

Government Orders

Canada, despite having one of the highest incarceration rates in the world and one of the highest numbers of people in prisons, has seen its city life degenerate one decade after another. You ask yourself, is this strategy working? Are we getting to have better neighbourhoods when we put more people in jail? The answer is no. Do we have a way of supporting people once they leave jail to ensure that they do not go back? The answer is no.

We do have people who are interested in this. We have people working in the John Howard Society. We have in Winnipeg on Ellice Avenue a new centre which deals with the questions of justice and crime and community support for communal action. These are important projects begging for money because the government does not see them as being important.

There are transitional points in which once a person leaves the prison system you wish that they could then be part of the community. The point is that this is rarely done in this society. Instead, we end up with pieces of legislation such as Bill C-36 because people are afraid and the government responds to their fear instead of responding to the underlying problems.

In Winnipeg North Centre, when I became a member of Parliament, I saw safety as one of the major issues. There is an easy route to go such as writing letters to the editor talking about crime in the streets, joining people decrying Asian street gangs. There are 101 easy ways to go. You can see it in this debate if you follow some of the government members. They are quite anxious to see people put back behind bars because of crime in the street.

I chose a different route, one I would like to share with the House. It is essential for the many here who are interested in this particular problem to understand that there are different ways of going about it.

Over a year ago I formed the Inner City Safety Council. This is the first opportunity used in the inner city to bring together different groups concerned about safety issues. We held a public meeting in May 1991 and had over 100 people in attendance. In Winnipeg's inner city it is not safe to go out some nights to attend meetings, so that was a big accomplishment.

People expressed their anger. There were so many

fronts on which they felt threatened. We took that long list and said we should begin to work with different community groups on this list. Some people worked on their own and some people came to the office of their member of Parliament looking for support.

We used the facilities of the office of the member to communicate with others so that everybody knew what the other was doing. For example, the question of Asian gangs, is a big issue in cities such as Vancouver and Toronto, but is not an issue in Winnipeg, except in the minds of the newspaper writers. The Asian leaders feel very strongly that they are mistreated and they wish to participate in the safety council so they have an opportunity to say to people, "Do not characterize us in terms of gangs. Do not characterize our youth in terms of gangs. Help us find a recreation site". You can go for blocks in the inner city of Winnipeg and not find a recreation site.

I have had people say to me that it is a long way from the federal government, but it is not. The core area initiative, which is partly sponsored by the federal government, was about to embark on a recreation strategy. If you cannot spend time in the evening and time on the weekend with children from communities, particularly in communities of new Canadians in which people are working 60 hours a week for \$5 an hour trying to make ends meet, if you cannot bring the children and youth into the community, by definition you are pushing them out and asking for trouble. Therefore, we work closely with the Asian community to overcome this image and to build some recreational support for it.

Second, in the Wolesley area there is a concern about violence against individuals, violence against gays, violence against women walking home, violence within families. We have had a very successful approach that has led to other levels of government having safety evaluations of school areas to inform people how to make their streets safer. In all three major business districts we have had community police offices open up, on Selkirk Avenue, Sargent Avenue, Ellice Avenue and down on Broadway. In one particular case, a businessman is paying for the space himself to make sure the community policeman is there.