

Organized Crime

crime transcends not just provincial boundaries but national boundaries. Much of it originates in other countries. I just do not think there would be any point in approving an amendment that would restrict the commission to reporting in six months. There may be a time frame which is too long, but six months is far too short. It just does not make sense.

The main motion puts individual Members on the horns of a dilemma. Probably no one in this Chamber would fail to agree that we want to do something about organized crime, its reduction and elimination. If we have a common goal, then we have to identify the most effective and efficient means of achieving that goal.

Much of this debate has centred on the belief that increased publicity would be helpful. Indeed, the findings would be helpful, but much of the debate has centred on publicity. What we are really saying is that we are to make a priority expenditure decision to appoint a royal commission which would be, if not the most effective way, certainly a very effective way of helping to get to the root causes of the problem and find some solutions. I am not sure that that is as defensible as it might sound at first blush.

We talk about costs in dollar terms. Although I think taxpayers would like to be spared the burden of dollar costs wherever possible, the more significant reality is that we have been through a very lengthy period of what charitably could be called benign neglect of the criminal law, not to mention other laws. For the last three years this Parliament has been perhaps the most productive in our history in the sense of changing laws. The reason for that is simply that so many things were neglected for so long. With support from all corners of the House, not on every occasion but on many, we have been changing the criminal law in substantial ways. We have dealt with legislation to confiscate the proceeds of crime. We passed changes to the Immigration Act, currently in the other place, which provide a better sense of security for Canadians because of its deterrence and detention provisions. Today we spent hours debating Bill C-54, dealing with problems of abuse of women and children. In other words, what we found in September, 1984, was a shared concern for the reduction of crime.

Yet we have been discovering in bits and pieces, from committee to committee, subject matter to subject matter, that we do not have the statutory provisions or tools in place which will allow our enforcement agencies to investigate and go to court, obtain convictions, and have sentences handed down.

We have involved people in the criminal justice system as witnesses before committees, as people who helped draft the legislation in the first instance, for a great many hours in the last three and a half years. We needed their help on occasion after occasion after occasion. To deflect them to a very high profile exercise which would eat up their time is the real cost. I suggest we have been on probably the most sensible course up to this point and we should continue it for the life of this

Parliament, which may be as short as six months or as long as a year and a half.

We should complete the work we have started, and then I suggest we might want those changes in place for a year or two before we could get maximum benefit out of a commission or some other form of inquiry. Statutes have to be put in place, you have to have experience with them and see if indeed they are helping with the problem or not before you move too quickly to change them. I am afraid that if we were to appoint a commission today it would be dealing with history rather than the emerging reality of the new tools and new methods which the House is voting for.

I would like to make one other comment. There seems to be an acceptance in the debate of the notion that a commission of inquiry would benefit society the most from being public. I have sat here and tried to visualize if people from foreign Governments involved in the fight against crime would come before a television camera in a public inquiry and share their experience with the commissioner. Would those inside the world of crime behave in like fashion? Would they feel comfortable, or would they be worried about their own lives or the lives of their families? I suggest they would not feel comfortable.

We are dealing with a very dangerous area for the people who wish to help us. Much of the help they would be willing to provide would be better provided in secret. Therefore, as an individual, I urge the House to be very careful about suggesting that the best way for Canada to reduce organized crime would be through the method of a very high profile public commission with television cameras and so on. There are better ways, perhaps less costly and more effective, and therefore it is my intention to vote against the motion.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Madam Speaker, it is with a great deal of pleasure that I take this opportunity to speak on the motion of the Hon. Member for Trinity (Miss Nicholson), whom I respect very highly. She has done an awful lot of good work in this House. She is a thinking and conscientious Member who does not bring motions like this frivolously. This is a very important motion. As the Hon. Member for Lethbridge—Foothills (Mr. Thacker) said on March 12, we knew she was an expert in financial matters but now we realize the insight she brings to criminal matters and the concerns of the country in this regard.

It would be wrong for the Government to deal with this motion lightly. We have an opportunity here to correct an awful lot of ills. We have just received the report of the Stevens inquiry at a cost of approximately \$3 million. It was an important inquiry.

● (1730)

There is another inquiry going on in my constituency, the Marshall inquiry, looking into the reasons that Donald Marshall spent 11 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. These are important matters which need to be