

Government Orders

I do not know where the hon. member got this. I am very surprised to hear someone from the Reform Party, which is a staunch advocate of individual rights and the need for individuals to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps and not be dependent on others, to then accept as an explanation from these people that the reason they are in trouble is because somebody else was not harsh enough earlier on. Yet he puts that forward as the basis for saying we should lock them up and throw away the key, which is the approach of the Reform Party.

Tonight we even heard advocates from that party saying we should have caning and corporal punishment brought back to Canada in order to stop delinquency. I have never heard such nonsense in my life.

Whipping was done away with in the 1960s. It is now 30 years later and you would think we would have learned something over that time but never mind. The fact is it was established back then that whipping was not stopping people from committing crimes. We got rid of it and the crime rate has not gone up as a result.

The second thing members of the Reform Party should do is show a little compassion in their consideration of cases involving people who have fallen into error, because there but for the grace of God go one of us. People who have had this problem—

• (2125)

An hon. member: What about the victims?

Mr. Milliken: I agree the victims have a problem and victims are often able to get some kind of relief. The public generally goes to the aid of their neighbours when they are hurt. We hear of people whose houses have been burned down and they get help and so on.

Sure, there may be shortcomings. But we have to live with the person who committed the crime too because that person has obviously fallen off society's apple cart and into trouble. Surely we have an interest in getting that person back on the cart, making that person a productive member of our society instead of spending thousands and thousands of dollars a year by locking the person up and throwing away the key.

Somebody has to look after that person in prison. You do not just lock him up and nothing happens. He is there, he has to be looked after, and it is costing us money. Surely it is a waste of that money if we do not make some effort to make the person a viable and responsible member of our society at some future time. Everybody who goes to prison will get out one day, unless they have a life sentence, and not everyone gets a life sentence as much as the Reform Party might like to see that they did.

However that is not the case. These people are released and have to live in our society. They are our neighbours and we need to make them productive members of our society. That issue has to be addressed and it is not being addressed with any sense of compassion. I invite hon. members to review their thoughts on

this matter and see if there is not some shred of compassion that can be dragged out to help people who have suffered in this way.

Another thing is that Reform Party members talk about the protection of society. The protection of society is very important. Indeed, it is stressed in the Young Offenders Act and in the criminal law as an important element in every sentence. In fact it is the important element. Reform Party members take the view that the protection of society means lock them up; if you lock them up then society will be safe.

I urge the Reform Party to look at the American experience. At least three if not four times the number of people are locked up down there than here. Where would you rather live, here or there? Where are you going to be safer, here or there? You are safer here. They lock up three times as many and their crime rate is double or triple ours. It does not guarantee safety. It is not the answer. We have to look at other alternatives and that is what this act does.

The hon. member says this is too open-ended because it gives too much discretion to judges. If we do not give the discretion, if we do not show the compassion then we are not going to solve our problems. We are not going to make the world safer. We are not going to make Canada safer and we are not going to make Canadians sleep any easier in their beds.

Look at your conscience in this matter, I say to those members. Look at your conscience and see if there is not a shred of compassion that will allow you to accept that the criminal law is not going to solve all our problems. If we do not look at it with compassion and fairness in mind and try to deal with everybody involved in it, victim, criminal and the law enforcement agencies, then we are not going to get anywhere in this country.

It is going to take more work than the criminal law but we all have to pitch in and go at it with an open mind and a fair heart. I urge hon. members opposite to consider that when they vote on this bill.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak very briefly because I spoke on this issue about five or six weeks ago. I believe it was on the Thursday prior to the Liberal convention in Ottawa.

I recognize that this whole issue of the Young Offenders Act truly is not a partisan one. I am trying to stay away from calling it a partisan issue or even referring to it in that way. However after the last speech I could not help but realize there is a very significant difference in the approach of the Liberal members of Parliament, the Reform Party, and the Liberal members of their party.

The point I am making is that when I spoke on this issue—what was it, five or six weeks ago that the Liberals had their convention in Ottawa—there were no problems. As a matter of fact I showed a tape of my speech to the kids who had helped me prepare the speech. Bear in mind that my speech was prepared in part by the hard work of some kids in grades 10 and 11 at Fernie Secondary School. So after watching the tape they said: "Yes,