

In 1971, 203.9 violent crimes were recorded per 100,000 population. In 1991, 20 years later, 1,099 violent crimes were recorded for every 100,000 population, an increase of 500 per cent. That is a 500 per cent increase in 20 years. Why this increase? There does not seem to be any definitive explanation for it.

Some try to minimize this trend. Some try to suggest that the crime statistics show that there has not been an increase in crime. I would suggest that this figure shows that there has been an increase in crime and it is time that we recognized it.

We can talk about some suggested root causes like poverty, the lack of education and all sorts of other things. These things do not explain why crime crosses all social economic boundaries. If we knew what the real root causes of crime were, we could go after them but since we do not know we have to deal with the symptoms.

My party is here with a clear mandate from its constituents to do something about the crime problem, not to ignore it, not to rationalize it, but to do something to turn it around. As the Liberals heard from their chief pollster at their policy convention last month, in major urban centres crime is the number one issue.

It is not the Reform Party that is leading the call for change. It is the people of Canada. There are very few issues where the people in this country are united but I would suggest to this House that the concern about safety in our communities and safety in our streets is a concern that is shared from sea to sea without exception.

In my last householder, I included a question about changing the age limit in the Young Offenders Act to 10 to 15-year olds. I received almost 3,500 responses. That is an 8 per cent return. Over 90 per cent agreed with this change. In addition, many of those who disagreed stated that the act should be abolished entirely.

How can any politician ignore the will of such an overwhelming majority of the population? Those who will not listen, who refuse to accept the fact that we have a problem with crime in our streets do so at their own peril. If they really think that Canadians are going to wait a good deal longer for action, for a government to start showing some concern, they are dearly mistaken.

Our job is very simple in this House of Commons. As a member of Parliament, I think we can start doing something and do it quickly. What we have to do in this Chamber is that in every aspect of criminal legislation we need to follow one principle. That principle is that the protection of society has a greater priority than the rights of the criminal. We have to send a strong message to all Canadians that violence against other Canadians is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

### Supply

In my community, a husband murdered his wife. He pleaded guilty to manslaughter and got five years. That is five years for murdering a Canadian.

• (1700)

Let us remove the dangerous offenders from society until such time as society can be assured they are no longer dangerous. Let us get the Fishers and the Barlows off our streets so people can feel safer. Let us get the non-violent offenders out of our prisons and have them repay their debts to society in a more constructive manner, for example by restitution, community work service, or the like. Let us make sure our criminal justice system is swift, fair and consistent. Let us return the control of the streets in our communities back to the average citizens.

Canadians across this great country are demanding change. We have the legislative tools to help accomplish this. It will be a great disservice to this country if we fail to fulfil this demand and to react and deliver back to Canadians their communities and their streets.

**Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James):** Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member would like us to believe that only Reform Party members are concerned about safety in this country, that only they are concerned about crime. That is not true. We on this side are just as concerned and sometimes just as befuddled by crime as they are.

I am concerned about how in her remarks she glosses over the causes of crime. In fact she said that we do not know the causes of crime, which I do not think is true. If she were to ask herself that again she would have to answer that we know most of the causes. They relate to family dysfunction, substance abuse, poverty, lack of opportunity, lack of education, lack of hope, racism. Those are many of the sources of crime.

If the member does not think those are the sources of crime, if she really thinks we should treat only the symptoms, I would ask her about the problems facing the aboriginal community. Why do so many aboriginals fill our jails? For example, why in my province is well over half of the jail and penitentiary population made up of aboriginals?

It is self-evident. It is because aboriginals unfortunately share more family dysfunction than anyone else. They suffer more racism than anyone else. They suffer from poverty more than anyone else. They suffer from the lack of hope more than anyone else, and so it goes. That is the reason aboriginals fill our jails.

It is nonsensical for the member to suggest we can ignore the sources of crime, that we can ignore the causes of crime and treat only the symptoms. We will never get to the solutions if we do not focus on the sources of crime. We can build all the jails in the world. We can have all the punishments and all the deterrents, but as long as the mills keep grinding and turning out young criminals, it will be an endless process.