

First, I would like to deal with the background of the bill. The law regarding sexual offences is basically unchanged since confederation. The most important exception was the 1969 amendments which decriminalized certain acts between consenting adults. In 1978 the Law Reform Commission of Canada advocated sweeping reform of the parts of the Criminal Code dealing with sexual offences. The commission said, first, that the rape charge should be replaced with assault and, second, that males and females should be treated equally under the law. This bill is the fourth time the government has attempted to make amendments to this part of the Criminal Code since 1978.

When the Tories were in government, then justice minister Senator Flynn promised to introduce legislation similar to the reforms the Liberals had attempted in some of these areas. As I understand it, the purpose of Bill C-53 is to modernize the code while adhering to certain principles of our society such as the protection of the integrity of the person, the protection of children and special groups, the safeguarding of public decency and the elimination of sexual discrimination.

I will just summarize the contents of the bill, which is familiar to hon. members. The new crime of sexual assault is created to replace the existing charge of rape. The exploitation of children for pornographic purposes is prohibited. Offences are enumerated regarding sexual relations with children under 16 and under 14, and I will be speaking about that portion of the bill. The offence of child abduction is redefined so as to cover children involved in custody disputes. The charge of procuring is expanded to include males as well as females.

There are two subjects in particular with which I would like to deal in my limited time. They are the issues of prostitution and sexual assault. With regard to sexual assault, the bill goes a long way toward improving the present legislation and meets many of the criticisms put forward regarding the inadequacy of our rape legislation. With regard to prostitution, however, the bill is totally inadequate, and I will deal with that subject first.

Earlier today I filed on behalf of my constituents a petition signed by 678 residents of the west end of Vancouver urging the government to take those measures necessary in amending the Criminal Code to restore to their residential neighbourhoods some form of peace and quiet. I have been actively involved in pushing for the reform of the laws dealing with this subject since I was elected, and that is why I am so disappointed with the failure of Bill C-53 to deal with this subject.

● (1610)

I should like to describe what the west end of Vancouver is like. It is that part of the city that I think one would see on a picture postcard. It is adjacent to the downtown area. It is primarily, but not exclusively, highrises. It is one of the most historic neighbourhoods in our city. For the last couple of years it has been invaded by prostitutes and pimps who are found on every corner. It is a business well organized by pimps with walkie-talkies and runners on motor bikes carrying messages. It is organized in relation to territories. Certain groups

have the rights for certain streets and territories. It is dangerous for residents. They are not only accosted every time they leave their apartment or home to get a loaf of bread or to pick up some milk or go to the post office, but there has already been one knifing incident. It is very noisy. There are cars squealing tires and people yelling in the middle of the night.

I should like to quote some letters from residents to make my point. One resident wrote:

I am a manager of an apartment with 42 suites. Please advise what progress, if any, the federal government is acting on this terrible prostitution of these young males and females. . . . The traffic is terrible from 5 p.m. to 5 a.m. I have good, hard working tenants paying taxes. Why should we all have to put up with this terrible situation?

Another one wrote:

As usual, I had trouble sleeping last night. The prostitutes were chattering in loud voices on the sidewalk and there was the constant roar of car engines and frequent honkings from the bumper-to-bumper traffic of hooker-hunters in the alley behind my apartment building. That is nothing new. However, by chance, because sleep was impossible I looked out my window, and there below in the parking lot, in the light of the street lamp, protected only by a three-foot high concrete wall, was a young girl hooker—

The rules of the House and one's natural sensitivity prohibit me from finishing the description of what this resident saw.

People going by in the steady flow of cars could see the proceedings. Hundreds of apartment windows looked down on that well-lit parking lot where this event took place. A young child, an elderly person, someone's daughter, someone's wife, would have seen (and perhaps did) exactly what I saw. . . . The youngsters view it in amazement, the elderly view it in horror, and many people like myself view it with utter disgust.

I would like to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that we are not dealing with the age old problem here of street prostitution in red light districts or street prostitution in downtown areas; we are dealing with the problem of prostitution on people's lawns, by their paper boxes, right in front of their grocery stores, in their churches and in their daycare centres. It is an infestation of a quiet and beautiful neighbourhood.

The inability of the government to act on this matter led to the formation of a group called CROWE, "Concerned Residents Of the West End", who have been again assisting in trying to bring pressure on the federal government to deal with this problem. They are intimidated by the fact that if they are publicly known, in terms of who the individuals are, they feel that there would be recriminations from the pimps and the organized drug dealers and the prostitutes who now control and patrol the west end.

CROWE has been successful in raising people's perception of the problem, but they have been unsuccessful and so far have had limited success in having the necessary changes introduced. Because of this, many people, including the mayor of Vancouver, myself and some of the residents, feel that the next step may be vigilante groups and active violence against this plague on a resident. I feel that that could take place before summer if these changes are not brought forward.

I should like to deal particularly with the juvenile prostitution problem. I see the member opposite is yawning. I would like to assure him that the problem of juvenile prostitution in the west end is not a yawning matter. It is a matter which involves children. The estimates say that on busy nights there