

The Address

• (1730)

There appears to be one matter though that the report does not thoroughly address. I believe it is on the minds of many Canadians. Certainly thousands of my constituents and hundreds of thousands of other Canadians want to see a punishment that fits the crime outlined. I would suggest they want to see it reintroduced into the system.

Would the minister please satisfy the Canadian people in their desire to see such a stand taken by the government?

Mr. Rock: Mr. Speaker, in response to the question put by the hon. member for Calgary Northeast, with reference to the recommendation last year it was the Horner committee, an all-party committee of the House, that conducted extensive research and had lengthy hearings on the whole question of crime prevention. That committee unanimously recommended, among other things, that a national strategy including a national council be created for this purpose. We are really acting upon and giving life to recommendations that emanate from an all-party committee, as well as from other sources as I mentioned in my remarks.

In terms of sentencing obviously it must be the very purpose of the criminal justice system to ensure the sentence fits the crime. That is often, however, in the eye of the beholder. There can be controversy about whether a given sentence on a particular day in answer to a specific crime is the right one.

If I may be permitted to say so at this time, I recently reread a study done by Anthony Dube, a noted criminologist, who undertook as a research project to examine public reactions to sentences meted out to specific crimes first from the newspaper story and then after acquainting members of the public with all the facts of the case that went before the judge who passed sentence.

In his research Mr. Dube made the observation that when the citizens read of the sentence in the newspaper a given percentage thought it seemed like a very light sentence for such a crime. However when the same persons were given all the facts before the judge who actually passed the sentence, the percentage of those who agreed that the sentence was appropriate increased dramatically until it became almost unanimous.

The lesson we learned is that it is often misleading and sometimes dangerous to assess the appropriateness of a sentence from a brief newspaper report or a television report. Surely the justice system we want is one in which competent judges, on the basis of all the facts in the adversarial system, assess the

appropriate sentence in keeping with appropriate principles in the courtroom where the case has been tried.

I do not wish to sidestep the question put by the hon. member for Calgary Northeast. Let me deal with it squarely by saying that I have already indicated we propose to introduce legislation on the subject of sentencing. I will be happy to have his reaction to it. In the process of committee hearings on that bill I am certain he will have an opportunity to develop his point further.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start my maiden speech by taking a moment to thank the constituents of Fraser Valley East for the trust they have placed in me. I will be doing my utmost to earn their continued confidence in the months and the years ahead.

I also thank my own family for their ongoing sacrifice and support. If, as many people say, a nation is only as strong as its families then in this International Year of the Family we must emphasize the importance of the nuclear family in our own country. My own family, Deb and Karina, Mark, Loni and Kyla, can rest assured that for me every year is the year of the family.

Listening to the speeches in the House during the throne speech debate has been very enlightening. Each member describes their riding as the most beautiful one in all of Canada, representing the best that Canada has to offer. Each of these speeches comes from the heart. They bode well for the future of our country if the members of Parliament will emphasize the positive themes that make us distinctively Canadian.

As a proud Canadian representing a proud area of Canada, I will fulfil my mandate as a positive, constructive opposition member in the 35th Parliament.

• (1735)

I come from a constituency that has given much and yet has even more to offer to the Canadian way of life. We can all take pride in the 1 Combat Engineer Regiment from Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack, a regiment that has represented us so well in Croatia. Often during Tuesday's debate on our peacekeeping role my thoughts were with the soldiers of 1 CER and their families as they prepare to go back into that very dangerous arena. We salute them all.

I could talk for a long time about my riding. Our forest industry has provided jobs for a century and continues to offer exciting opportunities for the future. From farms to flowers, high mountains and hot springs, our area is so colourful that we call it rainbow country. Tourism, fishing, golfing, unmatched scenery and warm weather year round make Fraser Valley East one of the finest places in Canada to live, to work and to play. All members are invited to B.C. to see for themselves.