

*Criminal Code*

hard-core pornography into the country. That is one example of the Government's worry about those who are exploited by hard-core pornography and how we protect the values which we as Canadians hold. What the Government has done is to move toward protecting in a more responsible way the victims of crime. The Speech from the Throne reiterated our commitment to family values. I believe this is something on which the people of Canada count. Our record with respect to justice matters bears that out.

We had the whole subject of prostitution and, in particular, street soliciting before the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs in the form of Bill C-49. Those of my colleagues who sat with me on that committee and those who watched the debates in the House of Commons were told again and again by the critics of the Bill all the dire, terrible things that would happen. We were told that all we would have to do is wave at someone and we would find ourselves in jail. In fact, what has happened in the last few months since the Bill's passage is that we have seen a beneficial effect for a great number of people in the country. In my riding of Niagara Falls where this has been a particular problem, I have been told again and again by the merchants and by those who are responsible for enforcing the law that it is working. The situation has been controlled.

● (1740)

I was very interested to read a comment made by a woman who had been engaged in prostitution in the City of Ottawa. She said that the way things were going, she would have to get out of the business. There are many members of my party and I am sure of the other parties in the House who would welcome that. That is not the kind of profession in which we wish to see people. That move away from prostitution was one of the by-products of Bill C-49. We made the point very clearly in that legislation and we are making it in this legislation as well.

An interesting comment was made by an Hon. Member concerning the entire subject of sexual abuse and the role to be played by all of us in society. She mentioned specifically the early warning signs that can be seen by child care workers. It has been my privilege these last few months to be a member of the Special Committee on Child Care, a special committee very ably chaired by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Lincoln (Mrs. Martin), who has done an outstanding job in organizing and co-ordinating the Government's investigation into that subject. We heard that child care workers across the country are in a unique position to observe the effects of and to detect child abuse. It is so important to detect such a thing at that age because of the pernicious nature of child sexual abuse and the damage it can do to children. It is incumbent upon all of us to deal with this problem as early as possible. Many times, a child's first exposure to the outside world takes place in a daycare centre or a family child care centre.

Without prejudging what the committee will do, it was made clear to us that we must impress upon those who deal with children at a very early age the importance of recognizing

the signs of child abuse. We as a society must encourage the detection of child abuse. People told us that they were afraid to speak up. Perhaps they suspected something was wrong but they were afraid to come forward. They thought that they might somehow be liable or subjects of reprisals. We as a society must encourage people again and again. We must tell them about the different signs for which they should look and remind them of their obligations to children and to Canadian society as a whole.

The fight against child sexual abuse is not confined only to daycare centres. The responsibility to do something about human exploitation rests on all of us as a society. In the last few years, how many of us have entered neighbourhood candy stores and video rental stores to see some of the hard-core pornography and kiddy porn that is on the shelves? I believe we have a responsibility to do something about this.

Simply expecting the Government to do something seems to be a Canadian disease. Everyone thinks that if there is a problem in Canada, Ottawa had better do something about it and spend money on it. However, I believe it is the responsibility of all of us. When we go into corner candy stores and see garbage on the shelves that is offensive to us and our children, we have the obligation to speak up and say that that is not the kind of thing we want to see on the shelves.

When I went to candy stores 25 years ago, comic books were being sold. I remember people saying that I should not be reading comic books because they were not good for me and would hurt my development in the English language, the one in which I was brought up. I think most parents would say now that if only comic books were in the corner candy stores, they could accept that. Now, however, many corner candy stores carry what is in my opinion hard-core pornography. I believe we must do something about that.

Earlier in this Session, I posed a question to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn). I told him that I, the people of Niagara Falls and many of my colleagues would welcome new legislation designed to deal with violent and hard-core pornography. I received an assurance from the Minister of Justice that something would be done and I welcomed that assurance just as I welcome this law.

There are many aspects to this law. I am particularly pleased that we will deal with the problems of sexual interference and invitation to sexual touching. The new Criminal Code provisions will make it an offence to touch anyone under the age of 14 for a sexual purpose. As well, the new legislation will make it an offence to invite or urge a child under 14 to touch another person in a sexual way. As several of my colleagues have pointed out, we have concluded that the age of sexual autonomy for most purposes will be the age of 18, and I believe that is valid. We as a society have an obligation to protect children under the age of 18 in the way outlined in this piece of legislation.

Among other things, this legislation deals with the problem of sexual exploitation and attempts to protect children under