

Criminal Code

This is not the first time the matter has been before the house. It has been before the house in discussions on the estimates of the Department of Justice in 1947 and again in 1948. While I have a bill here which deals with crime comics I should say that one or two remarks have been made indicating a view to this effect: Well, after all, is there much sense in going after the comics in the daily papers and depriving the children of their ordinary reading? May I make it clear, Mr. Speaker, at the very outset that the type of publication I have in mind is not the ordinary comic strip in the paper, but it is what is commonly called the crime comic; in other words the pulp paper magazine which retails for about 10 cents, vast numbers of which can be found on any of our newsstands.

Mr. Gibson (Comox-Alberni): Coming from Toronto.

Mr. Fulton: I believe that a large number of them are printed in Toronto. The hon. member who has just spoken and any other hon. member who may be wondering a little bit whether this matter is worth wasting much time on would be, I think, as I have been, amazed if he were to go down and make a study of the magazine stands in any news shop of this city or in any other city across Canada. If he will actually look through the racks in the shops he will be astonished to find how widespread is the distribution of these magazines. Again I refer to the kind of magazine, forty or fifty pages of which portray nothing but scenes illustrating the commission of crimes of violence with every kind of horror that the mind of man can conceive. May I lay before the house, Mr. Speaker, a description of the type of thing I have in mind. At this stage I do not want to use my own words; I want to use the words of a very respected minister of the government which is in office at the present time, a man of most temperate character, a man little given to exaggerated or violent words. In 1948 I sent the then minister of justice, Mr. Ilesley, now Mr. Justice Ilesley, a copy of the type of magazine which I had in mind. It was entitled "Crime does not Pay." A little later when his estimates were up for discussion in the house the minister referred to the particular magazine that I had sent him and he used these words, to be found on page 4939 of *Hansard* of June 9, 1948:

The hon. member for Kamloops sent me a shocking instance of the abuse of freedom of the press. I agree with him that it is just that.

As illustrated by the number of resolutions and letters which I have received from organizations from coast to coast, there is a very widespread feeling that this type of crime comic does immense harm to the youth of this

[Mr. Fulton.]

nation. May I read to the house some of the words used by an experienced psychologist in discussing the type of thing with which I am dealing. I hold in my hand a book entitled "The Psychopathology of Comic Books", an extract of the symposium held by the association for the advancement of psychotherapy held in New York city and written by Frederic Wertham. The first paper was read by a Mr. Gerson Legman. I shall read from page 473 of the proceedings of the association. I read these words because they are a perfect description of the type of publication which I have in mind:

The comic books concentrate on aggressions which are impossible under civilized restraints—with fists, guns, torture, killing, and blood. The internalized censorship of both artist and child makes this attack respectable by directing it against some scapegoat criminal or wild animal, or even against some natural law like gravity, rather than against the parents, teachers, and policemen who are the real sources of the child's frustration and therefore the real objects of his aggression. At the same unconscious level that the child identifies himself with the heroic avenger, he may also identify whoever has been frustrating him with the corpse.

Violence displaced in this way from its intended object invariably appears in larger and larger doses, more and more often repeated. Twelve years ago, in 1936, there was not one comic book published in the United States. Today, at a conservative estimate, there are five hundred million yearly.

May I pause here to remark that that estimate is already out of date, because the last authoritative estimate in the United States is that 60 million of these publications hit the magazine stands in that country every month, or 720 million a year. I regret that I have not been able to obtain authoritative figures on the numbers which are circulating in Canada; but, as I have said, if any hon. member wants to see for himself the threat which they are he has only to go to any newsstand in any otherwise reputable magazine shop in this or in any other city.

The article continues:

The secret of this unprecedented success—the greatest, fastest literary success the world has ever seen—is, of course, violence. All comic books without exception are principally, if not wholly devoted to violence.

The price being only a few cents apiece, and the distribution national, every city child can, and does, read from ten to a dozen of these pamphlets monthly, an unknown number of times, and then trades them for others. If there is only one violent picture per page—and there are usually more—every city child who was six years old in 1938 has by now absorbed an absolute minimum of eighteen thousand pictorial beatings, shootings, stranglings, blood-puddles, and torturings-to-death, from comic books alone. The fortification of this visual violence with similar aural violence over the radio daily, and both together in the movies on Saturday, must also be counted in. The effect—and there are those who think it has been a conscious intention—has been to raise up an entire generation of adolescents who have felt, thousands upon thousands of times, all the sensations and