

*Criminal Code*

director of the bureau of prisons in Washington, D.C. In the course of one of the studies to which I have referred he states:

We have in one of our institutions a boy who carried out a kidnapping plot following the precise pattern he had read about in a comic magazine called *Crime Does Not Pay*.

May I pause to remind the house that it was one issue of that magazine, which I sent to the former minister of justice, which brought from him the comment that this was an example of a shocking abuse of freedom of the press. Mr. Bennet continues:

Not only did the boy confess that he got the idea from the crime comic but the facts surrounding the execution of the crime bore out his statement. There are a number of cases, notably one in Ohio where two boys attempting a kidnapping shot and killed a citizen, which indicates pretty strongly the influence of comic magazines on the young boys who plotted the crimes.

Then it should be recalled, sir, that this magazine "*Crime Does Not Pay*" circulates freely in Canada. The second piece of evidence I should like to lay before the house concerns the trial of two boys aged eleven and thirteen for murdering James Watson of Dawson Creek, in Canada, in the fall of 1948. During the trial positive evidence was produced to show that the boys' minds were saturated with what they had read in crime comics. One boy admitted to the judge that he read as many as fifty crime comics a week, while the other admitted having read thirty. After the case was concluded, the presiding judge delivered a most direct and scathing criticism of crime comics, laying the blame for this murder almost directly upon their influence.

Many other cases could be cited. In Montreal a boy aged 12 years beat his mother to death with a bat while she was sleeping and at the trial said he had seen that sort of thing in the comics. In Philadelphia Symon Levin, aged 16 years, killed a 12-year-old boy with a pair of scissors. His room was found to be littered with crime comics. In Los Angeles a 14-year-old boy poisoned a 50-year-old woman. He said he had got the idea from a comic book as well as the recipe for the poison. In the same city a 13-year-old boy was found hanged in a garage with a crime comic illustrating that type of thing at his feet.

These are only examples that I am giving to prove that crime comics have a direct bearing on the commission of crime by juveniles. Apart altogether from the statements of experts who have studied the matter, there is other evidence in the form of resolutions passed by parent-teacher associations and other groups experienced in training young

[Mr. Fulton.]

minds from coast to coast of Canada. A campaign has been started by the Kiwanis clubs across the country and each club is asked to pass a resolution dealing mainly with obscene books but by implication with these crime comics as well. The resolution ends with the following words:

Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Justice be respectfully requested to fully investigate and to recommend prosecutions of the publishers, distributors and vendors of obscene books, especially of the inexpensive paper bound type, in order that the further corruption of the youth of Canada may be prevented and thus alleviate some of the ever increasing tendencies towards juvenile delinquency.

That is the background of the situation. I think hon. members will agree that the evidence shows that there is a real menace to the youth of our country in the widespread publication and circulation of crime comics. We are then faced with the question: How are we going to deal with it? Various methods have been suggested. One is direct censorship by the government and the other is the setting up of some sort of bureau which would ban certain publications. I say without hesitation that I am against both of those methods. I am unalterably opposed to the idea of government censorship of the press in any form whatsoever in peacetime. There are too many dangers involved in that type of solution.

I have the utmost confidence in proper legal processes which have been worked out in this country over the years; I have the utmost confidence in our courts and jury system, and my suggestion is that the proper approach is along these lines. If it is demonstrated by such evidence as has been given here that a course of action is obviously against the public welfare or public morals, then it should be made an offence by a properly enacted statute. We should define the offence as accurately as we can and then provide the mechanism whereby the person accused of the offence can be brought before our courts. It should be left to our judicial system to determine whether or not the person accused has in fact committed the offence or rather committed the acts which constitute the offence as defined in the statute.

That has been the approach which has been followed here. At the present time there is no satisfactory definition which would make it an offence to print, publish or distribute the type of crime comic which I have been describing. No satisfactory means exists of starting an action against a person who may print, publish or distribute these comics. I would refer again to the words of the former minister of justice when he was discussing this matter. I have referred already to his remarks as reported on page 4939 of *Hansard*