

*Criminal Code*

There are some serious omissions in this Bill. It ignores the recommendations of the Fraser Commission that would deal with community problems in a more non-criminal way with the strengthening of some nuisance provisions of the Criminal Code. It also ignores major recommendations of the Badgley Report. They are two very important federal reports that involved input from all parts of Canada and considerable study and research.

The fact is that it will be mostly women who will be charged under the Criminal Code. They will be thrown in jail, given a criminal record and returned to the streets to pay their fines. With such a record, it is doubtful that there will be very much chance to move into any kind of occupation in the future.

There is no provision in the Bill to deal with pimps. Although the Bill includes a provision by which customers could be charged, they are less likely to be charged. It is much easier to pick up a woman or young person who is on the street than it is to pick up the fancy customer who is in a car cruising around the neighbourhood. There is no question that past experience shows that it will be women and an increasing number of young people, including young men, who will be the primary victims of this legislation.

I hope the Government will seriously consider addressing our deep concern about the fact that this Bill also criminalizes juveniles and provides no strong sanctions against customers of juveniles. This was one of the most important recommendations of the Fraser Commission. I do not understand why there is no clause in the Bill dealing very strongly with such sanctions.

● (1550)

The Government has no plan to deal with the comprehensive situation that causes and has spin-offs from prostitution. Most of us agree, and the reports I have mentioned underline strongly, that prostitution has a social and an economic cause. Therefore, we must look at social and economic solutions along with protections for neighbourhoods.

We will oppose this Bill. We will present further details in debate and committee. Being the Member for Vancouver East, where this summer there have been intolerable kinds of activities particularly in the Mount Pleasant area of my riding, I wish I could support a Bill that would be a quick fix to solve community problems relating to street soliciting.

I know the Hon. Member for Vancouver Centre (Miss Carney) will agree that as street soliciting is concentrated in one neighbourhood it starts out as a nuisance problem which quickly escalates to include very serious problems leading to violence and intimidation. In one apartment building in my riding a prostitute was murdered and an incident took place involving 13 year-olds on private property. These are but two extreme incidents but they must cease. We cannot tolerate disruption to neighbourhoods. Citizens and communities have rights and it is up to all of us to assist in protecting these rights.

Our party and certainly myself feel that aggressive action must be taken on many fronts to deal with community prob-

lems. We feel that not enough has been done to deal with these problems. We would like to see much more aggressive enforcement by police. I have spent a lot of time talking to people regarding specific incidents that involved local people calling police. Much more aggressive enforcement by police must be taken under existing provisions of the Criminal Code as well as under municipal by-laws and provincial laws, all of which have provisions to deal with nuisance, loitering, intimidation, indecent acts, traffic violations, noise, trespassing and the involvement of juveniles. In Vancouver and in some other cities, there has not been a concerted attempt to follow up with concentrated police action, particularly community policing.

My colleague, the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) has spoken very eloquently and in great detail about the many reasons we have concerns regarding Bill C-49. Unfortunately, it is impossible to improve this Bill in committee. It would be nice if we could change the focus and modify it in some way to be helpful. Under the existing terms of reference and the purposes of this Bill, it cannot be amended. It is an extremely simplistic Bill which has many serious omissions regarding street soliciting, community problems and prostitution generally.

I want to repeat that while we cannot agree with this Bill, we do not intend to delay it beyond the normal period for debate. We feel it is important to have all views presented in committee, including views of community groups which have considerable expertise in the area. We know in advance that the Bill will be passed by the Conservative Government majority, despite its inadequacies and despite a complete disregard of the Fraser Committee recommendations.

In the New Democratic Party we agree most emphatically with the comments made by the Minister this morning, that the quality of life in residential neighbourhoods and the safety and rights of residents must be protected and of primary concern. Situations have almost destroyed a neighbourhood in my riding which has experienced nuisance problems, harassment, obscenities and violent crimes. Citizens and communities have rights to a safe environment.

Young people are drawn into street prostitution, a point which the Minister stressed. We too are most concerned about this. I have talked to many women who are raising young children on very low incomes and little security. They are forced to take to the streets to increase their incomes. As well we have people on grossly inadequate welfare rates who have to go to food banks and must prostitute at the end of the month to feed their kids.

I want to add my voice to those of my constituents who are demanding an end to this intolerable community disruption experienced in the Mount Pleasant community. Noise and offensive behaviour of customers, prostitutes and pimps has escalated, as I said before. Many women are afraid to go out at night. Parents are rightfully incensed at the obscene behaviour which their children are witnessing. I am very concerned when I hear about calls to police that more often than not are unable to be completed. I have heard about calls being unanswered. Responses are delayed. I am told there is no chance to