

Illicit Drugs Promotion

looked into the problem of drug abuse in Canada. It concluded that alcohol is also a drug that ought to be considered in dealing with substance abuse. Many recommendations were made in that particular report, one of which particularly addressed drug paraphernalia.

In my view, what is also needed is a government initiative similar to the initiative taken in the United States, where they refer to it as zero tolerance. In other words, no amount of illicit narcotics, however small, will be an excuse before some very serious and far-reaching penalties are imposed. For example, if a single marijuana cigarette is found in a vehicle attempting to cross the border, then that particular vehicle ought to be impounded.

It seems to me that if we are truly serious about combating drug abuse in Canada, we can talk all we want as politicians and parliamentarians, but we in Canada should adopt a similar strategy of zero tolerance. In other words, if narcotics are found in a vehicle, then that vehicle ought to be impounded.

It seems strange that in the Province of Ontario, if one fishes out of season or hunts out of season and is caught, one is required to forfeit fishing gear, the trailer and all the fishing equipment that is used. There is public harm done when one fishes or hunts out of season, but it does not compare to the public harm that is done when people distribute and are in possession of narcotics.

Another major step that should be taken by this Parliament is the implementation of criminal legislation that will come down heavy on those who choose as a profession or as a way of making money the importation, distribution and trafficking of illicit drugs. If drugs are found on their person or in their possession, if they are convicted of a criminal offence, there should be forfeiture.

● (1420)

This Government has taken certain initiatives with respect to the profits of crime. In other words, those who profit from crime, those who profit from the drug trade, should not be allowed to reap the benefits of their illegal activity. If someone is convicted of trafficking in narcotics, why should the profits made as a result of that particular criminal activity not be seized and forfeited to the Crown? However, in my view, the initiative taken by the Government does not go far enough.

I believe the New Democratic Party expressed reservations about this particular government initiative in terms of the requirement of the major banks to report large transactions. In the United States there is a more stringent requirement. Banks and other financial institutions are required to report transactions, to track down and trace, as the Hon. Member put it, "black" money, that is money obtained by criminal activity. However, here in Canada, for some reason, the banks objected to this particular proposal. They felt it was an invasion of one's privacy. They thought it should be done voluntarily and they should not be required to report to the Government the

unusual movement of money within their institutions. So if the Government is serious, it should move in that direction as well.

Let me conclude in the same way that I began. Drug abuse in Canada is a national problem. It is a national tragedy. The Government must take unequivocal and specific action to ensure that we do as much as humanly possible to eliminate the illicit use of drugs in Canada.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in debate on the amendment before the House. We are now at report stage of Bill C-264, presented in the name of the Hon. Member for Mississauga North (Mr. Horner). I want to make it very clear that we support the amendment, which would in fact ensure that concerns expressed both by the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Pharmaceutical Association are addressed.

In the Bill, as originally presented to the House, the sale of needles and syringes would be illegal. The Canadian Medical Association pointed out that this would cause major problems for diabetics and other patients requiring needles and syringes for self or home treatment. They also noted that the restricted access resulting from this legislation would result in more extensive sharing of syringes and needles among drug abusers, thereby increasing their risk of both hepatitis and AIDS infection. So to the extent it deals with this concern of the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Pharmaceutical Association, we support the amendment.

I just have a few brief words on the legislation itself. Members will know that the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs reported to this House in September of 1987 on the whole question of booze, pills and dope. It made a number of recommendations in this respect. One of the recommendations was in the area of drug paraphernalia and so-called "head shops". I think it is important to read into the record the recommendation that was made by the standing committee. It recommended that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn), in co-operative efforts with his provincial counterparts, develop legislation to close head shops, commercial enterprises whose principal business is the sale of drug paraphernalia and items which describe their use and which advocate the use of illicit drugs.

Following that recommendation, the Government responded officially and announced the establishment of an interdepartmental working group to look into all aspects of this problem. Officials from the Department of Justice, the Department of the Solicitor General and the Department of National Health and Welfare were included in this interdepartmental working group. The mandate of the group was to consult with interested parties, including provincial Governments, and to review developments in the United States and other jurisdictions.

The mandate of this interdepartmental working committee is very important. I would suggest that its consultation with parties interested in this area and, particularly, its consultation