

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[English]

CONTINUATION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed, from Wednesday, March 6, consideration of the motion of Mr. Stollery for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session.

Mr. Hugh Poulin (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, before the adjournment yesterday I had made some remarks with respect to matters of a local nature that are of concern to the government and matters of concern to the government nationally. I would now like to comment briefly on some of the remarks made by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner), whose speech I listened to yesterday with great interest. He referred to a story during his speech. My recollection of that story is that it had its origin with an Irish Boston politician who said, "These are my principles and policies and if you don't like them—well, I have others."

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe entered the House with a reputation, unexcelled by any other member, for his commitment to law and order as a prosecutor, as a judge, and as a minister of justice for the province of Quebec. However, it was not long before he, like the Irish Boston politician, reverted to other policies and principles.

Both in the House and in committee he supported the 90-day notice provision inserted in the Protection of Privacy Act which provision, I fear, will greatly restrict the investigative powers of the police in their efforts to control criminal activity. In his speech the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe also made reference to what he termed "the Liberal-NDP charade." May I point out that the NDP support has been for good Liberal policies which have resulted in good laws for Canada—some 50 pieces of good legislation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Poulin: Of equal significance is the fact that when the Conservative opposition joined with the New Democratic party, for whatever reasons, the product of that union was the 90-day notice provision which in fact places a fire alarm bell in the offices of organized crime, warning them that law enforcement agencies are investigating their criminal activities. The result of that union produced an illegitimate section in what is otherwise a worth-while piece of legislation.

However, Mr. Speaker, I must agree with the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe when he says that politics, if they are to have any meaning today, must be synonymous with integrity, honesty and responsive government. The word "politics" has gained many unsavoury connotations in recent months. The events surrounding Watergate in the United States have had a deep effect on the faith of the American people in their government, on the integrity of politics, and on the credibility of politicians in general. These effects have spilled over into Canada.

We all have a responsibility to restore politics to its place as a respectable and respected profession in the eyes of the public. Politicians themselves must ensure that they

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are honest, not only in fact but in every facet of the appearance of their actions. The fact that the authority of the government is no longer automatically accepted, especially by younger people, is not in itself an unhealthy attitude if it results in people taking a more active interest in their government.

There is another area of concern to me on which the throne speech was silent. I had hoped that included in it would be an announcement of forthcoming changes in the Narcotic Control Act regarding commercial trafficking in heroin and other similar hard drugs. This is an area which is becoming more and more of a concern to Canadians. The illicit commercial trafficking in hard drugs is becoming more and more of a threat to the health and well-being of Canadians. This problem continues to grow and is one of the major social concerns facing our nation.

My research indicates that the domestic illicit heroin problem is the most serious of our multi-drug problems. The number of persons addicted to heroin in Canada has continued to increase. It is now estimated that there are between 16,000 and 19,000 persons using this drug in our country. If we go back in the chain of supply, inevitably we must find that those who are using heroin, and who are the unfortunate captives of this addictive habit, have been supplied with their drug, and in many cases induced to become users of it, by those whom I would term commercial traffickers in heroin.

● (1210)

For purposes only of my remarks at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would define a commercial trafficker in heroin as one who sells a quantity of heroin, for example, 250 grams, which is equal to eight ounces or half a pound and has a current street value of \$100,000. Such traffickers are clearly and without doubt in this most reprehensible criminal activity for the sole motive of profit, greed and avarice. Such traffickers stand to double or triple their investment and we can easily see that the profits are indeed high. I believe that we must impose the most severe and stringent sanctions on such criminal activity so that those who seek to gain such high profits will, if convicted, be assured that the Canadian people, as represented by parliament, will also extract a high price by way of a minimum penalty of imprisonment without parole. I strongly recommend that, in order to deter this criminal activity and to protect society against this most reprehensible crime, the government should amend the Narcotic Control Act to provide a minimum term of imprisonment of seven years without parole for anyone convicted of trafficking in heroin or possession for the purpose of trafficking in the amount I have mentioned. It may be that parliament, upon examination of my proposal, would see fit to define a commercial trafficker as one who would traffic in, for example, two ounces of heroin which now has a current street value of \$25,000. I point out, Mr. Speaker, that one ounce of heroin has a street value of \$12,500 while the current value of one ounce of gold is \$160.

On September 1, 1973, new drug measures went into effect in the state of New York, just 60 miles from our seat of parliament. There, for example, a person trafficking in one ounce or more of heroin is liable to be sentenced to a minimum term of imprisonment of 15 years, with a maximum of life. While a minimum term of imprisonment is