

Government Orders

We do not provide the remedial resources for learning disabilities in the school. Without that the youth grow up being unable to read and write. In our society being functionally illiterate means being condemned to poverty.

We do not provide counselling resources to help families. We do not provide resources to deal with the anti-social behaviour of children who have been identified as anti-social earlier in school. We do not provide resources to boys and girls clubs, to recreational organizations, or to preventive child welfare programs that are necessary.

In fact this government has taken two actions to reduce the availability of dollars for resources to solve problems that juveniles face. One was taken a year ago when the government began to limit the amount of dollars that it would make available under the Young Offenders Act to assist provinces in providing post-adjudication services. I will come back to that later.

This year the government again limited expenditures in Ontario, Alberta, and B.C. under the Canada Assistance Plan. Those are moneys that are used for preventive services. Those are the moneys that are used to fund family service organizations which provide counselling to families. Those are resources that are used to bring people up from below the poverty line, to try to provide them with an adequate standard of living.

Yet this government said: "We are going to curtail the expenditures. We are not going to invest in prevention. We are not going to invest in remedial measures or rehabilitation. We are simply going to go back and take a punitive approach to corrections, particularly juvenile corrections".

Another major group in this country that comes under the Young Offenders Act is that of aboriginal peoples. It is no coincidence that today a native person is holding up the progress, if it can be called progress, that has been made in resolving the constitutional crisis.

I have a great deal of sympathy for the Manitoba aboriginal person who is refusing to allow the constitutional resolution to go forward because, again, it neglects to address adequately the concerns of native people.

In the juvenile correctional system native people have been treated atrociously. I can remember, when in the

early 1980s I took over as a senior administrator in the downtown core of Vancouver, that some 80 per cent of all children under the care of the Superintendent of Child Welfare were native children. If we look at some of the submissions made by the National Association of Friendship Centres about its concerns with the Young Offenders Act, we see that it points out that in Manitoba 47 per cent of young men held on remand are native and 55 per cent of those held in secure custody are native men. It is even more shocking when we look at the treatment of native women—92 per cent of young women held on remand are native. In secure custody the figure is 87.5 per cent.

• (1540)

We have a system that discriminates against those who are socially disadvantaged, who are poor, who have learning disabilities, who are in need of services and not incarceration. They are in need of rehabilitation programs, not punishment.

If we look at the backgrounds of many people appearing before the young offenders court, we find that they are people society has betrayed the most. They are people who have been sexually abused. They are people who have been neglected. They are people who have been left in poverty by this very wealthy society. They are people who have been subject to all sorts of pressures and who have ended up becoming involved in drug abuse.

I hoped that when the government saw fit to amend the Young Offenders Act it would do so by saying: "We are really going to deal with the causes of juvenile delinquency, the causes of youth getting in trouble with the law; we are going to do it in a manner that is going to protect society in the best way we know how, not by incarcerating someone for three or five years because they are going to get out whether it is three years or five years".

We have got to bring in resources that prevent that child from becoming involved in illegal activity or to ensure that they are not going to. We have got to be able to provide them with services that deal with their learning disability and their lack of education and provides them with sufficient training so that they can go out and get a good paying job; not a \$4 an hour job but a steady job that earns them a decent standard of living.