

Party could have been a little more serious when these important amendments were introduced in February of this year. It is unfortunate that they chose to stall, but be that as it may, we are prepared to turn the page and to deal with this very important legislation.

As my hon. friend, the Member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan) so eloquently stated, the Liberal Party will not oppose for the sake of opposing. We are prepared to co-operate with the Government. I am only sorry that the New Democratic Party is not prepared to co-operate to ensure that this Bill, especially the provisions with respect to drinking and driving, will become law before Christmas. I only hope that the NDP will reconsider its position.

With respect to the matter of drunk driving, it is quite clear that it is a very serious social problem in this country. As has been indicated in the past, in 1981 there were 158,000 convictions in the country for drinking and driving. Unfortunately, I do not have the statistics available with respect to the last few years, but I would suspect that the number of convictions has increased since 1981. That number itself would indicate how serious this problem is.

While it is recognized that the criminal law can go a long way to deter individuals from drinking and driving, the criminal law in and of itself is not sufficient to get the message out to the Canadian public that drinking and driving is a type of behaviour that will not be accepted. It is socially unacceptable. It is extremely dangerous and extremely costly. I am very disappointed, as are other members of my caucus, that the Minister of Justice would cut, purely for the sake of cutting, \$700,000 from the public legal education program which was planned. That money could have been earmarked to educate the public with regard to drinking and driving. I asked the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary whether he would petition the Minister to re-instate those funds and to earmark them for this specific purpose. For whatever reason, he indicated that he would not so petition the Government. That would lead one to question the credibility of the Government when it talks about the seriousness of combatting drinking and driving. If the Government is serious, I challenge it to spend at least that \$700,000 to educate the public.

We are talking about a very serious social problem. We are talking about human life. There are literally hundreds upon hundreds of individuals who are killed or maimed every year because of drunk drivers. The statistics indicate that alcohol is a contributing factor in 50 per cent of all fatal traffic accidents. Statistics also indicate that the economic cost of alcohol-related accidents is in excess of \$800 million per year in this country. On any given night, 25 per cent of the drivers on the road in Canada have been drinking and 6 per cent are legally impaired. Drunk drivers cause 30 per cent of all traffic accidents in which injuries are sustained.

The Liberal Party is prepared to support the provisions with respect to drinking and driving, Mr. Speaker. We are also prepared to support in principle the other provisions in this Bill. However, with respect to the other provisions dealing with telewarrants, computer crime and other amendments that

would allow for pre-trial conferences, we believe that those clauses of the Bill should be given some serious consideration by the Justice Committee. This would also provide an opportunity to various interest groups from across the country to indicate their concerns to the Justice Committee.

● (1610)

Returning to the question of sentencing, I have indicated one of my concerns with respect to the regime of sanctions that are proposed in this legislation.

In May of this year, I believe, the Liberal Government appointed a commission to study the whole question of sentencing in this country. Although the Sinclair Commission is to report to Parliament some time next year, I am disappointed to learn that the Commission has yet to meet. As of approximately two weeks ago, it had yet to commence deliberations to discuss the terms of reference for studying the question of criminal law sentencing in this country. I hope the Parliamentary Secretary and the Minister of Justice will request that the Commission begin immediately to look at the whole question of sentencing. This is a very important consideration when one talks about adding new offences to the Criminal Code of Canada.

I am also interested in the concept of adding the immobilization or impounding of vehicles to the impaired driving provisions. I believe that there would be a definite deterrent effect to impounding vehicles of those who are convicted of impaired driving. I say this because in the short time I have been a member of the Ontario Bar it has been my experience, while defending individuals who have been charged with drinking and driving, that it is the sanctions attached to drinking and driving that affect them the most.

In Ontario, the first offence fine for drinking and driving ranges anywhere from \$150 to \$500. This Bill will increase the minimum from \$150 to \$300. Presumably a clear message will go to the judiciary in this country that the existing tariff is too low and the penalty should be increased. I hope that there is some uniformity with respect to sentencing across the country.

With respect to the immobilization of vehicles, I suggest it would be an effective deterrent to include that sanction of impounding of a motor vehicle upon conviction. I would further suggest that the automobile should be impounded regardless of whether or not the person convicted is the owner of the automobile. This would make owners of vehicles more responsible in terms of the person to whom they lend their cars.

The current Ontario civil law holds that the owner of a vehicle as well as the driver are jointly and severally liable for negligence in the operation of that vehicle. I hope the Government would consider applying that principle to the Criminal Code and to the drunk driving provisions of the Criminal Code.

I recognize that my time is up. That is rather unfortunate because I wanted to discuss some other matters. However, I welcome any questions from Hon. Members.