

will consider this matter in the fall because the band-aid solution which the Minister is proposing will lead to more serious crimes. It will condemn those who practise prostitution, much as we would like to encourage them to find other ways of making a living. It will make their lives for worse. I think it will lead to more corruption in police departments, to more power held by pimps, and to greater opportunity for organized crime.

● (1150)

The direct interface between the prostitute and the customer in the public place is being removed, but since, as the Minister admits, prostitution will continue, prostitutes will be far more at the mercy of the underworld and of the corrupt participant in the drug scene who will find them their clients. While we are not taking the brief for prostitutes, it is very difficult to ask us to support legislation which will create more crimes and put prostitutes in a more difficult, precarious, dangerous, and vulnerable situation.

Therefore, we cannot agree with the solutions proposed by the Government for that very reason. We must look behind the band-aid. The Fraser Commission proposed solutions in some areas to deal with those serious vices which will become worse if the Minister's Bill is accepted in its present form.

The Official Opposition has another very serious objection to this legislation. Most of the media that have commented on this Bill have expressed this objection most of the editorials condemning this Bill have emphasized it, that is, the civil liberties dimension. When one reads the language of Bill C-49 one sees that it vastly increases the power of the police in this country to arrest citizens.

I am concerned about the definition of "communication". It includes very minor gestures by an individual which can hardly be considered a street nuisance. Such gestures would not interfere with other members of the public on the street. I do not feel that such unobtrusive activities as that should attract police attention. As well, there is much more room for mistakes. The police are in a position to interpret activities which they see on the street in a way that can impede non soliciting activities in the street.

There must be better answers than those proposed by the Minister. Fraser has proposed some better answers. Although we want to see the problem addressed by legislation quickly, this legislation must bear the study of a parliamentary committee. It must bear the review of all the various groups in society that have been appalled to hear that a political Party which paraded itself as being civil libertarian before the election would bring forward as Draconian a measure as this. It not only removes street nuisance, which is a very desirable goal, but it inhibits a tremendous number of innocent activities which in no sense of the word constitute anything that could be called a nuisance by rate payers, as sympathetic as we are with their concerns, and as willing as we are to have the Criminal Code address those concerns and remove the problem of street prostitution.

Criminal Code

I indicated, Mr. Speaker, that it would not be the position of Her Majesty's Official Opposition to prolong this debate. A number of my colleagues have been very concerned about the problem of street prostitution for years. They have been outspoken proponents of various solutions for dealing with the problem. We encourage them all to speak. After dealing with the issue of support in principle we look forward to serious legislation dealing with the nuisance of street prostitution. We hope that the Government, which claims to have other plans for later in the fall, will bring those plans forward and allow us to hear the whole package dealing with this problem. In addition to making the problem disappear from the view of the front porch, we must deal in a humane and realistic way with the problem of prostitution which the Minister himself admits, and which we all know, will continue even after legislation is passed dealing with the problems created by the Hutt decision.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to rise to speak on behalf of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party on this very important Bill. I would like to indicate clearly at the outset that we believe that the approach taken in this Bill is fundamentally wrong. It is wrong from the perspective of the victims of this crime, from the perspective of the communities in which soliciting takes place, and indeed from the perspective of a society which values the freedom of speech and civil liberties. It is an approach which reeks of hypocrisy. It is a sledge hammer approach which will, in the long run, do nothing other than aggravate the problem with which it purports to deal.

Before dealing with the substance of the legislation I would like to respond briefly to the suggestion made by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie) in the House today and recently in British Columbia that members of this Party—and I believe he went so far as to suggest that I in particular—sought to obstruct, delay, and refuse him the right to bring this Bill before the House of Commons. He suggested that he and his 210 Conservative colleagues were being single handedly thwarted by the Hon. Member for Burnaby. Mr. Speaker, I think the record makes clear that that is patent nonsense. The record and the reality is that it was not until the evening of Wednesday, June 26, two days before the House rose, that the Minister even attempted to bring this Bill before the House for second reading.

Not until June 26, at ten o'clock in the evening, did the Minister stand up to introduce the Bill for second reading. Any delay in the introduction of this Bill must rest squarely on the head of the Minister of Justice himself who did not even bother to bring the Bill forward until a couple of days before the House rose.

Having brought the Bill forward on Wednesday evening, did the Minister come back to the House on Thursday morning to move forward with this important legislation? We were prepared to debate this Bill recognizing the serious concerns of residents of Mount Pleasant and other residential communities who are victimized by this problem. No, Mr. Speaker, he made one feeble, gasping effort at ten o'clock on Wednesday evening and then dropped it. He did not come back to the House on