

Criminal Code

The government is flexible on oil pricing, is aware of the concerns of the west, and is open to negotiation. It is extremely important that both sides co-operate in these negotiations for the energy and economic security of all Canadians. I was in the west four times last summer. I spoke with Bill Richards, the president of Dome, Bob Blair of Nova, Jim Grey of Canadian Hunter, and Bob Pierce of Nova. I am well aware of the entrepreneurial spirit and the spirit of productivity that exist in Alberta and throughout the west. It is the purpose of the National Energy Program to foster a climate so that this can continue for the benefit of energy exploration and development for all Canadians.

I see my time is running out. I have further points to make, which I will do at eight o'clock.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Corbett)—Research and Development—Job-creation programs—Policy of department; the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Wright)—Energy—Inquiry respecting contingency plans to assist unemployed oil well drillers; the hon. member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong)—Hazardous substances—Shipment of Vitavax pesticide to Nepal and India.

It being five o'clock the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely, public bills, private bills, and notices of motions.

● (1700)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

[English]

Motions Nos. 17 and 18 allowed to stand by unanimous consent.

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CRIMINAL CODE

AMENDMENT RESPECTING PARENTAL ABDUCTION

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta) moved that Bill C-219, to amend the Criminal Code (parental

abduction of children), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

He said: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-219 is essentially the same bill I tabled first in the fall of 1976. One of the sad commentaries on our society is that there is an increasingly alarming trend to marriage break-ups. In far too many of these situations there is growing acrimony, and the victims of the acrimony are the helpless children of those marriages. It is becoming increasingly apparent also that it is the parent who does not have custody of the child who will frequently take issue with the other parent by snatching the child who has been assigned in custody. The hopeless victim is always the child.

It seemed to me when I first encountered this problem that we do not have protection for children by way of the Criminal Code under that section dealing with kidnapping. There is protection from this kind of violence for those children in what we might call a normal, wholesome marriage, home and family life, yet there is no protection under the law, at least no adequate protection, for those children who are the potential victims of a marriage break-up. For that reason I tabled what was then Bill C-221 in the fall of 1976. That bill was debated in March, 1977. At that time there was growing acceptance of the principle of the bill; that is, that kidnapping under the provisions of the bill should no longer be a matter dealt with under the civil code but should be dealt with under the Criminal Code. In this way there would be real substance to the protection that ought to exist for children.

At that time the subject matter of my bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs for further study. The subject of the bill was supported by all parties, and I think the principle has unanimous support now in the House. I must say, to the credit of all hon. members, the subject matter has never been dealt with in a politically partisan way but has always been seen as a social issue which has to be dealt with outside party politics.

If there is an awareness in the House about this issue, there is also a growing awareness in the country. There are thousands of cases of the kind I have described occurring in Canada. I have had many representations received in my office regarding this type of case. These are cases involving virtually helpless parents who have had their children snatched from them by the other parent, usually, but not always, the father. The parent with custody granted by the court becomes a helpless victim while the child, on many occasions, becomes the subject of abuse at the hands of the parent who snatched the child. There seems to be no elementary or emotional security for these children in their formative years. They sometimes become scarred for life through such an experience.

Four years ago when we first debated this issue I mentioned the first case that had come to my attention involving the son of one of my constituents, a Mrs. Lois Preston. Her son was snatched away and carried about from pillar to post across Canada, mainly throughout Ontario and sometimes into the United States, for a period of about three years. During that three-year period he had something like 12 aliases. By the time he was found three years later the poor child hardly even knew