

a very serious offence, must be given every opportunity to understand the consequences of his actions and to rehabilitate himself.

Unlike the system for adults, who are assumed to be responsible, the young person needs to develop within a supervisory framework. That was the view in 1984. They were right then and the same approach is still taken by all sectors responsible for dealing with this problem. However, it is not the position taken by the extremists and reactionaries who have managed to enlist the Minister of Justice for their crusade.

In any case, experience has shown that in Ontario and Quebec, the system works very well. Perhaps the provinces where the hysteria about the subject is greatest have yet to introduce effective mechanisms.

I would urge hon. members from the Prairie provinces and British Columbia to take a look at the youth protection agencies and youth courts in their provinces and find out whether they have this kind of institution which is indispensable to the proper application of the legislation. Maybe they should start campaigning in their own backyard. Perhaps they should send the protest letters they receive in such numbers to the members of their provincial legislatures.

By the way, I think that what was said by the Quebec and Ontario ministers about this legislation is a good indication of how it will be received in Quebec City and Queen's Park. A very conclusive experiment was conducted in Quebec at the Centre Boscoville, covering the rehabilitation and social integration of 24 teenagers who had been found guilty of homicide and were admitted to this reform institution between 1968 and 1983. I repeat that Quebec is probably the province where the application of the Young Offenders Act has been most comprehensive.

I also repeat that western reactionaries would do well to look at the Quebec experience. Maybe they would, then, stop seeing young people as strangers that you should be wary of, as the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby was saying. He seems to have forgotten that he was young once.

The study conducted in Boscoville demonstrated that all these young people had a good prognosis, that there had been no subsequent offence, nor any return to delinquent behaviour. The murders had circumstantial and neurotic causes. Moreover, the follow-up of these young offenders showed a perfect social rehabilitation, some having very good positions in society.

• (1625)

A document from the research branch of the Library of Parliament dealing with the impact of repressive measures concluded: "Increasing the capacity to punish by passing harsher legal sanctions could lead to longer prison terms for a larger number of young offenders".

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"The advantage for society, in the short term, is that it would be protected from the offender. However, this solution would further strain the already insufficient resources affected to detention and rehabilitation infrastructures—and assumes a greater criminalization, without reducing the crime rate".

Some members in this House see young people as the enemy. Whether they express a personal opinion or are echoing the fear of some of their constituents, the message they send to young people is vindictive.

I reread the speech that the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby made in this House on May 12 of this year. I hope that we will never again hear, in Parliament, such a war cry against young people. I would like Parliament to repudiate this desire to set up a police state.

Our attitude towards juvenile delinquency will reflect our democratic commitment. I call upon the conscience of every member. I urge everyone, irrespective of their political affiliation, not already committed to a more repressive attitude towards young people, to consider seriously, from the bottom of their hearts, what we are debating today.

I am convinced that on the government side, there are members who will not take an active part in this debate, but who are torn between their party line and their own sense of social justice. I am asking them to counterbalance the action of their colleagues who are vigorously campaigning in favour of the hardening of the legislation and demand a more in-depth reflection on juvenile delinquency.

I have already quoted various statistics during previous debates, and I do not want to bring any more numerical data to the debate. Statistics only explain the past. Even if they can be used to show trends, they can only reflect outdated situations.

At the risk of having to quote numbers regarding the past few years, I will talk briefly about that period when crime by young people went down. The experience in Quebec proves beyond any doubt that the system is working. I am not saying that it works perfectly. Do criminal courts work perfectly?

The system is working to the general satisfaction of all parties involved, starting with those in the judiciary, who all say not to change anything for the time being. Why is the Minister of Justice not listening to those who deal with this problem on a daily basis? Because he lets people tell him what to do, because he was unable to convince the cabinet and members of his party that nothing would justify such a drastic switch towards repression.

Because the minister, whose extreme competence and honesty I deeply respect, is being unwillingly caught up in a popularity contest. The Liberals are dragging behind Reform Party activists. The Liberals are being told what to do by Reform Party supporters. The minister has no other choice. Between those