

Government Orders

I have worked on the streets with juveniles. We are always shocked and amazed that particularly young girls are out prostituting themselves. I have sat down and talked to many of them. Many of them say: "I would like very much to be able to leave the street life. I would like to be able to leave the street life, but what skills do I have? I have a functional grade 2 education. I cannot read and write. I came from a home that was abusive, and I cannot go back there. I have tried to approach the child welfare authorities and they put me in a foster home that was not one bit better than the home I came from. The only way that I can earn any kind of a standard of living is in prostitution".

The problem is always of course that the pimps get involved, the hangers-on, and the girl does not even get the benefit of the money she earns.

We in Canada have to take a look at our growing problems around juveniles. Simply by saying that what we are going to do is make it easier for a judge to raise a youth from youth court to adult court is not going to solve the problem. It is not going to provide the preventive or rehabilitation services that are necessary.

The present legislation allows, where appropriate, for the youth to be raised to adult court. There is no need to make it easier. If it becomes easier, whenever a juvenile has committed a crime that becomes abhorrent in the eye of the public, as sure as anything there will be a push for that youth to be dealt with in adult court.

What we need instead is an increased range of resources within the juvenile court system. We need much better probation services. We need adequate counselling services for those youth who have been deemed to have committed an offence.

Kids who need psychiatric care are often held in secure custody simply because there is not adequate psychiatric care. Everyone thinks that by increasing the sentence the problem is solved. My experience with a fair number of penal institutions has been that for every year you put a person in a penal institution you are buying four or five more years of crime. The history of penal institutions in this country and every other country shows that that is the best way to make sure that you have a seasoned, hardened, life-long criminal.

Mr. Beatty: The question is how you got out.

Mr. Karpoff: You may think that is funny.

The whole system of corrections in Canada is designed to make hardened criminals. We start with the young offenders. It may be that the problems are not easy to solve, but I can assure this House that simply by making it easier to place the child before the adult court and incarcerate him for longer periods of time will solve the problem.

One of the things that surprises me most is how the federal government has unilaterally started to say: "We are no longer going to share financially in programs that provide services to people". It has done it by simply saying that it is not going to provide the services for young offenders once the person's case has been adjudicated. It is not going to provide the services under the Canada Assistance Plan. The government is hoping that the provinces will step in and provide these resources.

The provinces are saying that they do not have the ability. So who suffers? We all suffer because what is happening in this country is that services are not provided. When those services are not provided, instead of a troubled child we end up with an adult criminal.

I cannot support this type of approach. We need a rational approach, one that will protect society and the youth.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I will not take a great deal of time. I only have a few words to add to what my friend from Surrey North has already put on the record.

I think that there is some concern in rural communities, at least, and some misunderstanding, perhaps, of the intent of the Young Offenders Act.

• (1550)

Some of my constituents may greet as a step forward the move in this bill to extend the maximum penalty to five years less a day. They do so from two points of view.

Some simply think that there have to be harsher penalties. Others have some concern that if there is not such a mediating set of time, there will be more public pressure to try young offenders in the age group between 14 and 17 in the adult court for some of the more heinous crimes. This permits judges to have a little less