

Government Orders

on just talking about it and saying that because we have made some improvements that we have corrected the system. We have not corrected the system. We are a long way from correcting the system.

We need to get all of the governments involved in this together. There must be a more meaningful determination to correct this situation.

I would once again ask the government to do more to bring a speedy end to this problem. These children are growing up in poverty. They are a concern to their parents and they are a concern to this country because they are not being treated fairly.

We can only surmise what this is contributing to in terms of juvenile delinquency or problems with young offenders. There are no statistics on that nor will we be able to get any. Certainly if they see the injustice that is continuing there will be a bitterness on their part against the system, against the government, and against the way in which they have been treated.

This is really not helping anyone. It may be allowing the ex-husband to have more disposable income for himself. When we consider the real needs more disposable income for him is certainly not at the top of the priority list. Concern and support for these children and former wives is much higher on the priority list, and if it is not it certainly should be.

Mr. Jack Whittaker (Okanagan—Similkameen—Meritt): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on behalf of the New Democratic Party on this matter and also to speak on behalf of our justice critic, the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, who is unable to attend this debate this afternoon.

The bill before us is Bill C-79, an act to amend the Divorce Act and the Family Order and Agreements Enforcement Assistance Act. As the parliamentary secretary stated earlier in his speech, this bill will result in less red tape and simpler procedures for obtaining and updating support orders and better tracing services. The legislation should mean an improvement to the respective acts. We welcome the opportunity to examine the specific changes proposed.

The bill includes amendments to the Divorce Act so that future applications for custody or support will no longer have to be heard in the province in which the divorce was granted and only one of the former spouses

would have to reside in the province in which application for the order is made.

This is a very important section. Anybody who has dealt in the area of family law has often run into problems in which the custody area has to be changed and the applicant is in a different jurisdiction than the respondent. It often causes many difficulties when there simply is not enough money for either one of the parties to change venues or meet the court in the venue in which the application has been commenced. This is a very positive part of the bill that will and should be supported with some changes.

This bill also includes amendments to the Family Order and Agreements Enforcement Assistance Act that would remove the requirement that police officers obtain court authorization to use federal data banks for tracing individuals in cases of spousal child abduction. Police officers will no longer be expected to lay a charge before accessing the name and address information that will help them with their investigation. This certainly makes sense to me.

As well, garnishee summonses for the support payments would be valid for five years rather than the present one-year term. This is particularly important as it is often the experience of custodial parents, those women and children who are waiting for support payments, that they must wait many months for tracing services to find the father who has failed to meet his support payment obligation.

For example, presently a wait of six months leaves only six months of garnished support payments until the process must be started all over again. There seems to be a loss of time, a loss of effort, and often a loss of money to the spouse who is looking for the support payment. This must be seen to be an improvement, though recent developments at the provincial level give rise to hope that the wage garnishment procedure will become less and less the tool of last resort for women and for the children who have been abandoned by their fathers. Historically, the responsibility for enforcing family orders and agreements has fallen to the provincial governments.

• (1930)

Until the passing of the Family Order and Agreements Enforcement Assistance Act in 1986 there was no tracing information service available at the federal level and federal moneys were immune from garnishment.