

*Government Orders*

I wholly subscribe to the words of Queen's University law professor Nicholas Bala, an expert in the area of young offenders, who was quoted in the *Toronto Star* of June 3 as saying that "Whoever believes that our society will be better protected by this legislation is sadly mistaken". The same article also quoted Dr. Clive Chamberlain, a Toronto psychiatrist who treated 65 young people who had committed murder. He was saying that the money would be better spent on family support than on amendments to the act.

We could go on for hours quoting all the arguments against harsher treatment of young offenders, but they would not impress those who want an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

I will conclude this long introduction by an observation. Several members, especially from the Reform Party, quote at length letters they received from constituents concerned about young offenders. I am starting to believe that the concerns of these citizens are directly related to the political activism of the extreme right. I see a direct relationship between the number of virulent letters we receive and the fact that the riding has elected a Reform Party member. Indeed, I did not receive a single letter from Atlantic provinces, Quebec, Ontario or Manitoba, but I got boxes full from ridings in southern British Columbia and Alberta who, strangely enough, elected Reform Party members.

I ask you: are people in Langley, Rosedale, Courtenay or Chilliwack really scared of young people? Do they consider young people like strangers you should be wary of? Are they hiding in the closet waiting for these barbarians, armed naturally since, by a strange coincidence, they are also opposed to arms control? Are young people in British Columbia and Alberta more dangerous than those in the east? What inspires such a frenzy against young people?

I am convinced that citizens in both these provinces are just as well informed and democratically minded as people in the rest of the country. The scare campaign orchestrated by a few members from western Canada brings us a daily quota of stereotyped form letters, often mailed in bulk. None of them articulate a personal opinion. I would have liked one of those who signed them to send me a hand-written letter he would have composed and mailed himself. The Reform Party does not impress anyone with those tons of impersonal documents.

Through its excess, this campaign shows its authors for what they really are. I hold Reform members responsible for the fear expressed by some of their constituents. It should not impress the minister nor the House. Even if I were to be harassed by such tactics till the end of my mandate, I will never depart from my principles.

They are simple and can be summed up in one small sentence: Treat humans humanely. It is something I have never heard in all

the emotional speeches given by the hardliners. Humanity, generosity, understanding. It is indeed what the first clauses of the bill seem to promise. We are told with great pomp that the bill is preventive, that it will set up intervention mechanisms to address crime by young persons and that it is aimed at rehabilitating young offenders.

• (1605)

It is all talk, no action. Young persons are going to be rehabilitated in prison. It is in prison that intervention mechanisms will be set up. It is in prison that the underlying causes of crime by teenagers will be dealt with and that the framework for disciplinary action will be developed. And it is again in prison that young persons will learn that they are responsible for their crimes.

We had not seen such an example of legislative deceit in a long time. Where are the provisions for implementing clause 1? How is the minister planning to follow through on this lofty statement of principle which sounds the death knell on all the efforts of these past 30 years?

Clause 1 marks the end of the rehabilitation philosophy. It signs its death warrant, making sure that it will be bogged down in correctional red tape. It is a smokescreen.

I will now deal with the major provisions of the bill, the ones the minister would quote if we were to ask him where is the beef? The major reform brought about by this preventative piece of legislation aimed at rehabilitating young offenders, is to automatically send them to adult court.

Indeed, in spite of the consensus on this issue in Quebec which, incidently, administers a true youth protection act, in spite of all the valuable opinions provided to the minister to the effect that the legislation gives good results, in spite of all that, and because of the cries of a handful of activists, 16 and 17-year-olds will be proceeded against in adult court for murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, aggravated sexual assault and aggravated assault. In every case, the young person will have to convince the youth court that he should remain under its jurisdiction and not be referred to an adult court.

This new legislation, which is primarily concerned with rehabilitation, provides that the maximum sentence will be lengthened to ten years for first degree murder, and to seven years for second degree murder. In the case of an accused over 14 years of age, the court will have discretion to order that the young offender be referred to an adult court, except where a minor offence is involved.

Several MPs will certainly point out that juvenile crime has been declining drastically since the initial amendments made to the former Young Offenders Act. Statistics compiled by the Department of Justice also tell us about the proportion of serious crimes committed by young people. You do not have to be an