offender offend before he is locked up? In many cases, it is simply pious invocation to talk about alternate sentencing. Unless the resources and the attention of governments are put into it — which does not seem likely — a more realistic assessment of the Young Offenders Act is necessary.

Honourable senators, with regard to the protection of the privacy aspect, Bill C-37 provides additional exceptions to the rules against publication. It allows for disclosure of information to those in the community designated by the provincial Lieutenant Governor-in-Council. This is done to ensure that the safety of staff, students or other persons is taken into account. The youth court may also permit disclosure to other persons upon application to the provincial Attorney General. Regarding criminal records, Bill C-37 provides measures that permit youth court records to be kept for longer periods of time.

I am generally supportive of these changes dealing with information sharing. The provisions for more effective interaction among those who deal with troubled youth is desirable. It allows for information to go to the essential parties, such as, school representatives and social agencies. This should enhance the development of a more comprehensive and integrated response. It should be cautioned, however, that it is imperative that such information be dealt with carefully so as not to hinder the reintegration process by undue stigmatization.

Honourable senators, I should like to stress the importance of undertaking a thorough review that adequately addresses all the problems facing our young people today, not simply a review of the justice and criminal component. It is essential that we not let political motives and media sensationalism hijack the agenda. Decisions made in haste are rarely sound ones. The future rests in the hands of our young people. We owe it to them to do our best to ensure that their best interests are met.

I ask Minister Rock to step back and take a fresh look at the youth justice system in order to get to the heart of the issue. The question he should ask himself is: What do we want our youth justice system to look like in the 21st century?

The government would have us believe that this bill is timely because Canada is in the midst of a youth crime crisis. That is simply not the case. Research and statistics, including studies done by the Department of Justice, indicate otherwise. Canada's youth crime rate has remained stable in recent years. Young offenders charged with murder actually fell to 32 in 1993 from 45 the year before. In fact, the greatest number of murders committed by youths 12 to 17 was 68 in 1975. As well, youth crime accounts for only a small percentage of the overall crime rate. Of the 32 murder charges in 1993, only six were random acts, with the others being motivated by various reasons, such as hate or substance abuse.

As abhorrent as these six murders are, and in no way meaning to justify the other 26, this statistic calls into question the notion that the public need live in fear.

If we are putting our resources toward public protection, one might look instead to other problems. For example, in 1992, 132,377 impaired driving accidents were reported by the police. Impaired driving, of course, is a contributing factor, and it is estimated that it is a factor in 1,800 deaths and 60,000 injuries each year. We must make sure we are targeting the real problem areas and not the lesser ones.

The facts I have just outlined tell an important story. Evidently we are not in a youth crime crisis. This being the case, it appears that the Minister of Justice has caved in to political pressures. Indeed, when he appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, the minister conceded:

> The change we proposed in connection with the maximum sentence for murder has nothing to do with statistics...

He goes on to say that it is a matter of principle. The Minister of Justice should note that principle alone cannot offer an adequate response. It must be backed by statistically proven arguments. It is unwise to look at one to the exclusion of the other. The principles we are applying must be responsive to the problems we are addressing.

Also worthy of mention is the fact that the impact of the 1992 amendments have not yet been assessed. For example, does it make sense to make changes to the maximum sentences considering that these maximum sentences were increased less than three years ago? The issue of youth crime is one that deserves careful consideration rather than hasty measures.

In conclusion, I should like to say that this bill contains some worthwhile changes and some changes which are doubtful at best. However, that is not my main point. The fact of the matter is that we cannot continue to proceed with piecemeal measures that serve only to cloud our youth justice system. We need to get back to the core issue, and that is to provide Canadians, in particular Canadian youth, with a youth justice system that is fair, effective, and adheres to the long-term notion of public safety.

Honourable senators should keep in mind that legislation is only one part of the solution. It is important to understand that merely changing the laws dealing with youths will not achieve the goal of preventing youth crime in Canada. We must also be able to deal effectively with the problems of poverty, substance abuse, family violence, parental neglect, changing moral values, glorification of violence, inequality, racism and illiteracy, just to name a few. It is my feeling that the proposed amendments do not adequately take into account these problems and do not seek to understand the youths they are put there to deal with.

It is interesting to look at the problem of youth crime in Canada from an historical perspective. In 1908, when legislating the Juvenile Delinquents Act, the predecessor of the Young Offenders Act, Minister of Justice Aylesworth stated that his bill was intended to obviate the necessity for children accused of crimes being tried before ordinary tribunals. Then when proposing the Young Offenders Act in 1981, the Solicitor General outlined the basic thrust of the act as being a balance between the needs of young offenders and the interests of society. Now we are here in 1995 and it appears that Minister Rock has brought us full circle. We are still vacillating on the distinction between youth and adult justice systems. It is apparent that the time has come for a comprehensive review. We must ascertain in which direction we want to take with our youth justice system. I wish the Minister of Justice the best of luck in this regard.

Motion agreed to and bill read second time.