

Young delinquents should be held more responsible, report says

It is time for the courts to stop treating juvenile delinquents as misguided children and start treating them as criminals, a Federal Government study says.

The report tabled recently in the House of Commons says children should not be dealt with as harshly as adult criminals, but young people who commit offences must take responsibility for their acts.

The report previews a new Young Offenders Act the Government intends to introduce in the Commons in the next few months to replace the Juvenile Delinquents Act, which dates from 1908.

The law now says the courts should give juvenile delinquents parental-style care and discipline. They should treat a juvenile delinquent "not as a criminal but as a misdirected and misguided child... needing aid, encouragement, help and assistance".

Calling this philosophy outdated, the report says "young people will be held accountable for their behaviour" under the proposed law.

But the new law would raise to 12 from seven the age at which children could be charged with criminal offences. Only children over 14 could be tried in adult courts, and only for the most serious offences such as murder.

The Juvenile Delinquents Act applies to people under the age of 16 in most provinces, under 17 in British Columbia, and under 18 in Quebec and Manitoba. The Government proposes to establish a uniform age of 17 or 18 at which young people would be charged in adult courts.

The report also recognizes that "young people require supervision, discipline and control", and would give juvenile court judges more options in sentencing. Juveniles could still be sent to reformatories for up to two years, but they could also be given an absolute discharge, be ordered to pay a fine up to \$1,000, to compensate their victims or to do community work.

The new law would give young people more rights in juvenile court and would allow them to tell their side of the story to the judge.

The Government also proposes sharply reducing the number of offences a juvenile could be charged with.

The offences of incorrigibility and

sexual immorality would disappear. The report says the current law is discriminatory because it makes certain forms of behaviour a crime for juveniles but not for adults.

The Government wants to reduce the number of children brought to court by providing other ways of dealing with juvenile problems. It proposes abolishing the offence of contributing to juvenile delinquency, and would not let parents be held responsible for illegal acts committed by their children.

Another federal report says that Canadians can look forward to a slower increase, if not an actual decrease, in the rate of juvenile crime in the 1980s. However, an increase in the adult crime rate is expected.

The report, *Selected Trends in Canadian Criminal Justice*, was prepared for the federal-provincial conference of ministers responsible for criminal justice held recently in Ottawa. It bases its prediction on the fact that the number of males "at risk" in the juvenile crime-prone age group has started to decline.

International fire conference

Approximately 100 scientists from as far away as Uganda, Japan, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the U.S.S.R. attended a conference sponsored by the University of New Brunswick's fire science centre in Fredericton.

The conference, entitled "Fire in Northern Circumpolar Ecosystems", was supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Council of Scientific Unions.

Ross Wein, director of the centre, said that while other conferences sponsored by the two groups had dealt with the effects of fire on other ecosystems this was the first to deal with northern circumpolar ecosystems, and was the first gathering of scientists interested in the field.

Papers were presented on subjects such as past and present fire frequencies, the physical effects of fire, concepts of fire effects on individuals and species, and fire control and management.

Japanese journalists on Canadian tour



Seven journalists from Tokyo, who toured Canada, September 16-26, met Prime Minister Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs Flora MacDonald, then President of the Senate Renaude Lapointe and provincial government officials. Mr. Clark, in an interview with the journalists, told them he was planning a conference in Vancouver for early December to examine the possibilities for extended economic and cultural relations with the countries of the Pacific. The journalists (above) with Miss MacDonald are: (left to right) Dairoku Akamatsu, Hirofumi Kegawasa, Shigeo Omori, Hideo Akiyama, Ambassador Michiaki Suma, Toshio Hara, Takuhiki Tsuruta, Kazuo Harano and Ken Yoshida, Information Office, Canadian Embassy, Tokyo.