

On the contrary, the number of juvenile delinquents is increasing daily, especially in our urban centres.

I hope the government is aware that a certain responsibility must be assumed in this particular case and, by the way, every time members from our party have moved non-confidence motions,—the question of the vital minimum required for parents kept coming back. If a married couple with one, two, three or four children, has to live in a decent but very small tenement, and pay a rent that is very high, the mother has to go to work.

In fact, because of the rising cost of living in the last three, four or five years, parents have changed their plans in order to be able to support their brood. If the mother has to stay away from the house six, seven, eight, nine or ten hours a day, and this, five days a week, she must entrust the care of her children to the eldest girl, aged six, seven, or eight, who goes to school two, three or four days a week.

If something wrong happens in that home, the police investigates and then, the trouble starts. When the child sees a policeman barging in his home, because a neighbour complained that the children were trying to start a fire or had guests and were making an awful noise, the child develops an instinctive fear of the police. Therefore, at the start, this child is visited by an individual who is a complete stranger to his family, which causes an emotional disturbance that often brings the child before a judge before he is 18 or 20. In fact it has often been realized in juvenile courts that serious problems had developed from very minor causes which had developed into problems almost impossible to solve.

● (5:50 p.m.)

Why? Because of the absence of the parents.

I would also like to point out to the House that, as soon as a mother begins to work outside the home, especially in the cities, she begins, in most cases, to lose interest in her children and her husband. When, in the evening, the husband finds his wife tired and uninterested in her housekeeping, as was not the case previously, he goes to the tavern and takes a drink to forget his dissatisfaction. A few months or a few years later, this family finds itself facing very serious problems.

I believe that juvenile courts do their best, but the system appears to be organized in such a way as to promote an increase in juvenile delinquency each year, as my good friend the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) was saying a short while ago, and when the judge has passed judgment on the great-grandmother, the grandmother, the mother, and the young girl of 7, 8 10 or 12, everything is still the way it was before.

We should take active steps to change the laws whose purpose it is to settle most problems, juvenile delinquency in particular.

I am not against improving of the situation along the present lines, but I suggest that we should solve the real problems.

The way the government rules this country now, by introducing only stop-gap legislation, reminds me of the farmer, whose land is flooded every spring but who does

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not think of building a dam, which would eliminate the problem, once and for all.

I do not believe there will come a time when juvenile delinquency no longer exists, but I believe we should do something to reduce the number of victims of the government policy, especially children and young people from large families.

We are living in a chain system. The government decides that it wants to fight the alleged inflation created by the previous government. Therefore, plants cut down their production and lay off employees, who turn to unemployment benefits, thus increasing the tax burden of other taxpayers. Often, unemployment insurance benefits do not allow a family to live decently. Then, parents get discouraged and cease to take their responsibilities. Children, left to themselves, with parents socially fallen, set out on new adventures to make up for the shortcomings of the family environment. And this results in more and more juvenile delinquents.

This bill purports to solve the problem of young offenders, but should we not discuss also the problem of the parents of these young offenders who are offenders themselves?

Recently I had the opportunity to visit a secondary school with 810 students aged between 12 and 15. The parents of these children must have been 1,500 to 1,600 in number. Now then, there were only 22 of us parents. Where were the others? Nobody knows. Those parents who do not look after their children should be taken care of by some of the provisions of this act which would once and for all make it an obligation for them to look after their youngsters. Those parents should be fined or jailed at least in cases of outright negligence.

Is it not somewhat ridiculous that we should introduce a piece of legislation which tends to solve the problems of young offenders without concern for the responsibilities of the parents? I am positive that there are very many people who wonder what responsibility the government has in this field. And each and every Canadian should be wondering about that. Then they might decide to tackle the situation starting with the ones that are truly responsible.

The ones who are really to be blamed in 1970 are the parents who borrow money irresponsibly, who think only about themselves and forget those for whom they assumed some obligations, namely their children.

For the benefit of all members of this House, I should like to state a few principles. Let me report the thoughts expressed by senator Edward Kennedy when he discussed the basic obligation for parents to look after their children. This vital obligation is not only of a financial nature. Let me quote:

No human need is more basic than the need for personal security. No desire is more instinctive than the desire for freedom from fear. Unless we can feel secure at home and in the streets, if we are threatened—be it by the officer of a police state or by a common criminal—then we are not free.

The provision of this protection which is the cornerstone of freedom and safety is the prime responsibility of a government and it is discharged by the judicial power. An economist would add: "To be free, you must have a little money".