

*Government Orders*

If one were a suspicious person one would think that maybe the government is just doing this for a little bit of window dressing and for a future election campaign. However we will treat it as serious because it is a serious matter that has to be addressed.

I would like to explain why we in the New Democratic Party are supporting this bill, although we have some questions and some concerns. I have some concerns because I am basically a civil libertarian and I worry about the restriction of personal freedoms and especially the freedom of the press and the print. However the real question we have to examine concerns why most right-thinking people are against child pornography.

The reason is that the victims of child pornography, the children who are exploited to do this, can later become abusers themselves. A professor in Simon Fraser University's department of criminology, Dr. Ezzat Fatah, is a distinguished criminologist, and one of my constituents, and has written extensively on this issue. He shows how the victims become the criminals.

We in the NDP have set forward a policy, and I know there is support in other places in this House. We would get tough on violent crime and violent criminals but we would also work toward crime prevention.

This bill encompasses both because I think it is ultimately aimed at crime prevention. The Badgley commission recommended such a bill, although I am not sure it dealt with possession. The previous law did not deal with possession and this bill does. The Fraser commission recommended it. In a report to the ministry Dr. Rix Rogers talked about protecting children.

I think all of us in the House feel that we want to protect children and we want this matter dealt with. There is not an industry in Canada or the United States. It comes from offshore. This material is circulated privately.

One of the statements that concerns me is a statement by a metropolitan Toronto police officer. Sometimes the police have been guilty of seizing too many things and of being too zealous in these matters. However he made an interesting statement. He said: "You cannot have child pornography without having child abuse". That is why we are supporting this bill.

We have a whole slew of justice bills, about six bills. They are all going into the committee. I was joking today that I feel like I have the legs of a Texas line dancer, going from committee to committee to committee. We want to give this a hearing.

Remember what the former Minister of Justice said: "Let us have inclusive justice". Inclusive justice means that people from all sides come in and discuss the bill, we have a good hearing and then we get the best bill possible. Then it will hold up in the courts and will not be thrown out as unconstitutional.

• (1540)

I understand that the government can proceed on this partly due to the Butler decision in the Supreme Court, which clearly gives an opening for a law that deals with child pornography. That is another reason that we are supporting the bill.

I want to strongly draw it to the attention of the House, and it might take a little bit of courage to do this at this time, that there is a civil liberties angle to this. We have to be careful not to restrict people's right of disseminating information, no matter how much we dislike the information or what people are saying or arguing. People have a right to argue positions and we may not like them. I am not talking about visually depicting child pornography. I do not think there is any argument there. There is some argument with respect to the written word and what different groups have been advocating. This is a tough area. It is not in the bill and I do not think it should be in the bill. Others may have different viewpoints.

Alan Borovoy, who is the distinguished head of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, says that he supports the goal of protecting children but not the part of the bill that covers adults who play the part of children. He says:

It's hard to fathom why in the world the government would want to make it an offence to prohibit adult actors from portraying youngsters.

He continues:

Once again, you have a bill aimed at sleaze that could wind up imperilling legitimate materials, even works of art.