

Supply—Justice

and shoplifting among others. It is not that drug addicts become mentally unstable and develop criminal tendencies but they require money to purchase drugs.

Related to the problem of drug addiction is the impact on our society. Young people become addicted to drugs and are milked and bled for every cent they have by those who get them addicted. Drug pushers also lead girls into drug addiction and persuade them to engage in prostitution to earn money to purchase drugs and the drug pushers profit from this. Young people are led into drug addiction in order that they will turn to theft and crime in order to obtain money to buy drugs. In addition to this there is the misery of the addict who may have to spend many years behind bars and the misery that comes to his family and children. All of this adds up to a pretty sad picture in our society.

Perhaps we should examine the approach that has been adopted in the past toward this entire problem by law enforcement officers, the R.C.M.P. and the Canadian government. The previous government attempted to establish laws relating to the possession and use of narcotics. For many years we in Canada have adopted an attitude similar to that adopted in the United States with respect to this question and have tended to impose jail sentences and fines upon narcotic addicts. Sentences have ranged from a few months in a provincial jail to several years in federal institutions.

The Deputy Chairman: Order. Would hon. members behind the curtains lower their voices because it is difficult to hear the hon. member who has the floor.

Mr. Ricard: And he is so much less interesting.

Mr. Howard: I was saying that the tendency has been to impose jail sentences on narcotic users. This has been our attitude in Canada for a number of years. Apparently it has failed to have a deterrent effect on people continuing to maintain themselves as drug addicts, many of whom continue after release from jail, some of whom on the very day of their release seek out a source of morphine or heroin in order to get back on the habit again. Proof of the failure of our past approach is found in the steadily increasing number of drug addicts, many of whom are drawn from among teenage groups of high school age. The time is ripe for a new approach to the problem of drug addiction.

One of the first things that could be done would be to eliminate the free enterpriser in his worst state; that is, to eliminate the profit question from drugs. If possession of drugs was not illegal black market drugs that sell at exorbitant prices could be abolished. There

would be no need for addicts to commit crimes in order to get money to buy drugs. The tendency for drug pushers to get younger people hooked or addicted to drugs in order to lead them into a life of crime or prostitution so they could reap profits from this would not exist. We might be able to tackle the problem in a better way than we have in the past.

Shortly after coming into office the Minister of Justice made some public comments outlining his ideas concerning drug addiction and the need for approaching the problem from a fresh and humane viewpoint different from the approach that was used in the past. We commend the minister on expressing those views, those ideas and those hopes about having a different official and statutory policy in so far as drug addicts are concerned. I would certainly—I am sure many others would also—appreciate very much if at this stage the minister was able to give the committee an up to date account of the development of his ideas and his thoughts in so far as the establishment of drug clinics, hospitals or similar institutions for drug addicts are concerned, and also express, if he is able to do so, his thought as to when we might see the formal establishment of such institutions or the formal arrangement, whether it be in a statutory form or a regulatory one, which will be entered into in order to put this new approach or this different attitude into effect.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Chairman, this is one of those fields in which I have to admit frankly I am not able to report as much progress as I should like to be able to and as I am sure the committee would like to hear. I recognize that every time my estimates have been up since I assumed responsibility for this department I have described in general terms some of the ideas which I hoped we would be able to put into practice in connection with the treatment of drug addicts in so far as those addicts have fallen foul of the criminal law.

I must say that while I realized this was a big problem, I find it is an even bigger one than perhaps I had taken account of at the time that I made this first statement. In saying this I do not mean to say for a moment that we are discouraged or are adopting the attitude that there is nothing we can do about it because I believe there is something we can do about it. I am simply trying to confess that I find the problems to be overcome, indeed the differences of opinion to be reconciled and the thinking and research to be done, are of a very considerable nature.

I can, however, state by way of perhaps some definite encouragement that the question of the treatment of narcotic addicts who have