

Government Orders

When people ask me about crime prevention, I say we must get at the profits from crime. That is one way to help prevent crime. This was mentioned in the debate on the previous bill. There is big money in pornography. Let us get to the source of that.

This bill provides for effective management of assets that are seized by the Crown. As well it gives us a regime, a framework whereby we can share the proceeds of crime with the law enforcement community. People may say: "Well, you do not have the regulations". Of course the regulations are not there but we will work that out. It is important for Parliament to state its intention to distribute the proceeds of crime in a fair manner.

Forfeiture and seizure is not an easy process. We had the example of a skiing resort in Quebec that was seized by the Crown at least three years ago. There is still an appeal process going on. The ownership of that does not reside with the Crown at the present time, but we have an obligation to effectively manage it on behalf of the individual from whom it was taken. We owe that individual an obligation until the case is decided one way or another. If it is forfeited to the Crown, we need to have a regime in place for the distribution of that.

This is one part of the government's program but it is an important part. As I say, for my money every month since this Parliament was sworn in over four years ago, we have been seized with justice issues. These issues have the support of people in my riding of Niagara Falls and a lot of ridings across the country.

• (1555)

I do not apologize for the fact that this Parliament is spending time on this. Most Canadians worry about these things and they are reassured when they see their parliamentarians bringing legislation forward that will help make this country a safer one in which to live.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Moncton who also has some things to say on this piece of legislation.

I listened with interest to the introduction of the remarks by my hon. colleague who is representing the government on this legislation. Maybe he protests just a little too much. He is unusually sensitive today to observations by the opposition.

I think it was the New Democratic member who said that some people would be cynical in wondering why the

government waited until five days before probably the end of its time in office before it came in with this law and order series of legislation.

When trying to support his minister, the current Minister of Justice, the hon. member indicated that he has worked quite hard. There has been a bill a minute, a bill a day, or something like coming into the House lately dealing with justice reform.

It is too bad the former Minister of Justice was not as diligent. The former Minister of Justice, every time I read an article in the newspaper or *Maclean's*, likes to claim about all the tough work she has done in the Department of Justice. It is just too bad she did not suffer from the same work ethic the hon. member feels the current Minister of Justice has as he brings these bills in hand over fist, faster than a speeding bullet. But I guess that is what happens when a minister's eyesight is focused on another seat to occupy in the House of Commons.

Let us just say that Bill C-123 on the proceeds of crime should have been here a heck of a long time ago. This bill simply changes the legislation that has been on the books since about 1989 dealing with the proceeds of crime.

When somebody is convicted of trafficking in illegal drugs, the assets would be seized and those assets would be disposed of. The value of those assets or the assets themselves would revert to the Crown.

Clearly this was an attempt by the Crown to get right down to the root cause of this, as my colleague has said. People who sell drugs or are engaged in child pornography do so for a profit. If we could seize the profits then that would be an additional penalty to the incarceration or fine they would get under the law. It is about time that this has happened.

It is not really the federal government. We make the laws here. With the exception of the RCMP which is a federal force, it nearly always goes to the municipal police force. The municipal police force, which is controlled and paid for by municipal taxes, hunts out these low life and arrests them. It builds a case against them, takes it to the courts and sees them properly prosecuted and if convicted, incarcerated. It is the provincial and not the federal government in most cases and the municipal governments that bear the costs of the administration of justice in these and other cases.