

Government Orders

offences more than doubled to 20,033. That probably does not include all of them, as we have heard previously.

How did things get so out of hand? What can we do to stop it? I could give a list right now of horrific crimes that have been committed and have gone virtually unpunished in the last couple of years. We just heard one. It is a serious situation.

RCMP officials tell us there are definitely problems with sentencing under the Young Offenders Act. They say that young offenders are often put on probation for their first, second, third and fourth offences. For the next conviction they might get alternate measures such as community work. For the next conviction they might get open custody. Finally, after six or seven convictions, they might be put in closed custody or a group home. I might point out these are just the crimes the police prove in court.

What about all the other crimes these kids commit before we catch them? What about the crimes committed by kids under the age of 12 for which we have no statistics at all? What about all the unreported crimes that the police cannot even follow up? A local RCMP officer said that they are not holding young people accountable for their actions. They catch the kids and the kids say: "I did it. So what?"

The media was in a big flap about an American kid who was caned four times in Singapore for spray-painting cars and tearing down traffic signs. I do not think the use of corporal punishment should be dismissed. Many people are telling me that corporal punishment might just help to straighten out some of these kids. A poll conducted by *Newsweek* magazine in the United States found that 83 per cent of Americans approved of caning. Maybe some form of corporal punishment should be considered.

I must say it is not just Reformers who are upset about the Young Offenders Act. The Liberals are too. The hon. members for York South—Weston and Scarborough—Rouge River have both been critical of their government. On May 2 the hon. member for York South—Weston said in the House: "While these murders, rapes, robberies and assaults are taking place we in Parliament are sitting on our hands. Unfortunately the justice minister's agenda calls for simply introduction of a bill in June and he is not expecting the passage of the bill until later this year or some time next year. That is just good enough".

The hon. member for York South—Weston even beat the Reform Party to the punch with the introduction of his own private member's bill to amend the Young Offenders Act. The bill was very similar to Reform Party policy and had the support of the Reform Party during the one-hour debate. Unfortunately Her Majesty's loyal official opposition, the Bloc Québécois, blocked the bill from going to second reading and review by the justice committee.

I would now like to spend a few minutes to tell the House what the Reform Party would like to see done in the Young Offenders Act.

• (2010)

First, the Young Offenders Act should place the protection of society and our citizens as its first priority. I do not mind giving first offenders a chance to turn their lives around, but allowing kids to get off with crime after crime without even so much as a slap on the wrist is ridiculous.

Second, it should be clear in the Young Offenders Act that young persons have responsibilities or obligations to the larger society. They should be punished if they do not meet those obligations.

Third, the Reform Party feels that parents and guardians should be made legally responsible for exercising parental control over their children and responsible for the crimes their children commit if they fail to place reasonable controls on their children. Parents should have some responsibility. We should have a charter of responsibility, not just a Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Fourth, any offender aged 16 and older should be considered an adult and be tried in adult court. I appreciate the direction we are taking.

Fifth, young offenders should be redefined to include those offenders who are between the ages of 10 and 16 compared to the current definition of 12 to 18. We support moves in that direction.

Sixth, young offenders aged 14 and 15 who repeat serious crimes should be automatically transferred to adult court. It only makes sense. They know what they are doing.

Seventh, any young offender who uses a gun in the commission of an offence should be automatically tried in adult court.

Eighth, young offenders who are incarcerated would be obligated to complete education or skills upgrading within a disciplined environment. I happen to think that work camps would be a very good idea. I appreciate what the Liberal member opposite explained with regard to some of the very effective work programs that have taken place and how they have been almost 100 per cent effective in turning these kids around. We need to listen to that kind of evidence.

Ninth, low risk offenders refusing to participate in education and skills upgrading would be obligated to work for their keep by contributing to some civic or business projects.

Tenth, only young offenders who show a determination to rehabilitate themselves would be given special privileges and/or early parole. Parole should not be automatic.