

Government Orders

the lowest in Canada. Not surprisingly, we oppose the provisions in Bill C-37 which increase the period of detention in some cases to seven and even ten years.

• (2000)

They want to put young people in adult jails for ten years. That is unthinkable. The Quebec groups and individuals concerned reject such an approach. Based on Quebec's experience, they are convinced that young people can be rehabilitated. Young people, who are necessarily more vulnerable than adults, are also more likely to change and more amenable to positive influence as a result.

Quebecers have adopted a penal philosophy that emphasizes to rehabilitation and social reintegration. The various stakeholders in the legal process and in society work to make the young person found guilty of illegal behaviour assume his responsibilities. This is done without incarceration. In most cases, if he must be kept in detention, it is for as short a period as possible.

This approach is successful; it works for Quebec. Remember, as we said a few moments ago, that the juvenile delinquency rate is the second lowest in Canada. We can thus say, as workers in the system do, that there is no relation between more systematic and prolonged imprisonment and the juvenile crime rate. We therefore think that the measures in Bill C-37 are unnecessary and do not reflect the Quebec reality.

Of course, too many crimes are committed by young people in Quebec, as in Canada. We do not live on another planet. Nevertheless, to improve this situation, we believe that efforts must focus on prevention. We are talking about poverty, sub-standard housing and unemployment. We are talking about living conditions likely to promote antisocial behaviour.

Of course, these problems are much more serious in Quebec and they will not disappear anytime soon. It is nevertheless through improving the conditions in which young people live that reductions will be achieved in the number and the seriousness of crimes committed by young people. It is also through attitudinal changes in the people around them that changes can be achieved in young people's attitudes.

For these reasons, the people of Quebec object to the control exercised by the minister over custodial provisions. They wonder, and rightly so, if these are not motivated by political reasons. Otherwise, why would the central government impose such a blatantly anti-Quebec approach, one so in line with the complaints of certain citizens of Canada?

Why indeed? Such action seems to indicate that the reality and aspirations of Quebecers do not count for much in the decision-making process at the national level. Never mind that Quebec, as a society, has taken a slightly different approach. Never mind the fact that this approach works well for the people of Quebec. Who cares? If English Canadians have problems, they will go on finding ways of resolving them at the expense of Quebecers. It is but one more way for them to get rid of one of the three founding nations of this country along with its realities.

Let us now look and see if the proposed changes will actually contribute to reducing violence against women, this everlasting social evil. The minister purports that imposing harsher treatment on young people will bring down the number of attacks on women.

We would be curious to know on what basis the minister makes such a statement. We would like to know how the minister can promote his bill by establishing a link between juvenile delinquency and the protection of women. The representatives of women's groups directly concerned with violence reject that allegation by the Minister of Justice. Mrs. Lee Lakeman, who is the president of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres, believes that young people pose no threat to women. I want to emphasize here the role played by these sexual assault centres.

Their staff is on the front line and is more aware than anyone of the problem of violence against women. So, if the spokesperson for these centres says that young people pose no threat to women, then we should believe her.

• (2005)

As for the president of the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada, she fears that the amendments to the Young Offenders Act will create a more punitive and repressive justice system for Black and native people, as well as for the poor. Under the circumstances, I can only go back to my original comment and wonder if the amendments debated today are the result of a law and order mentality. This social philosophy has nothing to do with improving the situation of women and young people. It is also totally foreign to Quebecers' way of thinking and we reject it.

[English]

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville): Madam Speaker, every week we hear another horror story in the news involving young offenders and violent crime.

Between 1986, the year after the Young Offenders Act took effect, and 1992 violent crime rose 117 per cent in that short time span. The total number of youths charged with murder, manslaughter, attempted murder, sexual assault, aggravated assault, robbery, weapons offences and minor assaults in 1986 was 9,275. In 1992 the number of youths charged with violent