Mr. Jackson: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I have enough time for this question but I will try to answer it very quickly.

I guess censorship is another question. We do not censor things. People are supposed to know what is reality and what is not. I agree with the member. Most of us on this side of the House who grew up during his time know that there were very strict acts and most of us tried to confront that.

There is a great tendency within society as it stands now. I taught high school before I came here. A child may be subjected to four or five parents and there are some complications in those relationships. In a lot of cases they are given love. Talk to people from the children's aid or anybody who takes kids in who cannot deal with them. Unfortunately there are no tests for families, and part of our problem is to try to do that.

• (1735)

The other alternative is to lock them up, shoot them or hang them, and that is not what we do in our society.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, in a few words, to begin, I think I can say, and not be too far off the mark, that an elephant has just brought forth a mouse; the elephant, of course, is the problem of young offenders, you understand.

Fortunately, the Bloc Quebecois has proposed an amendment which the House can accept, for the sake of young people who need help in Canada.

After receiving much media coverage, reading thousands of briefs and attending federal–provincial conferences, the minister let it be understood that the problem of young offenders was very complex and deserved special attention to produce amendments for correcting the deficiencies in the system. The big problem of youth is supposed to be solved with the bill we have in our hands.

So where do we stand? What is the wonder prescription to achieve this objective? So as not to be accused of distorting the major points of the bill, I will use the justice minister's press release of June 2. Here are the ingredients of the wonder formula to deal with the problems of young offenders.

First of all, the minister proposes extending the penalties for adolescents found guilty in youth court of first– or second–degree murder to ten and seven years respectively. What a stroke of inspiration. We see that the essential element of the bill is repression. Indeed, the government stresses this point at the outset so that everyone understands.

Secondly, the minister proposes referring to adult court 16– and 17–year–olds accused of an offence involving serious bodily harm, unless they can convince a judge that the objectives of public protection and rehabilitation can both be met if they are judged in a youth court.

This is an important change. In our system, one is presumed innocent until proven guilty and the Crown must prove beyond any reasonable doubt that the accused is guilty; however, if the accused is 16 or 17 years old, he is presumed to be an adult for the purposes of his trial unless the public interest does not require it.

Under our laws, an underage person will have to show that the public can be protected and he can be returned to society if his case is referred to youth court; this is a dangerous breach of legal principles which concerns me greatly.

With this bill, the government is dividing 16– and 17–year–olds into two classes: persons under 18 who are docile and can be rehabilitated and those who, at age 16 and 17, are incorrigible, as implied in the bill. If we can speak of the long arm of the law, we can now say that it is also selective.

How can such unfair treatment be compatible with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms? In any event, we in Quebec have at least 25 years of experience in reintegrating young offenders in society. Although we need to invest to expand the program, and although I agree that a lot remains to be done, we have a system to provide support to a young person who needs help. But in those English–speaking provinces where rehabilitation is not a priority, where will a 16 or 17–year–old go, even if he asks for protection under the Young Offenders Act? I am quite sure that legal precedents will quickly be created and based on the principle that a 16 or 17–year–old must be held accountable for his acts, must be treated like an adult, must be dealt with by an adult court, and must also be sentenced as an adult.

In the reform he tabled last week, the minister also lengthens the sentences to be served by 16 and 17–year old offenders who are found guilty of murder by an adult court, before they can be eligible for parole. Again, the underlying message being conveyed is one of repression.

• (1740)

The fourth element mentioned by the minister to help young people avoid getting into trouble with the law is to improve the sharing of information between professionals, for example school authorities, the police and some public representatives, when public security is threatened, and to retain criminal records for a longer period in the case of young offenders who have committed serious crimes.

I am curious to see how clause 38.(1.14) will be interpreted as regards public security.

Many well–meaning but tactless people will append the criminal record and the court order to the academic record, precisely for so–called security reasons. What a nice introduc-