

Young Offenders Act

country. I think the members of this task force would, frankly, be shocked that a government would be putting before this legislature the kind of recommendations found in this bill. Surely, there is a responsibility laid upon them to ask that group for their frank and objective opinion of these kind of measures in law.

An earlier speaker suggested, in reference to some of the comments from this side of the House, that we were asking for more permissive legislation. I am sorry that the hon. member for York East (Mr. Otto) did not go on to indicate what he meant by that remark. I presume he meant a kind of laissez faire approach to those who do not want to follow the law as well as those who commit what are called crimes. I think he was not listening very closely to what was being said from this side of the House, because what we request is not permissiveness but understanding. That, in the first instance, is what is needed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Paproski: He does not know the meaning of that word.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): One fails to find in this bill a genuine understanding of what the problems are today with respect to the treatment of young people and children who commit crimes. Surely, what is needed in the first instance is understanding. Coupled with understanding there is a need for realism. Again, there is no realism in this bill which would suggest that by this approach the government will be able to substantially lessen the number of young people who eventually accelerate their way into hard-core crime. Third, it seems to me that the government has to accept some measure of responsibility, and I see very little of it here except in the drafting of suggestions which other people may have to implement.

We have already heard from the largest province in this country about the expense that will be incurred to even begin to put into effect some of the suggestions in this bill. Yet there is no obvious intention so far indicated by the government that they are prepared to give that kind of leadership, not only to the wealthiest province which has already indicated the cost that will be put upon them but to many of the other provinces which have not nearly enough resources to try to change their methods of rehabilitating young people.

In spite of what I have said this evening, I retain some measure of optimism about the government's behaviour in this matter. I would not have said this two or three months ago but, frankly, I was surprised and pleased when not too many weeks ago the government willingly dropped their measure attempting to restrict the power of the Auditor General. It was an important gesture when the government, realizing that it had put forward an unwarranted and unacceptable measure, willingly let it drop.

I feel that for the second time in this session of Parliament we have a similar piece of legislation. There is an amazingly high degree of unanimity among people, run-

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

ning the gamut from those who are concerned with the social welfare aspects of young people and their criminal behaviour to those who must administer the law in the courts and elsewhere. Almost to a man they have said that this is bad legislation and that it can do nothing but harm to this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I appeal to the minister and to the government to listen to these voices, not just the voices of those of us who are speaking from the opposition but of those who speak from the various positions that they hold in public life and who say: Please reconsider these serious measures. This country needs leadership, but the leadership that is being placed before us now can only take us back to the dim, dark recesses of the past.

• (8:50 p.m.)

Mr. S. Perry Ryan (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, to the newly-appointed Solicitor General (Mr. Goyer), who is well fitted for his position, I should like to convey my congratulations and express the hope that he will enjoy success in his portfolio which holds a great deal more responsibility today than it did a few years ago.

To my friend of many years, the former Solicitor General, the hon. member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. McIlraith), I express my regret that he has found it necessary for personal reasons to resign from the cabinet. He was a cabinet member whose views often appeared to be closer to my own than the views of some others in the cabinet. He has been an excellent House leader, has graced his ministership, and retires from the cabinet respected for his accomplishments. I do not think he had very much to do with the drafting and launching of Bill C-192, Mr. Speaker. I suspect it came up from below at a time when he was too busily engaged with public order and other problems.

Neither do I believe that the lawyers in the cabinet committee, nor the cabinet itself, have given much screening to the bill, otherwise they would have rewritten or revised it thoroughly. If the amendment is defeated, then either the cabinet must rewrite the bill or hope that the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs will revise it sufficiently to make it at least palatable. In the first place, Mr. Speaker, the bill is written, like so many of the government's bills, in too verbose and vague a fashion. The idea seems to be to fill bills with verbiage to give the impression of great accomplishment. But for practising lawyers, administrators, social workers and members of the judiciary, long, confusing codes cause chaotic cases and unnecessary appeals. The fact is that this bill is just about twice as long as the act it repeals, the Juvenile Delinquents Act of 1929, and it is not half as good as that act.

Some reform is needed, but not in the way Bill C-192 is conceived and worded. Section 38 of the Juvenile Delinquents Act of 1929 reads almost the same as clause 4 of this bill, but the old act specifically said that juve-