

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse Act

indicated that the amount should be excessive. We believe that this figure is very much in keeping with that recommendation as well.

In summary, I believe that Bill C-143, an Act to establish the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, represents a very important step in Canada's action on drug abuse. It will contribute to improved awareness and knowledge of substance abuse while building on current expertise. It will point to new directions for action while reinforcing co-operation. I would therefore urge all Hon. Members to support the initiative and to move this legislation ahead as quickly as possible so that the centre can become operational at the earliest opportunity.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely glad that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) raised the issue of the committee's report entitled "Booze, Pills and Dope". He is quite correct in suggesting that one of the recommendations of the report was to seek the establishment of a national centre on substance abuse. What the Minister fails to say and what should be part and parcel of the discussion today is that there were 31 recommendations in that report tabled unanimously by all members of the committee and the Minister rejected 29 of them. Out of 31 substantive recommendations, the only one he has seen fit to move on is the recommendation to create a national centre.

There were many, many other extremely serious concerns elucidated in the report, concerns that the Minister has either ignored, failed to act on or is afraid to act on. I would like to spend some moments outlining the over-all thrust of the Minister's so-called drugs strategy as well as the findings of the committee.

The Minister began this afternoon by reiterating the statement which was made by his leader, the day after a similar statement was made by the President of the United States, that there is a drug epidemic in Canada. In fact, the committee that studied the so-called drug epidemic determined quite substantively that the problem in Canada was quite significantly related to the abuse of legal drugs like alcohol more than to illegal drugs. The Minister of National Health and Welfare himself, in a press release he issued on December 30, 1986, after the statement of the so-called epidemic, said that there was a 12 per cent decrease in the number of convictions under all federally related legislation in 1985.

We heard time and again that the overwhelming majority of Canadians who abuse drugs abuse alcohol and prescription drugs, legal drugs that are available to be purchased at pharmacies or at liquor stores, most of which are government run. While the use of illegal drugs is certainly still of concern to every Canadian, particularly the use among teenagers as we learned in the very tragic case that occurred in the City of Toronto, in actual fact the number of people using illegal drugs in Canada has been on the decline when it comes to marijuana. The number has been holding level for drugs like cocaine and crack. The overwhelming message of the report

tabled in the House was that we had to develop a strategy to deal with legal drugs.

I would like to take a moment to quote an article which appeared in *The Vancouver Sun* which is headlined "Lame excuses from Mr. Epp". The article reads:

So much for the great Canadian Drug Epidemic.

It was of immense concern to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in September 1986, when he declared in Vancouver that "drug abuse has become an epidemic that undermines our economic and social fabric".

By coincidence, it was on the same day that his good friend, President Ronald Reagan, launched a crusade against drugs in the United States.

A House of Commons committee was given the task of drawing up a plan of attack on alcohol and drug abuse. It held 11 months of hearings and delivered a report to Parliament last November with 31 recommendations, including prevention and treatment programs, tougher drinking-driving laws, warning labels on alcoholic beverages, and mandatory educational messages in liquor advertising.

But it seems the Government no longer considers the problem an urgent one.

Health Minister Jake Epp has delivered a response to the committee's report that accepts only two of the recommendations: establishment of a clearing house on information on drugs and alcohol and a treatment program for young drug abusers. Total cost to Ottawa in the first year of operation: \$22 million.

Mr. Epp offered some pretty lame excuses for rejecting the other recommendations.

On the question of warning labels, the Minister said that he had asked the producers of alcoholic beverages to carry them voluntarily and they had said no. As a result of that, the Minister backed down in the same way he backed down on the food labelling issue. If the industry says no, the Minister jumps. Besides, the Minister said that there is no consensus that labels will help, and they might violate international trade rules.

In California, as of October 1 of this year, all alcoholic beverages will have to carry warnings including the message that they can cause birth defects, and in Massachusetts, the State House of Representatives has passed a similar law. Obviously the much-touted Americans who will be entering into the trade agreement think they can carry warning labels without violating any international agreement.

This recommendation would not have cost the taxpayers one penny. A variety of warning labels could have been affixed to alcoholic beverages. One could warn pregnant women that consumption of alcohol during the period of pregnancy can lead to birth defects. Another could warn that excessive consumption of alcohol can lead to cirrhosis of the liver and other extremely damaging illnesses. However, the Minister decided not to follow that recommendation.

As Hon. Members know, the advertisement of spirits is forbidden on Canadian television as a result of CRTC regulations, some legislation and a voluntary ban. At the same time, the television advertising of so-called soft alcohol like beer and wine is permitted. The committee heard suggestions that all advertising for all alcoholic beverages should be banned. The committee considered that recommendation but determined that in the shorter term, it would be more effective