

Government Orders

Financial compensation by the offender in the case of less serious crimes often encourages rehabilitation of the offender. In the legislation, amendments to section 745 of the Criminal Code will give victims of violence the chance to voice the effects the offender's crime has had on their lives during their hearing for early parole.

It is about time the victim's experience is given greater emphasis. The statement will play a key role in the determination of the release of violent offenders back into society. Fines will now be officially recognized as part of the sentencing process. The fact is that many offenders are in prison for non-violent crimes simply because they are not able to pay the fine levelled on them.

Consideration will now be given to these individuals and fines will be imposed based on the offender's ability to pay. Inability to repay will result in other penalties such as probation or community service.

For those who have the ability to pay, fines will be strictly enforced. The system of fines will result in decreased costs of running our institutions. The community plays an important role in this bill, especially under the provision that allows for alternative incarceration.

Under strict supervision, a less serious non-violent offender who has been determined to pose no danger to society could serve the sentence within the community in some way. Counselling, probation, fines and community service will be part of a more effective rehabilitative approach to minor and first time offenders.

Limited funds could be spent protecting the public from more serious and violent offenders. Prison will be reserved for their rehabilitation. This legislation will prove beneficial to communities because it contains measures that will ensure the culture of hate is not permitted to flourish in this country.

Hate crimes are an unfortunate and insufferable reality in our society. The fact that people are specifically targeted because of their race, their religion, their ethnicity, their sexual orientation cannot be ignored or purposely be swept under the carpet.

Police bias crime units have reported that crimes motivated by hate are on the increase. We must also keep in mind that this probably does not include the many hate crimes that go unreported because of an individual's fear or historic mistrust of authorities.

Have you ever stopped to think, Mr. Speaker, about how traumatizing it is to victims, knowing that they have been specifically attacked because of who they are and what they look like? This is a very personal attack because you cannot change these aspects of yourself.

Canadians have expressed their alarm at the intolerable increase in this type of violence. The government has responded by introducing these amendments that will allow judges to impose stiffer sentences on those who have been convicted of a crime

motivated by hate based on race, nationality, colour, religion, sex, mental or physical disability or sexual orientation.

Working with the community to improve education in combination with stiffer sentencing measures will result in a better co-ordinating response to hate. Section 718 which got much discussion across the way specifically comes into play after a person is convicted of a crime motivated by hate toward a specific group.

The government recognizes the need to replace the vagueness that currently exists in the sentencing process to protect the groups that are being senselessly and violently targeted.

History has taught us that we will only suffer as a society if violence, intimidation and fearmongering toward any group is tolerated. Ours is a society of equality and Bill C-41 will offer a solid deterrence to all people who threaten human life.

Sentencing practices should be a reflection of Canadian values and this legislation mirrors the values of equality and democracy quite clearly.

• (1920)

There is great support for this bill because the people of Canada know that in combination with other elements of our crime prevention package, change will come and the risk toward safety will lessen.

Sentencing reform, amendments to the Young Offenders Act, parole and corrections reform, the creation of a crime prevention council, greater control of firearms will go a long way toward making our communities safer places to live.

In addition to all this we will continue our efforts to reform the social programs, implementing more effective measures to combat poverty, lack of education, unemployment, illiteracy. We are making progress toward a safer, less violent and more progressive society.

Bill C-41 will guide us in that direction. Let us show tolerance and support this bill.

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased that the hon. parliamentary secretary had a wide ranging look at this bill in her speech.

There are some comparisons that I might make to the comments she has made. I have in my hand a report from the Canadian Police Association, a group that was lauded by the justice minister for its support of Bill C-68.

In the introduction to the report, the association says this:

Bill C-41 with a few exceptions is unwieldy, complicated, internally self-contradictory, duplicitous and what is worse, almost all of it completely unnecessary for anyone with any knowledge of or use for the common law heritage of Canada. While it would attempt to codify basic sentencing principles, eliminating this most basic judicial discretion, at the same time it would bestow huge new discretionary powers to a whole range of persons within the justice system.