

Government Orders

One of the things that concerns me is right at the beginning of the bill and it deals with the definition of child pornography. The definition says:

“child pornography” means a photographic, film, video or other visual representation, whether or not it was made by electronic or mechanical means, that shows a person who is or is depicted as being under the age of eighteen years and is engaged in or is depicted as engaged in explicit sexual activity.

That is the definition under this bill of child pornography. I have a little difficulty with that and perhaps some of the legal minds who will be looking at this in committee will make me feel a little more comfortable.

It is not just enough to talk about explicit sexual activity. There are people who prey upon young people for profit and take pictures of our children in positions of undress so that they can sell them to people who get their sexual pleasure this way. I think the definition should be broadened so that any exploitation or exploitative measure that is meant to sexually stimulate other individuals by way of the depiction should be considered obscene.

The difference between the definition of pornography and erotica is vastly different when we are not dealing with juveniles. When we are dealing with juveniles it is surely a much different situation. The definition of what is pornographic must be tougher when we are dealing with juveniles than when we are dealing with adults.

Clearly most of the provisions of this bill are laudable. It is something with which we absolutely have to grapple. There may be some technical things that we have to fine tune. One of the things the opposition is hoping is that the government will fully co-operate with us in allowing this bill to go to committee and make available immediately all of the appropriate officials from the Department of Justice so that we can get on with our business of fixing this particular piece of the Criminal Code.

The other thing that has to be looked at seriously is the issue of sentences. When we are dealing with sentences for the production of this material and for the distribution of this material then a maximum sentence of 10 years is probably pretty appropriate. We must have a sentence that is long enough to act as a deterrent to those individuals who are intent upon exploiting our children for sexual purposes and for profit.

I would like to once again say that our party and the New Democratic Party, members of both parties, have over the past number of years continued to raise this

issue. We have tried to put it on the front burner of the government opposite when we are dealing with legislation.

Indeed, the former Minister of Justice, the pretender to the Tory throne—

Mr. Nicholson: The next Prime Minister.

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): The Minister of the Environment might have something to say about that. The former Minister of Justice, who likes to tout herself as somebody who has been extremely progressive and has brought forward all these pieces of legislation that Canadians have long needed, told us back in 1990 that the government was looking at it. It was a very complex matter.

For anybody out there who wants to know why we have had to wait from 1990 until the sixth last day of this sitting to get the bill I want to show why. It is because altogether this bill has four pages. It took this government three solid years to put together a four-page piece of legislation to try to stop the bottom dwelling, pond scum who exploit our children sexually.

• (1535)

The Liberal Party on this side of the House, I know the New Democratic Party, who will speak next, and I would hope all members of the House will support this legislation as a priority, that we would have very quick hearings, that the Minister of Justice would give us his assurance today that he will treat this in an expeditious manner and make available the appropriate departmental and justice officials so that by the time this Parliament rises we will have a bill that will put an end to the exploitation of our children.

Mr. Ian Waddell (Port Moody—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge you and welcome you to the chair. It is good to have an Albertan in the chair.

I am going to speak for 10 minutes and then let my friend the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing, another westerner, speak for the remaining time.

I want to be quite plain. Since this government was elected in 1984 there has been a special committee on child pornography in 1984, 1985 and 1990 that recommended that Ottawa address this issue. It was not until May 13 of this year, with 24 days scheduled in Parliament at that time, with the House supposed to finish on June 23 but now it may shut down before then, that the government chose to introduce this bill.