this way Canadians will be able to tell Parliament what form they ultimately wish the Young Offenders Act and the youth justice system to take.

I believe that this is of crucial importance because in the final analysis it is those who feel well served and protected by the act, those who will be dealt with by the Young Offenders Act and those who will help them who must be satisfied with it and with the youth justice system.

In closing, I cannot stress enough that we must create a Young Offenders Act and youth justice system supported by Canadians. Otherwise we will fail in our attempt to address the social problem of youth crime which is a blot on our society. We cannot afford to abandon this small minority of our young people who for whatever reasons commit crime. If we do abandon them we can be sure that the cost to society will in the end be far greater than the cost of helping them while they are still young.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her fine speech. It was very eloquent and does in fact address some of the issues of why people become young offenders in the first place.

However, I will submit to the hon. member that one of her statements in the initial part of her presentation was false, the statement that crimes committed by youth are in fact not statistically increasing at all. Crimes committed by youth are in fact increasing at a greater rate than those by other people and in fact crimes that are of a violent nature committed by youth are increasing at a far greater rate.

Many years ago in putting myself through school I was a correctional officer in a maximum security detention centre and have worked as a doctor in jails. One of the most tragic things in working with youth as well as adults is that they find when they get out of the system there is nothing there for them.

Supply

I remember last summer a youth who was 15 pleading with me and saying: "Please, Dr. Martin, do not let me get out of this institute. This is the third time I have been in here. When I go out I know I am going to come back in here again".

(1705)

It broke my heart to tell that kid, that poor individual, that I had nothing to offer. As a constructive suggestion for members, I would ask members to please look at some kind of system for these individuals, particularly the youth in the detention centres, for some way in which they do not regress into the lives that they had before. Tragically, as has been pointed out in this House, many of them come from environments that are profoundly tragic. They find themselves going back into those situations.

I would like to ask the member what specifically—please, I do not want any rhetoric—is she or her party going to do in order to rectify the problems that we have in young offenders today?

Ms. Bethel: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

First, I should clear up that I was talking about statistically significant; that there has been no statistically significant increase in violent crime for youth. I would not like to leave the member's impression as what he sees as fact to be true.

I am quite encouraged to hear of the background of the hon. member. I too have spent time with young offenders as a member of our Edmonton police services and as a member of our city council which developed over a two-year period of time the safer cities initiatives which dealt extensively with crime prevention.

We have always believed in Edmonton that there needs to be that balance. Yes, there need to be consequences for the acts of violence and offences against people and property. That is what we have made very clear here that we are willing to do by increasing the length of sentencing in the bill that members will see coming forward.

When we talk about what we can do for youth, we can be sure that they have the kinds of rehabilitative programs that will erase the fear that the member has talked about. That is quite a heart-rending story about a young person who is in essence afraid to leave a jail because he is in fear of reoffending.

I would think that with someone who felt that way with a good rehabilitative program there would be little risk of reoffending because he sounded like he cared and wanted to take advantage of a program like that.

We need a balanced approach. I am heartened to hear the interest of the hon. member in rehabilitative programs and in dealing with preventing crime.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Madam Speaker, we have an opportunity today to be positive.

We can show the youth of our country that we do care and that we are willing to make the decisions necessary to benefit them in the long run. At the same time, we can show Canadians that we are listening, that we not only hear but also care about their anguish and anger.

We have an opportunity today to take all the pain, all the frustration and all the hopes and expectations and act substantively. What Canadians want from their members of Parliament is action and this motion from my side of the House responds to the expectations of Canadians.

The members opposite can also show today that they have heard and that they do care. I know that they do. They can support our motion. It appears that it will take further effort to get the members opposite to come to understand the problem of youth crime in the same way that we do.

Given this, I intend today to make an argument for change. My colleagues have provided many constructive arguments for ways to change the Young Offenders Act. We are simply proposing more vigorously to reform the criminal justice system and, most especially, bring change to the Young Offenders Act.

Despite contrary voices there has been an increase in youth crime and there are a myriad of contributing factors to this increase. We have heard about those today. It is clear that the lack of effectiveness of the YOA is one of those contributing factors, but I also want to point out that the Canadian perception of an increase in youth crime is not a false perception. Some of the members across the floor are quick to dismiss any talk of rising crime statistics as fearmongering or some kind of knee-jerk response and a reaction perhaps to isolated instances.

(1710)

I will provide information a little later showing just how wrong minded so many of the members across the floor are. I ask them to raise their heads, to listen to Canadians and then they too will appreciate the magnitude of this problem.

The members of my party are attempting to substantively address the problem. During the election campaign, on the doorsteps, at town hall meetings, during public debates and in the coffee shops people were talking about the Young Offenders Act and victims' rights. We heard them and we promised we would bring those concerns, the concerns of Canadians, with us to Ottawa. And we are living up to that promise. Unfortunately, the government has done nothing to date but we hear good things in the offing. To date it has done nothing about the Young Offenders Act and criminal justice reform. Promises are made. Yes, indeed. Soon, we are told and we continue to wait.

I know how concerned Canadians have become because on Mothers Day I attended the rally in Calgary that was held simultaneously with Edmonton and between those two rallies over 4,000 people came together to voice their concerns about the increase in violent crime by youths and the commensurate

Supply

lack of judicial action to deter criminal activity. Believe me, it was painful to hear their stories.

When the Young Offenders Act was introduced it may have been well intended but it has failed miserably. After the act came into force young offenders quickly came to understand that they could commit crimes and that if they were caught the punishment they would get would no worse than a slap on the wrist.

Unfortunately young offenders have become very clever. They know that when committing a crime their chances of being caught are very slim. Worse than that even if they are caught they know that their names will not be published, they know their records will be expunged five years after their sentence is finished. They know that the maximum sentence they can receive in youth court is three years. They know that the courts do not even like to try young offenders in adult court. In fact, in 1990-91 less than 1 per cent of violent cases were even transferred to adult court. They know that they can return to the community without undergoing any treatment whatsoever. Simply put, they know they can continue to get away with it.

Those of us who herald this debate have been called alarmists by many people in this House today and I wish to dispel that misunderstanding. I want to bring the debate even a little closer to home with some chilling statistics and we have had a lot of those thrown out today.

According to the MacKenzie Institute in Calgary, between 1988 and 1991 the violent crime rate among youth increased by 179 per cent. When those people rallied on Mothers Day they were not reacting in an alarmist fashion to a make believe problem. They were reacting to their heartfelt knowledge that the instances of violent crimes committed in Calgary and elsewhere by youth are increasing at an alarming rate. As well, not only is there a statistical increase in youth crimes but a Mount Royal criminologist, John Winterdyk, is also concerned that the nature of the crimes committed by young people seem to be more random, more violent and more senseless.

On that unhappy topic I have further statistics to corroborate Mr. Winterdyk's concerns. Of the 135,348 youths charged in criminal code incidents in 1992, 15 per cent were charged with violent crimes. This proportion was up 10.5 per cent from 1988. We should be very concerned that there was a 5 per cent increase in only four years. As well, the number of youths charged in violent incidents increased at a faster rate than the number of adults charged with crimes of violence. From 1988 to 1992 the average increase in adult violent crimes was 85 per cent whereas the average annual increase in youth violent crimes was 14 per cent. This demonstrates that as a society not only are we becoming more violent but that in particular more youths are becoming more violent more quickly.

Madam Speaker, I do thank you for the time allotted me today. I have appreciated very much, along with other members, the opportunity to speak on this matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): It being 5.15 p.m. it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply pursuant to Standing Order 81(16).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Call in the members.

And the division bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Pursuant to Standing Order 45(5)(a) I have been requested by the chief government whip to defer the motion until a later time.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, pursuant to Standing Order 45(5)(a), the division on the question now before the House stands deferred until 5:30 p.m. Tuesday May 24, 1994, at which time the bells to call in the members will be sounded for not more than 15 minutes.

[*English*]

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, might I suggest that the sitting be suspended either until 5.30 p.m. when Private Members' Business would normally commence or until the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod arrives at the door of the House, which I understand may transpire at any moment.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The House stands suspended until 5.30 p.m.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 5.18 p.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 5.31 p.m.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

PRODUCT PACKAGING

The House resumed from April 12 consideration of the motion.

Ms. Margaret Bridgman (Surrey North): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address this motion. I support it in principle, but I do have some concerns about the intent and the interpretation of the dates.

The motion talks about a best-before date in consumption of food products and beverages and also an expiry date. This is an excellent approach because consumers should have a better understanding of the quality both in freshness and nutrition of the product that they are getting.

However I wonder about the actual interpretation of the dates. In the presentation of the hon. member for Winnipeg North on April 12, reference was made to the expiry date being the date of the shelf life of the product in the shop. Further in the same presentation a reference was made to products that have or are considered to have a shelf life of 90 days or less having a best-before date on them. As there is one date on the package this could be confusing to consumers, are they actually looking at an expiry date or best-before or a "what is the difference" kind of thing, as the situation stands now.

(1735)

Food and beverages are perishable products and there definitely is a time factor involved as to the quality of the item. We need to identify that time factor in much more explicit terms through our dates, because there really is not any other way of establishing it that I can see.

If we were to think of the expiry date as it is now as the shelf life date, we would be indicating to the proprietors of shops that the product must be sold prior to that date, and if not it comes off the shelf. On the other hand, if we think of the expiry date as the date on which the food product must be consumed, then we are setting up a situation concerning the date on which that product may get purchased. What happens to it when we get it home? Unless we request the manufacturer to start putting things on such as "must be refrigerated when open" or various other kinds of instructions for us, we need to have some sort of sense of what that date means.

Does the expiry date mean shelf life in a shop, does the expiry date mean as long as the product stays in the package that it was originally packaged in but once opened the situation is different,

Private Members' Business

or does the expiry date mean the date the product is actually consumed?

Following that same kind of argument, if you look at the time of deterioration of a product being from the time it is packaged to the time it is consumed, then you can run into standards or criteria. Probably debates will arise out of what would constitute a valid expiry date.

If we see a product that has the two dates on it and the expiry date indicates the shelf life date then the owner of a shop must sell it before that date or take it off the shelf. Then the best-before date would be slotted in there as an earlier time.

Are we actually looking at two different situations now which could create a marketing system? For example, fresh bread and day old bread would be sold at a certain price to the best-before date and then at a different price from that date to the expiry date. The other thing that would happen from a marketing point of view would be to get into debates again as to what really is the best-before date and what is the criteria.

The other thing that comes to mind on these dates is this. If the expiry date is not the shelf life date but the actual consumption date, then we are getting into a situation where there would be different criteria applicable to different types of food products. All these would have to be listed on the packaging to tell us how to store it once it is opened.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North made reference to a tin of tomato sauce, I believe it was, that was put into the frig. Once it was opened the expiry date on that tin of tomato sauce was irrelevant. The sauce would be no good within three or four days. I believe the expiry date was longer, a year and a half or something like that.

We are dealing with two different sorts of things here that have to be clearly addressed in this bill. What does the expiry date actually mean? Is it the shelf life in the shop, or is it the time that the product must be consumed? ☐ If it is the shelf life in the shop and we slot it in between packaging and the expiry date on the shelf life of best-before we may be running the possibility of setting up a marketing situation.

(1740)

The other possible ramification that comes to mind in relation to this approach to the dates would be the guarantee. I would think by having the expiry date, the shelf life and the best-before date spotted somewhere in between, we are actually asking manufacturers to guarantee that their product, if the packaging remains unchanged, will be the quality on the best-before day that it was on the packaging day. After that there would be a gradual deterioration occurring. It is still safe to consume between best-before and expiry and can be sold.

Private Members' Business

Those are some of the concerns I have in relation to the actual dates. I think we have to clarify them very specifically for the public. As it is now, I can go and look at a date on a particular product—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Order, I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bills: Bill C-4, an act to amend the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act; Bill C-8, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act (force); Bill C-2, an act to amend the Department of National Revenue Act and other acts in consequence thereof; Bill C-29, an act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act; Bill C-21, an act to amend the Railway Safety Act; and Bill C-212, an act to recognize hockey and lacrosse as the national sports in Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I have the honour to inform the House that when the House went up to the Senate Chamber, the Deputy Governor General was pleased to give, in Her Majesty's name, the royal assent to the following bills:

Bill C-15, An Act to revise certain income tax law amendments in terms of the revised Income Tax Act and Income Tax Application Rules—Chapter 7.

Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act—Chapter 8.

Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act and a related Act—Chapter 9.

Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act, the Canada Petroleum Resources Act and the National Energy Board Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts—Chapter 10.

Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act—Chapter 11.

Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act (force)—Chapter 12.

Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Department of National Revenue Act and to amend certain other Acts in consequence thereof—Chapter 13.

Bill C-29, An Act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act—Chapter 14.

Bill C-21, An Act to amend the Railway Safety Act—Chapter 15.

Bill C-212, An Act to recognize hockey and lacrosse as the national sports of Canada—Chapter 16.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

PRODUCT PACKAGING

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Maria Minna (Beaches—Woodbine): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for introducing the motion. I think it is a very important one. I must say that best before dates and expiry dates on current products are most often so innocuous that they are hard to find. I have that difficulty quite often.

It is extremely important for our health to ensure that people are able to see clearly best before dates and expiry dates, especially individuals who have difficulties with the English language at times. It is extremely important to ensure for consumers that it is abundantly clear exactly what they are eating and the nutritional value of what they are eating.

Also it is important to note that in European countries for some time there has been voluntary participation in this regard on the part of companies. In Canada that seems to be something our companies have not done. It would be to their advantage to do so. If I am buying a product at a store and I am simply looking at the best before date or the expiration date, I might purchase the one with a best before date that is clearly visible without having to look for it. It is unfortunate that companies in Canada have not taken the opportunity to do so voluntarily and that we need to bring in a bill to get compliance.

From the point of view of health and nutrition and from the point of view of competitiveness it is beneficial for the country to have this kind of bill to deal very directly with the issue. It is a win-win situation for society. It seems to me the sooner we pass a bill the better. I am very glad to sense from the member

ROYAL ASSENT

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

Thursday May 12, 1994

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that the Hon. Peter de C. Cory, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate Chamber today, the 12th day of May, 1994, at 5.40 p.m., for the purpose of giving Royal Assent to certain bills.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony P. Smythe
Deputy Secretary, Policy, Programs and Protocol

(1745)

A message was delivered by the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Deputy to His Excellency the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the Chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly, the Speaker with the House went up to the Senate Chamber.

(1755)

And being returned:

Private Members' Business

opposite support for a bill. She did say there was support for it in principle. We appreciate that very much.

When we work for common causes we find there can be consensus on issues, especially for the betterment of the Canadian society. I am very proud to support the motion and I hope the rest of the House will do so as well.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to support Motion No. 217 in the name of my colleague from Winnipeg.

This is one issue that we debated in the last Parliament. A number of private members' bills were put before that Parliament. At one point in time the member from Winnipeg and I talked a great deal about consumer product labelling generally. We talked about some of the things that could be done and should be done with little or no cost for consumer interest to be better looked after. Indeed in some cases they could address some real health and safety concerns dealing with product packaging and product labelling.

The last Parliament was a different place. Perhaps that government was getting old and tired or was practising a style of politics that was basically no longer applicable or acceptable. Every time a private member's motion or bill came up similar to this motion unfortunately it would automatically be defeated for some pretty frivolous and strange reasons by the government. I guess back in those days the government felt that anything which was not initiated by the ministry or through the bureaucracy simply was not to be supported because somehow it would take away from the power of the ministry to direct the bureaucracy.

(1800)

In the last Parliament a number of bills did come forward but unfortunately they were not passed. One of the bills was in the name of the hon. member for Hamilton East who is now the Deputy Prime Minister. It dealt with ingredient labelling. It was one of those bills I know the hon. member for Winnipeg North who has put this motion did support. I supported it and many in this House supported it.

That particular bill dealt with the same subject area although in a different way. It dealt specifically with foodstuffs prepared in restaurants, that there should be some mandatory requirement to make ingredient labelling available for restaurant foods.

The hon. member for Hamilton East introduced that particular private member's bill in two different sessions of the last Parliament. It was not done to embarrass or to make trouble for anybody. It was done to try to ensure that consumers of prepared food products in restaurants had the option to decide whether or not their systems could tolerate the ingredients.

Those two bills were there for a particular reason. There had been a number of instances one of which occurred in Hamilton. A young person had eaten a hot apple turnover at a fast food restaurant, but unbeknownst to that individual peanut oil was one of the ingredients. This youngster was extremely allergic and died before reaching home.

However, even those types of very reasonable, productive, positive pieces of private member's legislation in our last Parliament very seldom saw the light of day. The debate would go on and in each and every case someone on the government side would jump up with a reason as to why it was going to cost the crown money and therefore should be defeated.

In the last Parliament I worked for about 11 months on putting a motion together. It never did make it to the Order Paper. My hon. colleague who has put the present motion forward supported me through that motion.

The motion was on nutritional labelling for all prepared foodstuffs in Canada. Again, it is something that should be done, could be done and will have to be done to ensure that consumers have the best information available so they can make the wisest consumer and nutritional choices.

I should indicate I had met with the previous minister in that government on that issue but it was decided that no, it could not go forward because it was too complex. However just last week a bill was passed in the United States legislative system which requires standardized nutritional labelling on all prepared foodstuffs sold in the United States. That means even if those foodstuffs are prepared in Canada for export they have to have those labels. That is something I hope some member will bring forward for debate in this place.

Motion M-217 put forward by the member for Winnipeg North is a simple motion which addresses a very major problem. It is whether or not consumers have made available to them with the products they buy, the information needed to make wise consumer choices. What the member is saying in the motion is key. He is basically saying that the government should seek to ensure that all manufacturers of foods and beverages be required to print best before and expiration dates clearly and legibly on the outside of the product packaging in a non-encoded format.

The wording is important on this. It is my understanding that if foodstuffs have a shelf life of less than 90 days there has to be a best before date. The hon. member is saying that for all of those other foodstuffs that have a shelf life of greater than 90 days there must be a best before date.

The consumer has absolutely no idea for example when the tuna was put in the can or when the corned beef was shipped in from Argentina or wherever it comes from. Therefore when the consumer decides which product to buy the best before date should be clearly displayed. If I am purchasing food for myself or my family and there is a can of Irish stew that has a best

Adjournment Debate

before date of January 12, 1989 and one with a best before date of January 12, 1995, I can tell you which one I am going to buy.

Without that information being made available there will be instances which have happened to the member for Winnipeg North and many others. That is where they buy a product which is not encoded with a best before date and subsequently find on opening the package that it has gone bad or its quality deteriorates very, very rapidly. Really this is a piece of consumer protection legislation to allow the consumer to have the best information available so that they can make wise choices. It is one of these things we can do that helps make the industry a little more honest as well.

(1805)

Many times people will dump products they have been unable to sell. They will pull them off the shelf in one part of the country and dump them in another market at a reduced price. People have absolutely no idea of how long ago the product was packaged. I know the member for Halifax has raised this with me on a number of occasions. I believe some of her constituents have come to her with these complaints. I am pleased to see she is here in the House tonight to support this particular motion.

I also want to point out that the consumer many times more than legislation or regulation dictates what the standards are in the industry. One of the soft drink manufacturers, I believe it is Pepsi—

An hon. member: That's a commercial announcement.

Mr. MacDonald: Or one of those colas. Did I say a brand name? One of the cola producers has just decided to put best before dates on the bottom of their soft drinks. It is not compulsory. The reason it is doing this is that the industry recognizes that even though there may not be a health or safety problem, there may be a quality problem if a product is in a can for an extended period of time. The industry is obviously responding to what it views as enlightened consumerism right across country in that consumers are saying: "If we are paying the amount of money we have to pay with our shrinking pay cheques, we want to ensure we get the best value for our dollar".

The second part of this motion is fairly clear as well. It deals with an expiration date. The member says in his motion that an expiration date should be clear and legible on the outside of the product packaging in a non-encoded format.

The non-encoded format is important. Anybody who tries to read consumer labelling will find that everybody does it a little differently. Try to find out the percentage of fat or calories or whatever in a product. They go from millilitres to grams to ounces to everything so that you cannot reasonably and easily interpret the information and make a wise consumer choice.

Perhaps on the motion which is before us there may not be a need to have the expiry date clearly and legibly marked on every product. I think the member would agree with me, it would be clear that this may probably only be required in situations where there is some sense of a problem for health and safety reasons. What I am saying is that not all products have to have an expiry date. Maybe they can be packaged for a long time. Maybe the best before date means that the product will not be good for as long as it should be.

In conclusion, I support the motion before us. I think there is an unusual degree of unanimity in the House today. I hope that all members will support this motion. I would like to move the following amendment:

That the motion be amended by adding after the words "best before and" the following "when required for health or safety reasons".

(1810)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Amendment agreed to.)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

A motion to adjourn the House under the Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

REFUGEES

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa): Madam Speaker, on April 20, I rose in the House to discuss the dramatic situation in Rwanda and to voice my concerns about the government's policy on admitting Rwandan refugees and the reunification of Rwandan families in this country.

Since then, the situation in that country has deteriorated beyond belief. The slaughter of civilians has reached the incredible figure of over 200,000 victims and has led to the exodus of hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Steps must be taken to stop this genocide. Unfortunately, the international community has not mobilized its resources as it has elsewhere. The UN Human Rights Commission must immediately start an investigation into the ethnic killing in Rwanda. We must send a peacekeeping force to stop this bloodbath and protect civilians, help rescue operations and create security

zones under UN control in order to provide a safe haven for the injured. We must help the 860,000 refugees that have already fled the country after the recent wave of atrocities.

Tanzania alone has received more than 250,000 Rwandan refugees, half of whom are children. Canada must make an additional financial contribution to provide food aid for these refugees.

The government should also set up a special program to admit a certain number of refugees to this country. Furthermore, we should facilitate the admission of members of Rwandan families who already live here in Canada. According to our information, the government has refused to grant visas to Rwandans who have taken refuge in hotels in Kigali and are under the protection of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

We have been told that Canadian General Roméo Dallaire said to these people he could evacuate those who had relatives in Canada and even had a plane to fly them out, provided the Canadian government gave him official authorization to do so.

It would be much appreciated if the government would act on the assurances given by the Deputy Prime Minister in response to my question on April 20.

(1815)

In fact, since I did not receive a specific answer, I will repeat the question. What special measures does the Minister of Immigration intend to take concerning the refugee program and family reunification, to accelerate the admission of Rwandans in distress who are asking for help?

Finally, despite the tremendous problems Africa is experiencing, I would like to say I also see some positive signs and I want to take this opportunity to applaud the election of Nelson Mandela as the first democratically elected president of South Africa, an election that has signalled the end of apartheid. I hope the South African government will from now on play a positive role on the African continent.

[English]

Ms. Mary Clancy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Madam Speaker, Canadians have all been moved by the terrible human tragedy taking place in Rwanda. True to its humanitarian tradition, Canada has been quick to donate funds to the international relief effort and to provide aircraft for logistical assistance. As always in this kind of situation, we are in close contact with the office of the High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva and on the ground in neighbouring countries where thousands of Rwandans have sought protection.

At this time the UNHCR is not promoting any special resettlement effort abroad. The preferred solution in this type of crisis is voluntary repatriation home when it is safe or resettlement in a familiar environment in the region.

Adjournment Debate

Canada is working closely with the UNHCR to identify any special cases for which logical solutions will not be an option and which will require resettlement outside the region. Canada has been the first resettlement country to offer to assist a group of Rwandan refugees stranded at the airport in Nairobi. The immigration office in Nairobi is currently processing its applications.

The UNHCR will certainly be taking measures to ensure that all those people referred to us are not people responsible for the massacres. An alert has gone out to all visa issuing posts to advise them to exercise caution in dealing with Rwandan applicants who come to their attention. Both Canada's Immigration Act and the UNHCR convention on refugees have provisions which render individuals who have committed atrocities inadmissible.

There is little specific information available at this time on individual incidents and most of the human rights activists who would report on these abuses and their perpetrators have had to leave the country themselves.

Canada has recently accepted one such prominent human rights activist for resettlement in this country.

RWANDA

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport): Madam Speaker, April 5, I asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs if Canada would support the United Nations Secretary-General's call for the Security Council to reconsider its decision to reduce forces in Rwanda and to protect the civilian population there, and if Canada would take a leadership role in the international community to respond adequately to this immense human tragedy.

To date some 200,000 people have been killed in the massacre in Rwanda. An estimated 300,000 people, virtually the population of Ottawa, are now housed in a refugee camp at the border in Tanzania and it is estimated that two million people have been displaced from their homes.

Therefore, the question is how many more must suffer before the international community rallies behind this immense need that is emerging in this beautiful continent which is going through such a difficult time?

There is the possibility of disease in the refugee camps such as cholera, diphtheria and typhoid because of a contaminated water supply and there is a need for the Security Council to take drastic measures if necessary. There are some 5,500 UN soldiers being requested to go into Rwanda and deliver aid. It has been impossible because of the shelling in the capital, Kigali, for the UN to deliver enough supplies to more than the 15,000 people living there.

The International Red Cross has asked for United Nations intervention to secure and protect the sources of water for the refugees and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has asked the international community for more help in terms of emergency aid.

Adjournment Debate

In essence I am asking the parliamentary secretary if he would kindly tell this House whether Canada will provide additional funds to the commission for refugees, specifically for humanitarian assistance for Rwanda, to assist 300,000 people already in the refugee camps. Also, will the Government of Canada make a contribution to the International Red Cross to help women and children still in Rwanda with water, food, medicine and housing to ensure that they will not suffer any further?

We congratulate the government and the minister for having taken the initiative on human rights. We appreciate that. However, the need here is so basic, so fundamental, that human rights will not alleviate the condition of people in Rwanda unless help is provided through the International Red Cross and through the United Nations.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to raise this matter today.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Davenport for bringing this crisis to the attention of this House and, through this House, hopefully to the entire international community.

The policy of the government regarding events in Rwanda has been to support efforts made for a ceasefire, permitting negotiations between the parties and the resumption of the peace process.

The government has made available military aircraft for the transport of relief supplies and for the evacuation of Canadian citizens and personnel of the United Nations assistance mission in Rwanda, known as UNAMIR.

Canadian air force aircraft will remain in Nairobi for a further week at least. Since the beginning of April the Canadian International Development Agency has provided, the hon. mem-

ber will be pleased to learn, \$4 million in emergency assistance for Rwanda through the good offices of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The hon. member will be pleased to know that the president of International Red Cross, Dr. Sommaruga, was in Ottawa this week and expressed his appreciation to Canada for responding so quickly to this emergency situation and to other similar emergencies.

CIDA is also examining what further response may be made to the requests of the Canadian NGOs and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. In addition, Canada took the initiative in arranging an intervention in Rwanda by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and for a special session of the human rights commission.

Canada has also provided the force commander for UNAMIR, General Romeo Dallaire, and six other officers. General Dallaire's actions in particular have commanded uniform attention and approval.

As noted by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in an earlier intervention, Canada has interceded with members of the Security Council to encourage the dispatch of a strengthened UNAMIR contingency to Rwanda. The council will consider a draft resolution envisaging an enlarged UNAMIR force of 5,500 to support groups affected by the fighting and to assist with the provision of assistance by humanitarian agencies.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Pursuant to Standing Order 38(5), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned pursuant to order made Thursday, April 21, 1994 until Tuesday, May 24, 1994 at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.24 p.m.)

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