

Supply—Solicitor General

The Chairman: Order. House again in committee of supply, estimates of the Department of the Solicitor General for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1968, vote No. 1. Vote No. 1 will be found at page 478 of the blue book and the details thereof are listed on page 480.

• (5:40 p.m.)

Mr. Pennell: Mr. Chairman, I believe the house would have cause to complain if I neglected to make some reference in my opening statement to the problem of crime. It is useful to remind ourselves of the presence of this problem which poses a threat to the quality of our society. Crime, and particularly the varieties of sophisticated crime which confront the police today, flourishes best where publicity is at a minimum and where the community is not alert to the wide range of devious methods which the 1967 model criminal sometimes uses to achieve his goals. We must turn the spotlight of publicity on both the crime and the master criminal in order to focus national attention upon the problem.

It is an unpleasant fact that there has been an increase in reported general crime. By "general crime" I mean the usual types of criminal activity: robbery, theft, breaking and entering, and so on. The available statistics indicate that crimes of this kind are increasing in number each year. In 1966 there were 737,900 Criminal Code and federal statute offences, excluding traffic offences, reported. This mean 1.4 serious offences occur every minute in Canada.

There are apparently three causes for the increase of reported general crime. First, part of the increase can be found in the word "reported". Until recently, a number of police forces either were not alert to the importance of reporting their activities to a central agency or lacked the staff that would have enabled them to report on a regular basis. These handicaps are being overcome and the results, in part, are reflected in an increase in reported crime.

Second, the increase in our population has also brought an increase in the number of offences. Assuming an unchanged rate of crime, there would of course be an increase in the total number of offences in proportion to the increase in the total population.

Finally, I believe there has been, in fact, an increase in the per capita rate of crime in this country. It is no comfort to learn that in the United States and Great Britain the increase in reported crime is higher than in Canada. There is an increase in reported crime in

[Mr. MacEachen.]

Canada, however it may be explained, and it must of necessity cause us some concern.

A significant fact in recent years has been that the nature of the task facing police forces is changing. The police are being called upon to deal with a silent enemy within our borders known as organized crime.

The phrase "organized crime" is of course in common usage, but it is not always easy to pinpoint what that expression means. Basically, of course, it means that criminals cease to operate as individuals and begin to work in teams, co-operating wherever it suits their interests. Criminal organizations grow up in which some men are virtually the employees of higher-ranked criminals who direct activities. An additional characteristic of organized crime is that the criminal group remains in existence over long periods of time, constantly turning its hand to new fields; in a sense, this makes a permanent business of crime. These illegal activities have arisen for the chief purpose of catering to our vices—gambling, drinking, narcotics—with illegitimate financial profit as the objective.

Then, we sometimes speak of crime syndicates which the R.C.M.P. describes in these words:

"Syndicated crime" denotes a subsisting association of persons engaged in criminal activities, and so highly organized and successful that it has acquired exclusive control or a monopoly over certain types of crime, or all crime, in a given area.

To know the nature of organized crime is to know the dimensions of the problem the police face. There has been an occasional critical reference to the government's response to the problem of crime. Generally, I take no exception to criticism for I interpret it as a genuine concern about a serious problem. But as hon. members will realize, the investigation and prosecution of crime in Canada is, generally speaking, a matter within the responsibility of the provincial authorities. Normal criminal investigation comes within the provisions of section 92 of the B.N.A. Act which leave the administration of justice to the several provinces.

The R.C.M.P. is primarily a federal police force, of course, although it functions on a contract basis in eight provinces as a provincial force. Even in those provinces, however, it has no direct policing authority or responsibility in the major cities which have their own forces reporting to the provincial attorney general. Therefore, the activities of the federal police are restricted in so far as organized crime is concerned. The R.C.M.P. enforce certain federal statutes such as the