

Acknowledgements

The Report of your Committee on "Early Childhood Experiences as Causes of Criminal Behaviour" has a long history. On May 14, 1975 during the First Session of the Thirtieth Parliament, Senator F. A. McGrand, M.D., moved that "the Senate considers it desirable that a Special Committee of the Senate be established at an early date to inquire into and report upon crime and violence in contemporary Canadian society." At the time, Parliament was debating capital punishment and he was deeply perturbed by our lack of knowledge about the causes of violent acts. As he told the Senate: "We know little, too little, about the magnitude of crime and its causes to deal with it effectively at the present time. Our system of crime control is an unplanned product of history." Even at this time he was convinced of two things: punishment did not and could not reform; secondly, that the search for the roots of violent behaviour had to begin with the earliest experience of the offender.

Debate on the Motion continued into December 1975. Some concern was expressed about the scope of the motion, who should conduct the investigation and the sort of terms of reference that might be granted. On December 18, 1975 it was decided to ask the Standing Senate Committee on Health, Welfare and Science to investigate the feasibility of a Senate investigation into the subject matter of the motion and to suggest precise terms of reference.

Your Committee began its study of the feasibility of an inquiry into and a report upon crime and violence in February 1976. The Research Branch of the Library of Parliament was asked to carry out a preliminary evaluation of the available literature. It was found to be scant, highly technical and mostly American. This caused some members of the Committee to doubt whether the Senate could conduct the investigation at the present time; it might be wiser to wait until Canadian physicians, psychologists, criminologists and sociologists had conducted more background research and case studies. This was a valid consideration which your Committee weighed carefully.

On June 22, 1976, having held six proceedings and listened to testimony, your Committee reported that the study was feasible if undertaken by a very small special committee composed of not less than 6 nor more than 10 members who had a special interest in the problem. It suggested the following terms of reference among others: "that a Special Committee of the Senate, consisting of 8 senators be appointed to inquire into and report upon what is being done and what further avenues of research are required to detect factors occurring before or during the first three years of life which may lead to personality