

Adjournment Debate

I agree here with Mr. Gold. Your Honour and I in this House are reminded that primarily the chief reason for government is the need for protection to persons and property. When we cease to support those principles we should no longer be representing the people. I had that drilled into me by my ancestors, and by predecessors and colleagues in municipal government, yes and in every day life in the region, the county, and community from which I come. I will never desert those principles.

No corporate state should ever relinquish the right to demand the life of any of its citizens convicted of capital crime. The Trudeau government with its permissiveness and laxity is finding this out, but is still refusing to act on it. The government has been operating on the false elitist principles that there are no deterrents to crime. This is not so. The government has not been employing deterrents in their proper severity and force. That is why I ask for an increase in the deterrents to those convicted of extortion. Let the judiciary increase the deterrents. As soon as it is known through extortion circles that the penalties are greater, the frequency of incidents will recede. It will work. It worked many years ago in the 1930's in Ontario.

● (2210)

During the depression chicken thievery became so prevalent that there was hardly a farmer in Ontario who did not suffer from raids on his chicken house. Up to that time chicken stealing was regarded on the same plane as Hallowe'en pranks. It was rather lightly regarded. The demand was raised for stiffer penalties for chicken stealing. The government of Ontario through its magistrates responded to that demand and imposed stiffer penalties commensurate with the crime. Chicken stealing very soon became a rare occurrence, and we hardly ever hear of it any more. Increase the penalty—decrease crime.

I have further information and statistics, but we do not have the time for them tonight. We have been informed that extortion has been so prevalent, especially in Montreal and vicinity, that since November last well over \$1 million has been successfully extorted by the underworld from citizens in that area in 13 different cases. This occurs not only in Montreal; it is prevalent in Ontario and the western part of the country as well.

In closing I ask the Minister of Justice to use all his influence to see that those convicted of extortion are more severely punished in a manner commensurate with the enormity of their crimes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Marceau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, the Criminal Code creates various crimes of extortion. The most notable of these comes under section 305 which provides a penalty of 14 years' imprisonment for inducement or attempted inducement. Subsection (1) reads as follows:

Everyone who, without reasonable excuse and with intent to extort or gain anything, by threats, accusations, menaces or violence induces or attempts to induce any person, whether or not he is the person threatened, accused, menaced or to whom violence is shown, to do anything or cause anything to be done, is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for fourteen years.

Section 266(1) of the Code stipulates:

Everyone commits an offence who, with intent

[Mr. Alkenbrack.]

(a) to extort money from any person, or

(b) to induce a person to confer upon or procure for another person an appointment or office of profit or trust, publishes or threatens to publish—

And so forth. I will spare you the rest.

In addition, section 266(2) creates an offence punishable by five years' imprisonment for publishing a defamatory libel. The Criminal Code also makes it an offence to threaten or intimidate people whether or not the threat or intimidation was done with the intent to extort anything of value. Numerous other provisions of the Criminal Code overlap with the extortion provisions and some of these have penalties up to life imprisonment.

In recent times the entire trend has been away from prescribing minimum penalties for offences under the Criminal Code. The rationale is that those directly involved in the administration of justice generally hold the view that the courts should be left with a discretion to impose whatever sentence they consider fit having regard to the circumstances of the particular case. The Attorney General of a province, or his agent, can always appeal the sentence.

The maximum terms of imprisonment under section 305 is fourteen years and this appears to provide sufficient flexibility to the judiciary in imposing sentence. The present maximum does, I think, reflect the public's general disapprobation towards this kind of conduct.

While I agree with my hon. friend that the problem is serious, I refer here, naturally, to the administration of justice, I do allow myself to disagree with him on capital punishment. I do not believe in the law of the underworld, the law of settling of accounts, the law of mutual assassinations as a solution to our problems. And I feel that we should now have, naturally, more severe penalties. I shall therefore convey the recommendations of my hon. friend to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang), for I do agree that extortion is a serious crime which calls for appropriate sanctions, but I disagree with him on capital punishment, which he recommends, yet I respect his opinion.

[*English*]

PUBLIC WORKS—REQUEST FOR CHANGE IN REGULATIONS TO PERMIT PEOPLE IN NORTHERN AREAS TO RENT PREMISES OWNED BY DEPARTMENT

Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday in the absence of the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Drury) I directed a question to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), which had been referred to me by my colleague, the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth). If he had been here he would have asked the question, but he was attending meetings in the Northwest Territories, and he called upon me, because of the crisis proportions of this problem, and asked me to direct a question to the Minister of Public Works.

So that you may be aware of the question, Mr. Speaker, I said:

In view of the housing crisis in the Northwest Territories and the fact that in the Yukon—