

Adjournment Debate

● (1805)

The commission came up with a long list of recommendations which basically were aimed at restoring public confidence in our criminal justice system. How can we restore the confidence of the great Canadian public in our criminal justice system? I believe there are certain basic things we should be thinking of here. We should be wanting to make sure that a person who commits a serious offence pays a proper penalty for it by spending a substantial part of that person's life in prison.

I believe that we should be looking at longer sentences for violent crimes, particularly murder. I believe that we should not be trivializing murder and other serious offences, particularly violent crimes, by rapid paroles. I believe that we should be trying to put more certainty into the sentencing procedure. We should limit the discretion that judges have in imposing sentences, not tying their hands altogether, but putting some definite limitations on their discretion and we should make them spell out specifically what sort of sentences they are imposing. We should not kid the troops by saying life imprisonment when we mean only 10, 15, 25 or even 7 years. We should make judges spell out specifically when parole of any sort is applicable and for how long a period. That is the sort of thing we should be doing.

I hope tonight that we will have from the Parliamentary Secretary some specific words on the subject, that he will tell us that that is what the Government will do and that it will do it fast. I hope he will not tell us, as reported in the newspaper yesterday, that although this report of the Sentencing Commission came out in March of this year that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn) is not going to meet with his provincial counterparts on this until 1988. Surely the Government can do better than that.

[Translation]

Mr. François Gérin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising this issue because I must say at the outset that his remarks faithfully mirror the concerns of many Canadians in this respect. As it happens, they often find it hard to understand why an individual sentenced to five years should be paroled after a year and a half under conditions with which they are not familiar.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice shares the concerns not only of the Hon. Member but of many Canadians, and I think he has made a commitment to take vigorous action to prevent crime, and violent crime more specifically. Perhaps the sanctions provided under the criminal Code ought to be more in line with the seriousness of the criminal act involved.

Last March 27 the Minister of Justice tabled in the House the report of the Canadian Sentencing Commission, a complex document of 592 pages containing 91 recommendations. We must take time to make an in-depth analysis of this report and

give it all the attention it deserves. The report recommendations have significant implications concerning every aspect of the criminal justice system, from police work to sentence serving. Its consequences for the provinces are particularly significant because they have jurisdiction over the administration of justice and the enforcement of many sanctions prescribed under the Criminal Code. This is why the provinces must have enough time to analyze the full impact of the report and have an opportunity to express their views at length. The Minister of Justice is therefore planning to have extensive consultations with the provincial Governments.

In addition, in view of the importance of this matter for all those involved with our criminal justice system, the Minister of Justice wants to consult all of them. These consultations should include the judiciary, the associations of defence counsels, the various provinces, the correctional authorities and certain organizations, such as the John Howard Society, which play an active role in the criminal justice system.

Finally, we must not forget the new draft of the Criminal Code prepared by the Law Reform Commission. Major reform proposals such as the new Code and the report of the Commission on sentencing cannot be examined independently. Comments about one must necessarily take the other into account.

However, in view of their importance as far as determining the direction to be given to the Canadian justice system, I can only say, Mr. Speaker, that whatever the time it takes to prepare a responsible reply to the recommendations of the Commission, this time will not be wasted.

● (1810)

[English]

CANADA DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION—COVERAGE OF REGISTERED RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLANS—REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT TO LEGISLATION

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, the 67,000 Canadians who entrusted their savings and RRSP funds to Principal Trust and its affiliated companies will lose \$191 million as a result of the bankruptcies of these companies and particularly of First Investors and Associated Investors.

Speaking for the Government, the Minister of State for Finance (Mr. Hockin) has denied any real responsibility for this disaster by pointing out that with the exception of Principal Savings and Trust, whose depositors had their funds insured by the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation, all the other subsidiaries of that original trust company were established under the laws of the Province of Alberta and their depositors were not covered by CDIC. That claim is factually and legally correct.

There is at least one group of people who invested their savings in subsidiary companies and who had every right to expect that their money would be protected. I am referring to the thousands of people who put part or all of their savings into