

an end the abuse of children. Anything that brings to an end child pornography is something that we can all rally around.

As Bill C-15 is a piece of legislation that our justice critic has been working on and concerned about for a great length of time, Mr. Speaker, he may want to say a word or two about it. However, as House Leader of my Party, I simply wanted to speak for the caucus and to say that we are pleased Bill C-15 has moved to this point. We want to see its rapid completion and passage through the House today.

● (1150)

Mrs. Mary Collins (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, I just wanted the chance to add a couple of words in respect of Bill C-15 as a member of the legislative committee. We spent many months working on this piece of legislation. I have been in Parliament for almost three years, and I should like to say that it was probably the most constructive opportunity we have had to work together, as previous speakers have said, in a non-partisan way for the public good. In dealing with the vital issue of child sexual abuse, I think we have come forward with a piece of legislation which will be a very important first step.

I was particularly pleased that the Minister agreed to recommendations of the committee, particularly those in respect of the ability of children to testify based upon their ability to communicate. This certainly means that children will be able to bring forward evidence. As well, the other amendment to have a review after four years puts into perspective the concerns we heard from all sides. We tried to create a balance between protecting the accused and ensuring that young people will be able to come forward, those who have been abused.

We recognize that this piece of legislation is only one part of dealing with the problem. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) has come forward with a \$20 million program over a period of five years to help with the educational process. For example, the West Vancouver Police Association has been involved in this process, as have many others in British Columbia.

We need more public awareness. We need to view the issue of child sexual abuse within the broader framework of how we deal with violence in society.

I see this issue as a very positive step forward, one in which all Members have played a very constructive role. I hope in the years to come we in the House will deal with some fundamental issues in respect of how we will attack the problems of family violence and societal violence in a constructive way.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this important debate and to echo the comments which have been made by the Hon. Member for Capilano (Mrs. Collins) who certainly played an important and constructive role in the work of the legislative committee on Bill C-15.

Criminal Code

I have participated as the justice critic for my Party in many legislative committees and in many sittings of the justice committee on legislation. I can say without any hesitation whatsoever that I felt the work done in this committee, chaired I might add by Your Honour, was really outstanding.

The committee looked at a piece of legislation dealing with a very important, sensitive, and complex question. We heard from many witnesses from across Canada, such as groups representing the Child Welfare Community and the Canadian Council on Children and Youth, which had conducted its own extensive hearings and consultations in respect of the legislation. Many witnesses voiced their concerns about the legislation.

In a truly non-partisan spirit the legislative committee, after having heard from these witnesses, proposed some very significant amendments to the legislation. I see the Parliamentary Secretary in the House who spoke earlier on the debate representing the Minister. I can say that there were times when perhaps the Parliamentary Secretary was not entirely in agreement, as Your Honour will recall, with the spirit of some amendments proposed by members of the committee. Nevertheless, the committee as a whole, in a non-partisan approach, in fact made some very major and important improvements to the piece of legislation. I should like to touch upon some of the areas in which I believe the Bill has been significantly improved.

Before doing so, however, I should like to indicate my concern that while we are establishing a legislative framework today, it is an important and essential first step, but it is certainly not enough. We heard from a number of witnesses in the committee about the critical shortage of resources, both at the federal and provincial level, to deal with the concerns of the community, to deal with the sexual abuse of children.

It is one thing to establish a framework for prosecution of these offences, but it is quite another thing for us as a society, having done so, not to recognize that we are terribly underfunding programs to prevent child abuse, programs to deal with and to assist children to recover from the trauma of abuse, and programs to deal with those who offend.

Another area in which we received representations as a committee was in respect of the adult survivors of child abuse. This is an area in which further legislative action is clearly necessary. We must take steps to ensure that those adults who still bear the scars of abuse as children after, in some cases, many years must be in a position to come forward to tell their stories. There must be resources to ensure that they receive the kind of support they so desperately need.

I hope the Government will recognize that we have unfinished business here. Yes, we have taken important steps in respect of children who have been abused, and I welcome those steps. However, we must go further and deal with the very serious concerns which have been raised by adult survivors of abuse.