

*Criminal Code*

problems. In particular, I commend the residents of Mount Pleasant who have addressed a number of these community proposals for dealing with what is a community problem. However, in looking at this Bill, I think it is also important to look at the objectives not only of the Government but of the police themselves. I could do no better than quote Staff Inspector William Donaldson of the morality branch of the Metro Toronto Police who said:

We are the last people in the world to believe we can stamp out prostitution but . . . we can force it into the several seedy motels and hotels and rooming houses downtown and knock those once in a while to keep it under control.

Is that really the answer, which the Government is suggesting is appropriate, to the serious problem of prostitution? I suggest that it is a pretty cynical cop-out to what is a serious problem.

I have dealt with some of the short-term problems in terms of nuisance and so on. We as a community or a society have to come to grips with the fact that this is a fundamental social and economic problem, a problem which reflects the broader sense of exploitation and degradation of women in our society. It is a problem which ultimately reflects the sexist nature of our society, in that women continue to be dealt with unequally, economically and socially. Women continue to be victims of sexism in advertising. Women continue to be victims of violence, whether it be wife battering, which we know is a problem that touches all levels of our communities, sexual harassment, rape or other forms of violence. As well, they continue to be victims of pornography. It is only when we come to grips with these things that we will be able to deal with the underlying causes of prostitution. It is about time that we started to come to grips with these problems.

Also I commend the Fraser Commission for recognizing that there is a number of concrete steps which could and should be taken to deal with these concerns. For example, it recommended a series of measures to deal with the economic and social concerns in this area. It dealt with the whole question of improved child care facilities, retraining programs for women to assist them to get out of prostitution, extension of benefits to part-time workers and changes to social benefits legislation in order to allow women to support their families adequately. Indeed, recommendations were made by a group in Vancouver, the Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes in Vancouver. They were concrete steps to assist women to get out of the vicious treadmill of prostitution. For example, it proposed the establishment of drop-in storefront centres to provide health care, family planning information, legal services, court advocacy and welfare appeals. It went on to point out that the instances of prostitution could be reduced if some or all of the following services were available to ease the financial burden for single women and sole support mothers: day care, which I mentioned earlier, so that single parent prostitutes could obtain regular jobs; student grants to allow prostitutes to improve their education or job skills; co-operative housing to reduce the cost of living of single parents or single women; an increase in welfare payments so that welfare women would not have to resort to prostitution on the last few

days before their next cheque arrives; an increase in the minimum wage so that low-income women would not have to resort to prostitution to make ends meet; and special training for social workers and police who do not presently know how to deal with prostitutes.

• (1230)

In this connection, before closing, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could quote from the words of a young woman who is in fact a prostitute about the nature of that life. Those words lead me to ask why on earth we should be further victimizing these individuals. What kind of society is it that further victimizes women who are already victims and in many cases have suffered from sexual abuse as children? Studies have shown that as many as 80 per cent of these women suffered from sexual abuse and violence. The overwhelming number of these women would, given the choice, want to get off the streets and out of the life of prostitution. A recent study carried out in Winnipeg, Manitoba, by the YWCA and the Elizabeth Fry Society revealed that over 90 per cent of the city's prostitutes wanted to get out of the business. That is not surprising given the levels of violence, assault, degradation, humiliation and depersonalization that exist. However, these women need support. They need job-training skills and education upgrading.

We can sit comfortably here in Parliament and pass laws which sweep this problem out of sight. It is very easy for us to do that. However, by doing that, we are failing the people we should be representing. We are failing our communities because we are doing nothing whatsoever to deal with the underlying causes of prostitution. I spoke of the hypocrisy of hearing the Attorney General of British Columbia calling for tough new sanctions against prostitutes while his Government hammers single women, makes it impossible for them to survive and shuts down hostels for juvenile prostitutes. That is hypocrisy of the worst sort.

With whom are we dealing? One young woman has spoken about her life. She has said the following:

Why do we turn so much away from the straight life? Because we're not even considered part of society. For example, to rent a place, you need to put down your occupation. You can't get a bank loan, buy a car . . . You need to come up with stories. So you live in a world that is strictly cash . . . When you leave the business, you have to start at the bottom again. People ask what you've been doing the last five years. Society is what shapes how girls get out of the business. The minute you try to do anything like open a business with money, the government is down your back. You have to fight the whole world. You try to make it back into the system, get fired, and then people ask, 'Why didn't you make it.'

For years I had a very low self esteem. Society's attitudes makes one feel different about themselves. The reinforcement that you're a whore, that you're nothing, that you're a low life does have an impact on how you feel about yourself. If you're constantly being told that, given the same message for years and years and years by society, by the social agencies, by the police force, by your family, you can't help but have a low self esteem and it's only in the last couple of years that I've started feeling good about myself. For years I didn't.

We as parliamentarians are being asked to respond to a crisis in residential communities. However, I suggest that the response of this Government is profoundly mistaken. I would hope that when this Bill goes to committee, we will give the opportunity to speak to those who do have serious concerns