

Government Orders

Lloyd Clark who was at Passchendaele and was also on the beaches of Normandy.

• (1720)

Ever since I rose in the House to respond to the throne speech, one of the things I hoped we could do was work collaboratively together. The Young Offenders Act is one of those topics. All members owe it to their communities to make them safer.

We owe it to Canadians to be as factual and as analytical as possible in dealing with the issue that most critically involves striking a balance between the rights of the victim, the offender and society in general.

No matter what our political stripe or gender or cultural perception, we must get this one right. In our daily work we deal with tax issues, procedural issues, political issues to mention a few. I would argue with my colleagues on all sides of the House that this is one on the human side like no other.

Simply put, all members in the House and Canadians in general want to be in a community that is safe and secure. This is a public policy issue and a priority for us as a government.

In this democratic forum I call on all sides to make sure that we benefit from the discussions here. The hon. member for Saint-Hubert made a good presentation and a passionate one. I know that she does a good job for the province of Quebec, notwithstanding the fact that she disagrees with us completely and would like to make an amendment to the act.

In the era of Aristotle and Plato the justice issue was discussed. I am intrigued by the fact that in this debate in the year 1994 we are attempting to debate that very notion. This is an intergenerational problem and it requires from time to time that in places like the House of Commons we debate this kind of policy.

Margaret Mead, the sociologist that studied society, said that a family that did not care for all of the children within that family was a family that would fail. In every society she studied there were problems in terms of the way the family is.

The way we deal with our young people is very important. Recently, during the election, I had a whole lot of street kids right in front of my campaign office. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, by the end of the election they were all working with me. One guy even got five bucks. He got his picture in the papers. They changed completely. They tell me that a lot of adults walk right by them, not admitting they exist. Sometimes we have to look at ourselves when dealing with young people.

Recent events within various communities have increased public fears, fueled the debate and intensified the attacks on the Young Offenders Act. Canadians empathize and are saddened by the tragedies. However I strongly feel that we must analyse and make sure that we do not get into misinformation and prompt an

emotional response to this question. The minister is trying to find a good balance to make sure that some of those needs are met by allowing youths to say why they should not go to adult court, of sharing information with the police, the teachers and the people in the community that require it and using all those agencies within the communities to make sure that when the person is convicted that they are going to be able to work with them in order to get them rehabilitated.

It is all well and good to put a person in jail, but sooner or later he has to come out. If the apprenticeship they get in prison is one that teaches them to be criminals, that is what you are going to get. If the response is one we can deal with in our communities, which is one of caring and and trying to find out what makes a person tick, there are certainly going to be some individuals who will respond. When I took psychology we studied people with the xyy chromosome and some postulated that there was not much that could be done with people who had that tendency.

• (1725)

If members watched the movie *One Flew over the Cuckoos Nest* they will remember McMurphy. At that time frontal lobotomies were given which removed parts of the brain. Members will remember that when they did that to McMurphy he was no longer the person we knew. That was something that happened in mental hospitals and was a response to a problem of humanity.

Human beings are very complex organisms. I listened to members from both sides of the House saying: "We are legislators, we pass legislation". One thing I want to say in passing is that in this legislation we are trying to strike a balance. There can be no perfect solution because God created each one of us differently but equally. It is that diversity which has made us the kinds of people we are. We allow that.

There are societies where they use very harsh methods. I just came back from South Africa. In South Africa if a person committed a crime and was caught they were brutalized, beaten, their families were intimidated, incarcerated and virtually disappeared. Some were even killed.

Do you know what is the response to that kind of harsh system? If criminals saw your face they would kill you. It got very bad in that community.

Statistics from the United States tell us that more people are incarcerated there than in any other country in the world. They have extremely violent crime activity and it seems to be increasing so I do not know if that system would help us.

Incarceration costs us a lot of money. Why not provide some means of restitution, some means of rehabilitation. Let us make sure we have the infrastructure to ensure that the needs of people are met in our communities.