

Private Members' Business

The third group is the private sector. Such business groups as the Chamber of Commerce may expect to comment on any proposed changes to the act that might affect an employer's right to know the background of his employees. Professional associations governing the affairs of lawyers, doctors, accountants or real estate personnel will have an interest in any legislation which would remove their right to regulate entry to the profession by ex-offenders. School boards, camps, nurseries, and day care providers will have a particular interest in ensuring that changes to the law do not inhibit their ability to screen prospective employees who may pose a threat to the children under their care.

Credit bureaus should be involved in defining the protection which can be provided to ex-offenders regarding the confidentiality of information which is on the public record.

Finally, the public, the fourth group. The general public will be interested in any proposed changes to the act and strategies will need to be developed to disseminate factual information identifying the problems with the current legislation and how any proposed changes will better protect the public, help deserving ex-offenders and create a more efficient system.

While the benefits of Bill C-314 to certain individuals who presently have records is obvious, it would appear that efficiencies would also result. I see little in these proposals to address the concern that the public should not be subjected to undue risk. Specific members of the public may have concerns about how legislation may affect the right for example of children's aid societies to screen prospective foster or adoptive parents. Others may raise questions of whether change procedures for pardon will allow dangerous offenders easier access to firearms, driving privileges, or positions of trust following a conviction and prohibition being imposed.

Finally, the fifth category, the media. Provisions of the act which would change the rules regarding the disclosure of information to the public concerning a pardon conviction and the possible destruction of records has special repercussions for those involved in publishing and research. Consideration is required of how non-disclosure rules would affect the publication of law reference books, what access researchers may have to protected records and what protection would be avail-

able to limit the disclosure of information contained in the newspaper and the electronic media data banks and files. The interests of both academic and official government archivists must be considered before a final decision is taken on the best procedure and timing which should govern the destruction of records following a further waiting period after a pardon has been granted.

To conclude, I view Bill C-314 as an example of a positive effort by a member of the government side to take personal responsibility for an action he believes not only to be necessary, but overdue. I admire and support his actions in this regard.

I do suggest, however, that even a well thought out initiative such as the one put forward by my hon. colleague for Mississauga South can open up a consultative process of an intensity and duration that far exceeds that which might be anticipated in light of the modest attempt of the proposed amendments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Marc Robitaille (Terrebonne): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome this opportunity to take part in the debate on Bill C-314, a Private Members' bill whose purpose is to correct an obvious discrepancy in our legislation which so far has been overlooked.

The hon. member for Mississauga South has drawn our attention to the fact that individuals whose offences did not justify sentencing by the courts were nevertheless labelled as criminals for periods from between one to three years; this does not include the time required to process their requests for rehabilitation.

I know the hon. member did not want to give the House the impression that everyone who tries to have every trace of a guilty verdict erased from his criminal record and get an absolute discharge has to wait five years, as he said in December.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, it seems quite possible that people who have just obtained an absolute or conditional discharge believe— that their run-ins with the justice system are finished as soon as they leave the courtroom. This misconception may never cause problems, but it is also quite possible that a few years from now, they will be denied a job, security clearance or access to a country or they may suffer some kind of embarrassment or inconvenience.