

Government Orders

• (1735)

Now that it has been confirmed, could the member tell me what his province will do the day young offenders are released, following the amendments to the Young Offenders Act, after spending seven to ten years in jail? What is the province going to do with them, if during all that time, there were no specialists to work with and treat them? If during their time in jail, nobody helped them, what is the province going to do with them once they are released after seven or ten years?

[English]

Mr. Mills (Red Deer): Madam Speaker, I am not quite sure exactly what the member is referring to but we are saying that we do not abandon those children. In fact, we have to do something about that rehabilitation.

We are already spending millions of dollars on social programs, on various types of retraining programs and it is not working. It is just not working. We have a bunch of academics who have this idealistic world where they think they have solutions but it is not working. We have to look at other things and that is the point. The money we are putting in there now is being wasted.

[Translation]

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, it is rather significant that on the one hand, we have the Reform Party telling us that the justice minister's proposal is nothing more than a cosmetic measure, while on the other hand, we have the Bloc telling us that the bill is far too repressive. Perhaps it is the happy medium.

I have listened closely to my colleague, the Minister of Justice, answer countless questions in the House about his views on young offenders and crime. He has said that his philosophy consists of cleaning up some of the outdated provisions in legislation, and at the same time focussing on the issue of crime prevention.

In our red book, we promised to take a look at provisions in the legislation as they pertain to certain violent youth crimes and to strengthen the act which is now ten years old. At the same time, however, we made it very clear that we would try to find ways to curb crime, and this is where prevention comes into play.

[English]

Just the other day after the Stanley Cup riots, all of us expected the riots to take place in New York City which is a city where crime has become a way of life. Yet New York City was quiet. It was lawful. The riots happened in Vancouver, a quiet peaceful city in normal times.

Last year it happened in Montreal, my own city, which is again extremely quiet and peaceful. We have to ask ourselves

what the reasons are for lawlessness, violence and crime. We have to go back to the hopelessness in which youth sees itself.

I heard my colleague from Reform say that 17 years ago when he was 17 he went to bush camp and 20 years ago he knew what right and wrong were, as if today we do not have youth going to bush camps and other ways of work, as if today the youth does not know what is right and wrong. The great majority of youth in Canada are outstanding citizens, highly qualified, desirous of working. There is crime because there is hopelessness. We do not give them a chance.

A few years ago I had the sad privilege to serve on a committee with some other people about an ethnic group in Montreal who did not have the French language skills. They had very few educational skills and no work training skills. They could not find work.

The elders were saying because of that those people would resort to crime. They would rely on drugs and crime because there was no other open way for them. This is why in our electoral commitment we call it creating opportunity. Unless we create opportunity we are going to have to resort to more and more laws which will solve nothing. The more hopelessness there will be, the more crime there is going to be and then the more repressive laws we are going to be looking for.

• (1740)

What we need to do is to look at an integrated approach to society that looks at crime in its very sources. They say that an adult is born when a child is born. This is why we have addressed the question of day care for all the poor, single mothers that have to go to work leaving their children at home without adequate day care. So we have tackled day care. There is a correlation between day care and eventual crime.

Today we have a rate of drop out rate in our schools of something like 40 per cent. Sixty per cent of young Canadians have no vocational skills or no post-secondary skills. How can they approach the workplace in a competitive economy where work has to be more skilled than ever?

We graduate 24,000 apprentices a year compared to 600,000 in Germany. In proportion to our population we should graduate 275,000. How can we hope for these young people to find work, to find a dignity of life if we do not give them the chance?

This is why our program addresses itself to all the various causes of hopelessness.

[Translation]

Literacy, youth programs, the Youth Service Corps, apprenticeship programs and the reform proposals which my colleague the human resources development minister is now working on: this is the integrated reform which will affect all sectors of society and foster a climate in which job training will be a much more positive experience.