

### Government Orders

In the first one, the petitioners are saying: "Wherefore the undersigned, your petitioners humbly pray upon Parliament to enact legislation that would give protection in law to pre-born human beings and, as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray". There are several names on the petitions.

#### ASSISTED SUICIDE

**Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley):** Mr. Speaker, the second duly certified petition which I support states that section 241 of the Criminal Code of Canada states: "Every-one who counsels a person to commit suicide or aids or abets a person to commit suicide, whether suicide ensues or not, is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment of a term not exceeding 14 years".

The humble petitioners therefore pray that Parliament not repeal or amend section 241 of the Criminal Code in any way and to uphold the Supreme Court of Canada decision of September 30, 1993 to disallow assisted suicide, euthanasia.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Shall all questions be allowed to stand?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement Government Orders will be extended by 26 minutes pursuant to Standing Order 33(2)(b).

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1535)

[English]

### YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada)** moved that Bill C-37, an act to amend the Young Offenders Act and the Criminal Code, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to introduce debate on second reading with respect to Bill C-37.

In beginning may I observe that last week the government took steps to improve the youth justice system in Canada, both in terms of immediate and long term changes to the justice system for young people. By introducing Bill C-37 the govern-

ment addressed the very real public concerns about crimes of violence by youths in Canada.

The government recognizes the importance of public protection in the justice system, but it recognizes that protection of the public is best achieved through the rehabilitation of offenders wherever possible.

The government emphasized the accountability aspect of the justice system and at the same time, it fulfilled commitments it had given to the electorate last year during the election campaign.

[Translation]

All Canadians want to raise their children in safe and crime-free communities. But we do not always agree on the best way to reach our goal.

There is no miracle solution, no panacea. However, I believe that this bill represents a step in the right direction, a better way for the federal government to deal with young offenders, especially those guilty of serious offences.

[English]

I wish to touch upon the essential elements of Bill C-37 as I introduce second reading debate in this Chamber. As I do so, may I invite the attention of hon. members to the balancing aspects of the legislation, to the distinctions it draws between for example, violent and non-violent crime, and between young offenders in different parts of the age groups covered by the legislation. I ask hon. members to agree that those distinctions based on a rational assessment of risk and of need are an appropriate adjustment for the youth justice system in Canada.

I deal first with maximum penalties for murder. Bill C-37 would increase to 10 years in the case of first degree murder and to seven years in the case of second degree murder the maximum penalties in youth court for those convicted there of murder. This change is motivated by an acknowledgement on the part of this government that Canadians recognize that the present maximum penalty for first degree murder of five years is simply not sufficient to reflect society's abhorrence and condemnation of what is simply the most serious single criminal act.

[Translation]

By toughening up sentences, we give a clear indication to our young people that serious offences also have very serious consequences, whether they come before a youth court or an adult court.

[English]

The second significant change introduced by Bill C-37 has to do with those 16 and 17-year old young people who are charged with the most serious crimes of violence. The bill would adjust the present transfer provisions in dealing with those young persons so as to obligate them to satisfy the youth court judge that their trials should be held in youth court. Failure on the part of such persons to persuade the judge would result in their being