

Government Orders

the principle of confidentiality may be seriously threatened by this openness. It is the Lieutenant Governor in Council who will rule on the clause concerning the disclosure of information.

The reaction of the Quebec Minister of Justice suggests that would not change, at least in Quebec, but what about the other provinces?

• (1645)

The last of the major changes proposed in Bill C-37 is unquestionably the harsher sentences provided for in the case of first- and second-degree murder. Pursuant to clause 13(3) of the bill, the maximum sentence for first-degree murder would rise from five to ten years. In the case of second-degree murder, the maximum sentence would increase from five to seven years.

This is a strange provision in that 16- and 17-year-olds can already be tried in adult courts. Therefore, the ones who stand to suffer the most as a result of this measure are 12- to 15-year-olds. Youth crime statistics do not justify such a harsh stance. Youth violence is generally on the decline. In the big cities, violence is either increasing or changing in nature with the upsurge in gangs. We are now seeing different kinds of violence than in the past. One can believe the government has been influenced by the families of victims of violent crimes who are motivated by a desire for vengeance. The Youth Protection Act was amended in 1992 to increase the sentences from three to five years. Why is the government taking this hard-line approach when the number of murders has declined? It is not even waiting to see the results of the initial changes and here it goes increasing the length of sentences again. Will it decide to lengthen the sentences again in two years' time?

It is obvious to the official opposition that the government is acting with undue haste in bringing in this legislation and that it is trying to please everyone.

Surely the rising popularity of the Reform Party in Ontario, a Liberal stronghold, has something to do with this decision. As far as the Quebec government is concerned, the bill should not have been introduced in the first place and the government should work within the parameters of the existing legislation and enforce its provisions.

It should be noted that the provinces are responsible for enforcing the provisions of the legislation and, in the opinion of the federal justice minister, they will enjoy considerably more latitude in this area. However, if ever a genuine legislative review process were to be undertaken, the provinces would have to be seriously involved.

No further details are given about the federal government's crime prevention policy mentioned in clause 1 of Bill C-37, despite the fact that it is an essential component of an effective juvenile crime prevention strategy. The bill is also silent on

another problem, that of adults who use young people to commit their crimes and who get off scot-free.

The Official Opposition supports harsh penalties, but only in the case of premeditated, first-degree murder. With respect to other crimes, the existing provisions should remain in effect. It has also been said that the Youth Protection Act should not be mentioned too often because it only confuses matters.

Instead, I will quote statistics. According to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, the average number of murders committed by teenagers in Canada fell from 55 between 1972 and 1982 to 46 between 1982 and 1992. In 1992, police laid charges against 140,000 teenagers for violating the Criminal Code and other federal laws. The number of charges laid has risen by 25 per cent in the last seven years. Two thirds of the 115,000 cases heard by youth courts led to a guilty verdict. About one third of teenagers found guilty by youth courts were committed to custody in correctional institutions or to open custody.

According to an article that appeared in the *Toronto Star* on June 6, it would cost between \$70,000 and \$100,000 a year to keep a young person in a detention centre. In 1992-93, the average number of teenagers in detention institutions was 4,734 a day, one third of whom were in secure custody. Fifty-three per cent of the teenagers convicted in 1992-93 were 16 or 17 years old.

According to the Canadian Department of Justice, in 1992, less than 15 per cent of violent crimes were committed by young people. According to an article published in a magazine called *Canadian Social Trends* in the fall of 1992, only 13 per cent of the charges laid against young people in 1991 involved violence.

According to a Statistics Canada survey, 70 per cent of all charges laid against teenagers in 1991 were related to crimes against property. However, the number of charges linked to crimes against property has increased by 17 per cent since 1986.

According to an article published in the *Ottawa Citizen* on April 19, 1993, one in three Canadians mistakenly believes that violence is as widespread here as in the United States.

• (1650)

In 1991, 753 homicides were reported in Canada, as compared to 24,000 in the United States. This means 32 times more homicides in a population 10 times larger than ours. There is just no comparison. The only detectable element of commonality between our two countries is the fact that repression does not make the crime rate go down, while media coverage of murders has a greater effect on public opinion.

A study carried out in Manitoba in 1992 showed that 90 per cent of young sex offenders had been assaulted in their childhood. Another study, which was carried out in London, Ontario,