

showed resulting convictions of 18. When the updated figures for 1975 were published in the 1976 report which the hon. member is so prone to quote, this number had risen to 69.

These figures reflect only those prosecutions and convictions made with the use of wiretap evidence produced in court. I underline the words "produced in court". It is, of course, important to realize that a lot of people who have been arrested as a result of wiretap information decided to plead guilty when confronted with the wiretap evidence. That is something that was not brought out clearly by the hon. member. In such cases, the actual wiretap evidence is not produced in court. The updated figures for 1976 show, under the relevant sections, which are (1) and (m), that 514 convictions out of 1,492 arrests resulted directly or indirectly from evidence obtained through wiretaps. Of course, the prosecution of many of those who were arrested and charged in 1975 is still before the courts. The end result should be a very high ratio of convictions to arrests on the basis of evidence collected under the provisions of this law.

The statistics indicate several points. First, where wiretap evidence is produced in court the resulting conviction rate is almost 100 per cent. Second, the annual reports required by parliament—and perhaps we should change it—do not at the moment reflect actions before the courts which at the time of compilation were still incomplete. Accordingly, it is necessary to analyse not just one year's report but successive years' reports in order to fully appreciate the success achieved under this law.

To get back to the main subject of discussion, I am sure that all provincial attorneys general are concerned about organized crime. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) and I will be meeting with the provincial attorneys general later this month. There will, of course, be an opportunity for an exchange of views on methods of dealing with the problems. Unless there has been a very recent change of approach, I understand that all attorneys general support the concept of co-operation and joint force operation and do not support the idea of the institution of a national inquiry into organized crime.

There are many who advocate a royal commission or similar type of public inquiry into organized crime. I admit that there are some advantages to this approach. It does create an awareness among citizens of the nature and extent of organized criminal activities. It may expose the techniques employed by organized criminals to exploit an unsuspecting and unaware public. It would also expose key figures of the organized criminal community, their connections and the extent of their influence in legitimate activities. It would probably also expose organized criminals without having to gather the evidence necessary to produce in court.

There are definitely drawbacks, as well. The question surely arises as to whether it would be a satisfactory approach to a problem as complex as organized crime. A public inquiry would, of course, require a large staff of investigators and support personnel. Many of these people would have to be diverted from their current police responsibilities; that is undeniable. The diversion of police resources, and the publicity

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generated by a public inquiry, would without any doubt whatsoever—and I am clearly advised in that regard by the RCMP who have a great deal of expertise in this area—hamper ongoing, current investigations.

There may be a time when the drama of a public inquiry would be helpful, but at the moment one must remember some of the main disadvantages of a public inquiry. It would expose evidence and information in the hands of police as well as investigative techniques, without bringing criminals before the courts where they could be dealt with according to law.

I have given examples of joint police force operation right across the country, the type of network the federal government set up along with provincial attorneys general to establish a national system of intelligence of criminal activities in Canada, with the resultant prosecution. We just have to look at what has happened in Halifax, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver over the past few months. It indicates quite clearly we are on the right track in combatting organized crime in this country.

Mr. Gilbert: Tell that to the public; they do not believe it.

Mr. Fox: The hon. member says the public do not believe that. My responsibility as a minister of the Crown is to ensure that the most productive way of fighting organized crime is the one that is used in this country, not to try to come up with the most popular way of fighting organized crime which is not at the same time the most productive way. I am willing to stand here and say that at this stage I have not been convinced that it would be productive for the police to fight organized crime through a royal commission of inquiry which would be held in the full light of day. I am willing to accept the fact that what I am saying today is not politically popular in the country. However, I am willing to take my responsibility as a minister of the Crown and my responsibility to the people of this country to see to it that the productive way of fighting organized crime is indeed undertaken by the police forces of this country.

An hon. Member: You are being the spokesman for the police.

Mr. Fox: The hon. member says I am being the spokesman for the police. I have spoken to people in the police who are extremely knowledgeable in these matters, a lot more knowledgeable than members opposite who are not interested in the fight against organized crime but in scoring political points in this country because they think an election is coming up.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Fox: If hon. members will give me the opportunity, I will conclude and have the great pleasure of listening to their words of wisdom in this debate. Organized crime should be dealt with by the criminal justice system, the police, the prosecutors and the courts. Hon. members can assist this process by responsible support of legislation designed to combat organized crime and protect our society.