

Government Orders

concept that we must provide appropriate treatment for these youth over a longer period of time.

There has been a lot of talk about murder. Murder is always the most difficult. We assume right away that because it is murder the youth is most dangerous to society and to himself. That is not necessarily so. Murder involving juveniles amounts to one-fortieth of one per cent of youth coming before juvenile or youth court. I do not think that we should be designing laws and transfers and penal institutions based on one-fortieth of one per cent.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I want to continue along the same theme as my colleague from Moncton and the member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys.

We have found in my riding in downtown Toronto, Broadview—Greenwood, as in every other region of the country, that since this first Young Offenders Act was passed youth crime has doubled. As some members have said earlier, organized crime is now using the refuge of the Young Offenders Act to promote their dealings, especially in the area of drugs. I think it is really important that the government, in its review of this act, really takes some of these amendments seriously. The ability and the understanding of youth today with regard to this Young Offenders Act are so sophisticated that we are actually shackling the hands of our police forces. They do not feel that they can really develop any kind of an honest program of rehabilitation or even crime control because the youth use the refuge of this Young Offenders Act. The youth use this refuge and the criminal element is exacerbating the situation by adding to the numbers of people involved in youth crime because of its excessive support.

• (1600)

Any sort of review or any amendment to this act that does not take that reality into consideration is really avoiding or not listening to the advice of our police forces from coast to coast. We are not listening even to the parents of a lot of these children. I am actually hearing in my riding from some of the parents. Some of them may not have the economic resources to support their children as well as they would like and as a result the children are using all means they can to make their way through society. Of course when they know they

have the protection of the Young Offenders Act as it is structured right now, they are literally getting away at times with murder.

I think we have to be very dramatic in our reform of this bill. I think we have to listen and support not only our police forces but our community service agencies that are pleading with us to give them the tools to help rehabilitate those youth in our society that are using this act for their own negative purpose, which is ultimately causing a disservice to everyone in our community.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Mr. Speaker, I could not help but note the good remarks of the member from Moncton. In the statistics that were cited, the 34 per cent increase for the period of time noted completely excluded the province of Ontario, Canada's largest and most populous province with its most populous urban area. Those statistics actually underestimate by a long shot the frightening increase in crime by youth and young offenders in this country.

We have to keep in mind that the purpose of this Young Offenders Act is to try our very best as a society to salvage a young life, to salvage it before it goes the way of the classic criminal life. These proposed amendments are premised on the assumption that we as a society are more likely to salvage a young life if the young offender is dealt with in the youth offender system rather than the adult system.

If we have to toughen the laws and increase the sentences, as we are going to, the thrust of these amendments is that the increased sentences to be spent by young offenders should be more appropriately spent in the young offender system rather than the penitentiary system.

Since the thrust of the government's amendments to this act is to better enable a transfer to the adult system, there is a fear on the part of the opposition and among a number of members that there will be a greater tendency or a predisposition to transfer more young offenders to the adult system and thereby lose the opportunity to salvage what is left of that life.

I wanted to point that out so that it would be on the record. There may be from time to time some apparent inconsistency as the opposition and government debate this but our position is that the young offenders ought to