

Criminal Records

I am not afraid to say, right in the House, in front of the Prime Minister himself, what I have in mind. And I shall not be deprived of that sacred democratic right by two ruffian cops badly in want of sensation.

I thank you in advance knowing that you will deign follow up my petition.

And what was done then?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bécharde): Order. We are now debating a bill of federal jurisdiction and I would ask the hon. member to limit his remarks to the subject matter of the bill and not to refer to the jurisdiction of another authority.

Mr. Matte: Mr. Speaker, I just want to demonstrate that having a record is often due to the police seeking revenge, the Crown seeking to win at all costs, or a judge unwilling to commit himself.

The role of a policeman is above all to protect the citizen against incidents or persons who may attack his reputation and integrity. It too often happens that the public is seen by police as an opponent. Children fear them, teen-agers avoid them, and adults do not like their neighbours to see that police is inquiring in their homes. Why? Because there are too much "mini-brains" in "maxibodies" within the police corps.

I recognize their essential role for the smooth functioning of society and the maintenance of order, and I admit that they must be respected and helped. But support and respect must be conditioned by sound protection. If ever a citizen cannot defend himself fairly and win a case similar to mine, the public will gradually lose faith in the advent of the just society.

I would like to speak on behalf of an incalculable number of individuals who, unjustly, are born losers. Besides having huge expenses to defray, they are unable to fight this unfair law whereby the police are always right. In these trying years, when public figures are always criticized, insulted, run down and often physically assaulted—remember for instance the Kennedy brothers, Martin Luther King and the Prime Minister of Canada when he attended the St. Jean Baptiste parade in Montreal—it is even harder for him, especially if he is on the wrong political side, to maintain his dignity and his honour if the police are allowed to mistreat him.

To put it another way, in the example quoted a minute ago, should there have been two charges because I was a member of Parliament? Should I have had to pay the maximum fine of \$50 for having allegedly insulted

[Mr. Matte.]

a policeman? The next day another judge ordered an individual who had assaulted a policeman with his fists to pay the same fine.

This incident, which resembles somewhat La Fontaine's fable "The Wolf and the Lamb", took place on August 23, 1969. The assailant, a policeman, abused and handled an individual roughly. In order to justify his behaviour, he accused the other of the misdeed he himself is guilty of. The devilish satisfaction with which this police officer wrote up and gave out tickets was something to see. Since when is the victim to be condemned? I am puzzled by this situation and I would like to intervene in order to ensure the disappearance of this climate of constant conflict between the protector, which is the police, and the taxpayer who should have a right to protection.

Naturally, I am bitter, and the 50 witnesses to the disgraceful incident that took place on August 23, 1969, understand what I mean. Many immediately came to the aid of my wife, and I take this opportunity to thank them publicly. I believed that two or three of those witnesses would be enough at my trial, but I had believed in the impossible, since the police is always right.

We have a part to play here, that of safeguarding the rights of the citizen, of endeavouring to improve the lot of the human being and of allowing everyone to develop fully. We must not allow our police forces or our legal systems to be mainly responsible for the wave of crimes of which we are the unfortunate witnesses.

This extremely important matter prompts youth to lose faith in the established authorities. Why? Because it is too often the witness of those glaring injustices. It rests with us to see that a stop is put to those injustices, so that everyone may be truly himself, without having to experience the disadvantages of the offences which are becoming more and more serious.

Perhaps I let myself be carried away while making those comments, but I was involved in those incidents and this shows that it is time to do something. That is why I am making a suggestion which should be taken into consideration.

The fact that a man is arrested does not mean he is automatically guilty. Everyone has heard about the recent incident when a deputy minister of British Columbia had his nose and brow ridges fractured. That is absolutely ridiculous.