

*Government Orders*

Presented to the committee were studies conducted in England, Canada and the United States. In relation to young offenders, these studies revealed that a minority of male offenders are responsible for the majority of all crimes committed.

The president of the Quebec Association of Police and the director of the Hull police force described to the committee research findings showing that 80 per cent of crimes are committed by approximately 20 per cent of the offenders.

Self reports and arrest records of offenders who have long criminal histories revealed to the committee that offending began when they were very young, that their offending became progressively more violent and that a significant proportion of persistent young offenders become the adult offenders of the future.

A criminology professor with the University of Ottawa told the committee that about 75 per cent to 80 per cent of incarcerated adults were persistent offenders in their youth. The committee heard that the level of crime in a society cannot be separated from the social, economic and political milieu in which it occurs. Social science research has identified many interrelated factors in the social environment of persistent offenders that contribute to crime.

Although the committee made a number of recommendations regarding crime prevention to the previous government based on its findings, the previous government did not introduce or even propose measures that demonstrated it was taking a leadership role in crime prevention.

We have a new government but the same approach to crime. We seem to be satisfied to deal with the symptoms of crime rather than to get at the cause of crime. Until the government of the day can identify the cause of crime, until it can identify the reasons for domestic violence and violence against women, we will continue to have this problem.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I congratulate the secretary of state for her excellent presentation on a very important matter to all members who are going to speak on this very important subject.

I have one quick example to share with members about domestic violence. I spent about five years serving as a board member of the shelter for battered women in my riding of Mississauga South. It is called Interim Place. I am very pleased that Interim Place was able to arrange for additional funding and arrange for a second shelter to be built.

Members would be interested to know that in one month alone while I was on the board 80 women were turned away from our shelter because there were no beds left. There was no place for them to go with their children. That gives some idea of the magnitude of the problem we have in Canada. As the minister

has stated, one half of all women will experience domestic violence in their lives.

● (1140)

I ask the member whether he would agree that because of the seriousness of the issue of domestic violence and the fact that there is presently a bill before this House, Bill C-41, which tries to identify aggravating circumstances of bias, prejudice or hate, that the matter of domestic violence or spousal abuse be included as a matter which would demonstrate bias, prejudice and hate and warrant a more serious sentence than the simple offence that was committed.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I think it is important. When we deal with penalties for offences committed, I think that if the state wishes to stiffen penalties we can do that, but we all ought to stand equal before the law. The courts and judges ought to be left with the discretion based upon the circumstances to decide whether a more severe penalty should be imposed upon the culprit who through motivation of hatred or bias commits an offence against another.

I enforced the law for 14 years and I never saw an assault upon another person motivated by anything but anger, hatred or bias. I have never seen an assault conducted by a positive emotion of love or compassion. I have never experienced that. I have never taken anyone into court on that basis, and I have taken hundreds of people into courts for other types of offences during my service.

When I consider the hon. member's question and I look at Bill C-41, I ask myself why is it that we cannot leave this matter to the courts. Yes, enhance the penalties, make them stiffer. Surely when the court feels that mitigating circumstances indicate a more serious penalty ought to be levied, the court should have the discretion to do so.

**Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Secretary of State (Training and Youth), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased and honoured to join in the debate this morning that this House take note of the anniversary of the murder of 14 women at l'École polytechnique on December 6, 1989, and the continuing urgent need for action to eliminate the threat of violence in society, including the threat of violence against women.

I find this debate particularly important because a year ago today I went to a memorial in Montreal. I spoke at the memorial for the 14 women. It is an experience that has left me with a commitment to society, a personal commitment to see that human beings show respect and dignity to one another that is deserved, a love, caring and commitment to work hard with all people in society.

We must work with men, women, families and communities, different levels of government, all the institutions in our country and with our children, toward a violence free society. It is a very