

Government Orders

I am pleased that Bill C-126 proposes harsher penalties for this type of offence. Increasing the possible penalty for this offence to a maximum of five years in prison sends a strong message that stalking will no longer be tolerated. In fact zero tolerance of harassment must be our common goal and action.

Clause 7, section 465 was amended to add a section on husband-wife conspiracy with regard to the abduction of a child. This amendment was voted down in committee because it would not take into account the situation, financial dependence, fear of assault, battered wife syndrome, et cetera of women who are often forced into such acts. There is often a power imbalance between partners that must be acknowledged by law. Such an amendment would not have recognized that in many relationships women have neither control nor power.

I was pleased with the parental child abduction provisions. At present children are not protected from abduction where there is a valid custody order but the abducting parent believes it to be invalid. This bill redresses this situation and closes this gap by stating that:

A person is guilty of an indictable offence or an offence punishable on summary conviction if this parent abducts a child whether or not there is a custody order with relation to that person.

This is a long overdue measure.

Clause 9 of the bill was amended to prohibit accused persons from possessing firearms, ammunition and explosive substances. The accused must also surrender firearms acquisition certificates. This refers to clause 8, subsection 515 (4.1) and is designed to give added protection to the victims. In other words, in addition to not being able to communicate with the victims and frequent certain places, the accused will no longer be allowed to possess firearms.

I also support the amendment proposed by my colleague from Moncton that the House undertake a comprehensive review of the provisions of this act. This is imperative to ensure that the act, if and when implemented, is meeting the needs of Canadian society.

I am concerned by the provisions with respect to convicted sex offenders and their access to children. The new provision that would provide for up to a lifetime ban on convicted sex offenders from frequenting day care centres, school grounds, play grounds or community centres, public parks, bathing areas and so on is problem-

atic. Although it allows the court the discretion to tailor the prohibition to the circumstances of the individual or not to impose the prohibition at all, it leaves the individual judge with far too much discretion.

The premise is also very disturbing. The premises are linked in that a person who commits an offence should be punished for life and a person who commits a certain type of offence will inevitably do the same thing. It is an entirely different story with a repeat offender who refuses all treatment. My party, the Liberal Party, believes that the rehabilitation of an offender is a fundamental premise of our criminal justice system. Retribution without rehabilitation is a very flawed process.

Several weeks ago I participated in a press conference with the Liberal leader to unveil the Liberal crime and justice paper. In the paper we proposed recommendations to deal with the rehabilitation of sexual offenders. Over the past five years there has been a 20.4 per cent increase in the rate of admission of sex offenders. This means that more and more sex offenders are reintegrating into Canadian communities.

As the research branch of the Correctional Service of Canada tells us, repeat sex offenders are more than twice as likely to commit further sex offences, much more likely to violate conditional release conditions and more likely than any other offenders to re-offend with a non-sexual offence. Unfortunately treatment programs for sexual offenders are lacking. The federal government is spending approximately \$98 million a year to incarcerate these offenders and only \$2 million a year on treatment programs. It is the norm when it should be the exception that convicted offenders are returned to their communities without counselling or rehabilitation therapy. Treatment when available has been shown to cut the recidivism rate for sex offenders by almost 50 per cent.

• (1615)

For these reasons the people in the opposition party recommend that first the programs be established to rehabilitate convicted sex offenders to reduce their chances of re-offending once they are released, all the while supporting tough sentences. Second, a national registry of convicted child abusers be established. This information will be made available to organizations employing people who work or volunteer with children. Three, serious sex offenders who are not cured by the