

Child Pornography

the House of Commons. There was a ground swell of public opinion against what people saw when they went into corner grocery stores, walked past marquisse or wherever they might have been. They were confronted with explicit sexual material, with which they had to be content.

When various members of this House presented their bills, other hon. members were highly skeptical. The ominous threat of censorship was immediately raised. It was suggested that these members were trying to bring back the nineteenth century. While members of parliament might have been slow coming around, the evidence is that the public has been demanding that we take action. The public has been appalled at the sexually explicit material which has become readily available at outlets throughout our country. That material is available not just in our large cities but in almost every community across this land.

Calls for action came from community leaders, church leaders, parents and police departments. The calls were for amendments to the Criminal Code, not to stem the flood of this material, but at least to reduce its impact.

Often in the history of mankind it has taken tragedy to awaken people to what has been happening, and so it was in the last session of parliament. We were not receiving support from a number of members of parliament. We faced innumerable questions about censorship. Then something happened in Toronto which changed everything. It is so difficult for people to learn the lessons of life that it often takes tragedy to force us to face the stark realities of life. The tragedy to which I refer was that an 11-year old boy had to give his life to spark public consciousness about what was happening in our streets. I refer to the death of Emanuel Jaques. That highly publicized event suddenly raised the level of consciousness in the public and in members of parliament. Yes, something had to be done.

I and other hon. members were pleased that the government allowed this subject matter to be referred to a committee. After hearing reports on both sides of the issue, the all-party committee reported that a dramatic increase in the amount of sexually explicit material had become available in Canada. That finding was substantiated. Traditionally this material was in the form of magazines, but it became more sophisticated. In addition to magazines there were home movies, cassettes, and sexual paraphernalia which defied description.

In its findings the committee stated:

A close examination of this development has revealed the emergency of a number of unhealthy social tendencies which are unacceptable to the vast majority of Canadians.

The committee found that too often the material involved was exploitive of women. The result was degradation not just of women but of all humanity.

The committee observed that there was an increasing amount of material vividly depicting the participation of children in sexually explicit acts. This material portrayed children involved in sexual acts individually, with adults, with animals, and with inanimate objects. What I found interesting was that this so-called "kiddie porn" was condemned by all witnesses

[Mr. Epp.]

who said that adults should have the right to decide what to read or view. When it came to "kiddie porn" all were appalled.

Even pornography peddlers said that this material should not be on the stands. But when pressed further they said they did not peddle it. If they do not peddle it, how can it be on the stands? When pornography peddlers—many of whom are fathers—were confronted with what this material is all about and its ravages on young minds, they were appalled. However, I assume the dollar speaks louder than their apparent disgust.

Bill C-211 addresses itself specifically to child pornography or "kiddie porn". I am dealing today with the most sordid element of pornography which is now in this country. According to studies, and also evidence before the standing committee, this material is almost totally imported into this country. It is estimated that between 80 per cent and 85 per cent comes from the U.S., and almost the entire remainder comes from Europe. Very little of it is Canadian made.

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The customs and excise branch of Revenue Canada is authorized, under the Customs Tariff Act, to prohibit the importation of goods which are described as pornographic. The difficulty with the importation regulations, I suggest, is not a legislative problem but rather one of administration. What is interesting is that ministers of national revenue have been lax before, but the public outcry has suddenly toughened their resolve. Nevertheless, the smut still comes into the country. However, at least there is now a recognition that under the Customs Tariff Act much of this material can be kept out of the country.

The definition under section 159 of the Criminal Code is not totally clear, and so Bill C-211 attempts to define obscenity more precisely, thus giving our customs officers and other officials a clearer understanding of what this House means and how it defines obscenity.

What was pointed out also was that the material of which we are now speaking is produced almost totally by organized criminal networks which, as I said before, have their basic operation in the United States. It is organized crime that is involved in the production, transportation, and distribution of this material.

The Vancouver police department, in co-operation with two other metro police departments, in its presentation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs on February 21, 1978, stated the following:

The Vancouver police department expresses a concern that the pornography industry has a major influence on crime. Pornography cannot be looked at in isolation. The city of Vancouver has a very cosmopolitan population, it is a seaport city with the largest drug addiction problem in Canada. The major prostitution problem involves both males and females and young children who have found the homosexual market to be a means of supporting themselves. It is our contention, that the pornography industry aids and abets the social problem of prostitution.

It is understandable why the purveyors of this filth would oppose any type of restriction on their trade. It is because their trade is highly lucrative. Mark-ups of 500 per cent to 5,000 per cent are common. But is it not an indictment of our society