

Private Members' Business

I continue to quote:

Then you get into the subdivision records; then you get into the central crime index records in Ottawa. Then you get into prison records, and international records. The fact he may have been reported as convicted to the American authorities or the British authorities.

Apart from all the official records, then you have newspaper records and when it comes to sealing a criminal record, in order to make sure that no one can get at it, you are going to have an awful lot of documentation in this country to deal with if you want to do it effectively.

That is the end of the quotation.

I am suggesting, in conclusion, as is evidenced from the debates which have already taken place, that this is an exceedingly complex issue, perhaps more complex than some of us realize. I think it is important that the Minister of Justice and her officials use the legislation, use the bill which is before us, as an opportunity to examine this very important but very complex issue.

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): I am pleased to take part in this second reading debate of Bill C-314, an act respecting amendments to the Criminal Records Act and related legislation.

The member for Mississauga South has done his homework and intends to correct a long-standing anomaly through direct action.

The part of the Criminal Records Act that is the subject of Bill C-314 is an area that has been identified previously as problematic. I therefore commend the hon. member's good intentions.

I would point out that the government has also done its homework in this area. A wide variety of questions raised concerning reform to the Criminal Records Act has led to far-reaching consultations with concerned interest groups, government officials and affected citizens.

The most extensive consultations occurred during the clemency review initiative in 1983 when the distribution of a discussion paper, the circulation of a questionnaire and in-person meetings took place with all provinces and

territories. Provincial officials in the departments of the Attorneys General, social services, corrections and justice took part. Many private sector agencies active in criminal justice were contacted, as were criminal justice professionals and concerned citizens. A total of 93 responses were received after the distribution of the discussion papers. Representatives of other federal departments, regional and national parole board members, police forces and associations, correctional officials and the judiciary and counsel, the private sector and individual inmates and inmate representatives were included in the consultation process.

The full 18-member constituency of the national associations active in criminal justice responded. These responses included those of the St. Leonard Society, the John Howard Society, The Salvation Army, the National Association of Friendship Centres, the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, and the Canadian Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies.

The expectation that changes to the Criminal Records Act were imminent was raised among this wide spectrum of individuals and groups. Proposals for change that came forward were closely scrutinized by those who became actively engaged in this consultation.

A more limited consultation took place in 1986. Provincial deputy ministers responsible for criminal justice were informed, as were selected non-government organizations including the large group of national voluntary organizations which belong to national associations active in criminal justice. The Canadian Bar Association, the Uniform Law Conference, and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police were contacted.

When new proposals are brought forward, it should be expected that a very large number of concerned and interested constituencies may wish to address the issues. It seems likely that this will be the case regardless of how limited or extensive the proposed reforms are.

In the present case of Bill C-314, the lack of major change will be contrasted to previous expectations and demands for broader change will almost certainly be raised. Should proposals for broader and more general reforms be brought forward, the many substantive issues