

growth in prison populations does not appear to have reduced crime. In the Committee's view, expensive prison resources should be reserved for the most serious cases. Other than in exceptional situations, the use of incarceration for non-payment of fines should be restrained. Insofar as minor offenders are concerned, all non-carceral options should be exhausted before there is recourse to incarceration.

While few would disagree with the lengthy imprisonment of dangerous, violent criminals or some recidivists, there is a case to be made for alternative forms of sentencing for many offenders who do not pose a threat of physical harm, nor endanger the safety of individuals. Not surprisingly, then, the Sentencing Commission, following the leads of the Ouimet Committee and the Law Reform Commission of Canada, recommended that sentences of imprisonment be used with restraint and that they be reserved normally for the most serious offences, particularly those involving violence. These recommendations are consistent with the resolution on Alternatives to Imprisonment passed at the Seventh U.N. Congress on Crime Prevention and the Treatment of Offenders.

Nevertheless, the Committee is aware that some offenders incarcerated for property offences have long criminal records and in some cases do pose a risk (of violence, as well as of general recidivism) to the community. The Committee believes it is unlikely that many of these offenders have really been held accountable, other than "doing time", or have accepted responsibility for their criminal behaviour. The Committee does not wish to give the impression that it considers property offences trivial. It knows that such offences may be extremely upsetting to the victims who are affected by them. Moreover, not sanctioning such behaviour seriously can give both offenders and the public the impression that such conduct is tolerable. In the Committee's view, it is not.

In supporting the expansion and development of alternatives to incarceration, the Committee is of the view that one of the primary foci of such alternatives must be on techniques which contribute to offenders accepting responsibility for their criminal conduct and, through their subsequent behaviour, demonstrating efforts to restore the victim to the position he or she was in prior to the offence and/or providing a meaningful apology.

In the Committee's view, this notion should be uppermost in sentencing judges' minds. The issue should be addressed by both defence and