

Government Orders

young people have on the outside. We are doing absolutely nothing but making a mockery of our entire system.

The final area where we believe there has to be some major change and something where the government did not even involve itself in tokenism on is the concept of parental responsibility. We believe that whenever there is a young offender and it can be shown that lack of parental control is a factor in the crime being committed then those parents must be responsible for identifying the victim for their losses.

We will have some people arguing as to whether that is fair to the parents. Maybe the parents could not stop the problem. Maybe it is not really being fair to the parents of this young offender. We have to look at the two sides of it. On one side we have a parent, in the situation we are suggesting, and it has been demonstrated that their lack of exercising parental control was a contributing factor to the offence being committed.

On the other side we have the victim. The victim is wholly innocent. There is no question of the innocence of a victim in these types of situations. Who really should have the financial burden placed upon them by the actions of this offender? Should it be a wholly innocent victim or should it be a parent who perhaps should have exercised more control in preventing that offence in the first place? If there is any injustice in this at all it certainly should be on the side of the one where there could be presumed certain responsibility for this. There is no question that it should not fall on the victim who is wholly innocent.

We believe that these are basic changes to the act that must take place. The Liberal government has not addressed this concept whatsoever.

One of the things that involves the Young Offenders Act and in fact the entire criminal justice system is what is this act in place for. Who are we trying to protect? Who are we trying to reward or make life easier for? Is it the victim or is it the person who perpetrates the crime? I suggest that we have to provide protection for the innocent people.

• (1940)

There may well be cause for people to say the poor youth, they have had a bad upbringing, they come from a broken home, they come from poverty. These things may all be true and may have in fact contributed to the person committing the crime.

We have to deal with those issues separately. Our first premise is that we must protect law-abiding citizens and their property. The Young Offenders Act needs to be changed and the reason it needs to be changed is for protection of society at large and also for young people themselves who are the most frequent victims of juvenile crime.

I had high hopes when they talked of introducing this change to the Young Offenders Act and I am very disappointed that they have gone half measure. On one side, we might say that something is better than nothing but on review it seems that what they are offering us is nothing at all.

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke):
Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand tonight to say a few words on this bill because it is one that we have been waiting for for a long time.

Having brought it forward now, it is one that has improved the initial act. I am sure that all of us know of cases in which the previous act was applied and was not certainly considered sufficient for the crime and certainly not a corrective measure to any extent either.

Some will say that there is a crisis with youth offenders today. Some will say there is not. We have heard that on the floor of this House. People who witness youth or adult crime know there is a problem. Communities that have witnessed a problem out there in youth crime know there is a problem.

It is easy to judge from afar and from a safe perch but when it comes home to people, that is the time that they get serious about these issues. Of course the media wants something spectacular or there is nothing newsworthy about it. Some will say that the media is responsible for the hype about issues and others will say that it is only reporting the news.

Be that as it may, there is always room for improvement in legislation of this nature. Young people usually get their first sense of authority, their first feeling that there is authority around them, in the home. If they get the feeling at home, that there is an authority there, when they get out to face society they are able to handle it because they are accustomed to it.

When youth are not accustomed to discipline, a sense of authority and sound practices in the home they rebel when suddenly confronted with it in society because they have always had their own way. When they cannot get their own way they become angry.

I want to quote from paper written by Dr. Victor Szyrinski who is a well known medical doctor and doctor of psychiatry. He has a PhD as well. In his very learned way he says: "Parents are the first people who gratify the child's basic needs and in this way provide him with evidence of their love and stimulate similar reactions in return".

At another stage in his paper: "Generally speaking, security is provided by parental love. Here, however, in accordance with David Levy, we might consider the harmful aspects of "too much love" and "too little love". Children overfed with love in their early days by overprotective and overaffectionate parents find it too difficult to face the real frustrations present in the outside world".