

Government Orders

need to throw more money at a problem. We need to respond better to the social causes of crime.

However, societal concerns cannot be used as an excuse not to tighten up the justice system while we work on the broad social policy objectives.

The juvenile justice system in its operation should mirror the adult system as much as possible if it is to be understandable by the community and develop general deterrents.

Consequently, the YOA court should be completely open to the press. YOA court records should be one and the same as adult criminal records and the same rules for the control and use of adult records should apply to the YOA: access, dissemination, subsequent court use. Without the social engineering limits of the YOA justice must be seen to be done as well as done.

We advocate the increased use of a variety of residential young offender facilities, some of which may be secure. Alternative measures such as diversion from further court process, community accountability panels, victim reconciliation programs, community work service, restitution orders, fines, educational attendance programs and treatment programs for behavioural disorders and substance abuse are all being used at present at great expense to the taxpayer.

The community could always use more helping alternatives but there are financial limits. There is no end to the demand for more and better social programs, and government must balance its priorities.

• (1705)

Although C-37 tries to encourage the broader use of non-custodial alternatives there is no additional cost shared funding forthcoming related to the C-37 initiative.

In summary, it is my prediction that the half measures of C-37 are not going to fundamentally alter the operation of the young offenders system and future results will still bring outcries of dissatisfaction from the community.

The Liberals gave us the Young Offenders Act after years of wrangling at the end of the former Liberal administration. It was an overly optimistic social experiment, idealistically designed around a wishful view of the community rather than reality. We have now lived with the consequences of the YOA for 10 years. It has been amended and improved by the Conservatives, as the first version passed by this House was bleeding heart Liberal in the extreme. It was a bureaucratic approach from the experts down to the community.

Bill C-37 is finally an admission for the Liberals that the original YOA was fundamentally flawed. The public pressure has been building against the misguided YOA and C-37 is another in a line of amendments to reflect reality rather than idealistic theory.

As the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs undertakes the more long term fundamental review, I hope the government will remain open to the common sense view of ordinary Canadians and let them have what they have been asking for. Canadians have said loud and clear they want a juvenile justice system that they can have confidence in.

As Reformers we will work to let the people speak so that our legal system reflects a higher standard which Canadians deserve.

The motion of the Bloc members is oppositional in an unhelpful manner. It says if it is not their way then it should be no way and do not amend the act at this time.

Reformers are the true opposition and we will work with the government to make the YOA reflective of what the community wants. Again I say let the people speak and Reformers will bring their voice to this House.

Ms. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Bruce—Grey.

I am pleased to be given the opportunity to speak to the amendments to the Young Offenders Act as presented by the Minister of Justice. I have studied for many years the behaviour of young people across the spectrum from so-called normal to abnormal, in part as a parent in anticipation of the needs of my three sons and also as a family practitioner with a large adolescent practice.

After all these years I still cannot say what I understand or that I can always predict the reactions of young people to the stresses, anxiety and confusing conflicts created by the transition from child to adult.

I believe I have gained some valuable insights into these issues with the help of my three sons and my young patients, many of whom confided in me over the years the nature of their feelings and anxieties, and by yet others who were brought to me by their parents or social workers because of problematic behaviour.

I do know from painful experience that the solutions to the problems of young people's behaviour, violent or otherwise, are neither simplistic nor linear because the problems and anxieties that beset our youth are highly emotional, complex and volatile, and the answers need to be flexible, individually focused and multi-faceted. They also need to strike a careful balance between the requirement to punish and the need for rehabilitation and prevention.

As a member of Parliament for a very metropolitan urban riding the issue of young offenders is particularly pertinent. I have heard from many of my constituents, both adults who are anxious and fearful, and youth, particularly street youth who are homeless and lost.