

is making a great mistake. The member for Westminster District (Mr. Stacey) points out that certain people think we have no right to pass legislation with regard to young girls. But this is not altogether a moral question: it is a physiological question as well. A man who indulges once is likely to do it again, whereas if he is kept chaste, he has no desire to do it. I speak with some authority with regard to this matter, because I have been an observer of men whom I have had under my control, men who have been closely associated with me, locked up with me, so to speak, for weeks and months. I have observed the practice of a vicious system of ignorance: some of these men teaching younger men that they would have to do certain things in order to be men. This is the greatest rot that was ever taught to young men. I repeat that the question is one of physiology as well as of morals. Young men may be and ought to be so educated that there would be no necessity for such a law, in the meantime let us protect them from their present ignorance. I certainly hope the minister will strike out subsection 2, and I would suggest that he raise the age of consent to twenty-one. A man has no right to take advantage of a woman at any time, at any rate, not until she is twenty-one.

Mr. G. B. NICHOLSON: I am in full and complete accord with the suggestion made by the hon. member for Wright (Mr. Devlin), and I believe the time is not very far distant, if it is not here now, when that principle will be incorporated into the Criminal Code of Canada. I believe, however, in being practical if I can, and I do not think there would be much use in pressing, at the present moment, an amendment quite so drastic as that, but I strongly urge on the minister that if he does not eliminate subsection 2 entirely, he will accept the suggestion of the hon. member for Westminster district (Mr. Stacey), and, at least, amend the subsection so as to make the ages similar. As regards what the minister said as to branding as a criminal a young man between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, let us just reverse the order and see what takes place with regard to the girl. Assuming that we set the age limit in each case at eighteen, assuming that the young man and the young woman are alike up to eighteen years of age and that they commit that offence, what happens? The young woman goes through life branded, if not as a criminal,

[Mr. Read.]

at least as an outcast, while the young man goes through life free. We proceed further along that line, and under subsection 2 we say to the young woman: You will be branded as an outcast, sinking possibly lower and lower in the social scale until you become a menace, not only to your own sex, but to the opposite sex, the younger boys, if you will, and we say to the young man between eighteen and twenty-one years of age, who brings the young woman into that position: You go scot-free, and we thus encourage that sort of thing to continue. I would like to see the clause struck out entirely, or if not, that the minister should accept the amendment suggested by the hon. member for Westminster district (Mr. Stacey).

Mr. PROULX: I approve the amendment suggested by the hon. member for Westminster district (Mr. Stacey). In some of the provinces a young man is considered old enough at eighteen to be married without the consent of his parents, so, as my hon. friend from Wright (Mr. Devlin) has said, a young man of eighteen years of age can commit as much damage as a young man over the age of twenty-one. It would be conducive to morality if the age, so far as the young man is concerned, was reduced to eighteen.

Mr. VIEN: The only argument that has been brought forward against striking out subsection 2 is that the young man between eighteen and twenty-one years of age should be protected and not be branded as a criminal. I think, on the contrary; it will be a preventive to the young man of that age if he knows that his action constitutes a criminal offence. Moreover, while the maximum punishment provided for is imprisonment for two years, the sentence may be for imprisonment for from one day up to two years, and I think that, if a young man between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one committed the criminal offence which is foreseen by this amendment to the Criminal Code, the court before which he would have to appear would take into consideration the particular circumstances of the case and, instead of branding him with a sentence of imprisonment for two years, the court might sentence him to imprisonment for an hour, a day, a week, two weeks, or two months. It would be a good thing to strike out subsection 2 and leave subsection 1 alone, thus leaving it to the courts to decide in each case what punishment should be inflicted.