

*Government Orders*

young people in drop-in and rehabilitation centres is the lowest, about half the Canadian average".

According to research done on crime rates in American states relying on punishment as a deterrent against crime, there is no significant difference as opposed to states having a different approach based on the fight against crime. In this regard, the American experience in the area of crime and crime prevention clearly demonstrates that stiff sentences have little effect on the crime rate.

[English]

Getting back to the report "Beyond the Red Book": "Few saw any serious problems with the act that could not have been remedied by proper and creative administration of the act. Repeatedly the view was expressed that the most serious problem in the Young Offenders Act was the way in which it was administered in some provinces. Most cases involving violence that come under the control of the Young Offenders Act can be dealt with under the present legislation".

So much for the necessity of new legislation. What about increasing the severity of sentences?

• (1925)

In the same report Mr. Doob noted:

With adolescents, increasing the severity of dispositions has no real impact on offending behaviour; either for the youth before the court or other youths. That is, despite its apparent logic and appeal, increasing the severity of dispositions has neither specific nor general deterrent value.—The data supports the conclusion that rehabilitation is more likely to be accomplished in non-custodial settings.—It was suggested that if the federal and the provincial governments were serious about protecting the public, then the governments should invest money in prevention and in educating the public about youth crime. It is cheaper and more effective to prevent crime than to put kids in custody when they commit offences.

[Translation]

Therefore, this bill is premature. We do not have a long enough experience, here in Canada, to assess the effects of the amendments introduced in 1992. I should remind members that, in 1992, the sentence for murder what extended to five years. However, such a sentence should also be imposed. At the present time, considering the lag time in the availability of statistics, we cannot determine the impact of this amendment. How can we justify what we are doing now? Why not wait for the results of the previous amendments before taking more repressive measures?

Crime, lest we forget, is an extremely complex issue. Generally speaking, criminologists recognize that the causes of crime are many. Violence and crime are interconnected and it is therefore important to address the root cause of crime by impressing on young offenders at the earliest opportunity that they are responsible for their actions. Sanctions or penalties directly tied to the offence must be enforced. Automatic incarceration or isolation in secure custody have no rehabilitative value. The deterrent effect of these measures can even be called into question.

Getting back to the question of public perception, last February, Jean Trépanier of the University of Montreal spoke at a symposium on crime and shared some statistics on the subject. According to Mr. Trépanier, only one in every six persons who commit an offence is a minor whereas the public's perception is vastly different. It is commonly believed that nearly 50 per cent of crimes are committed by young persons.

The February 3, 1994 issue of *La Presse* reported that youth crime had even declined by 7.6 per cent in Quebec over the past 15 years. The same is true for Montreal. The number of juvenile delinquents was reported at 10,145 in 1979, compared to 6,679 in 1992. This represents a decrease of 34 per cent in 13 years.

More recently in the June 8 edition of *La Presse*, Mr. Trépanier stated the following: "According to Statistics Canada, the delinquency rate in Quebec per 100,000 residents is the second lowest in Canada after peace loving Prince Edward Island".

Over the past decade, the number of serious crimes such as murder, manslaughter and aggravated assault has either remained stable or declined.

"The increase noted in the number of violent crimes is due to a large extent to a 127 per cent increase in minor assaults from 1986 to 1991. According to national statistics on crime, a minority of young offenders are involved in crimes of a violent nature. In fact, only 13 percent of charges laid in 1991 were in connection with crimes of violence. However, nearly half of the charges laid against young offenders in 1991 involved first level assaults, which means that the offense was committed without the use of a weapon and that no bodily injury was inflicted upon the victim".

Tim Weiner from the *Ottawa Citizen* reported in March 1991 that "one Canadian out of three is under the false impression that violence is as widespread in Canada, if not more, than in the United States." The fact of the matter is that a far greater number of violent crimes are committed in the United States than in Canada.

The Americans have doubled their police forces and the size of private police forces has increased fourfold over the past 30 years. Their inmate population has doubled over the past 10 years to a record high of four per 1,000 residents, which is at least four times higher than anywhere else in the Western world. Yet, violent crime rates in the U.S. are three times higher than in other industrialized countries.

• (1930)

As for the transfer to adult court, the amendments to the 1992 act clarified the applicable criteria to determine if a young offender must be transferred to adult court. Youth court must now take into account society's interest, in particular the public's protection and the teenager's reintegration into society, and determine if it is possible to reconcile these two objectives by keeping the teenager under its jurisdiction. If the court thinks that it is impossible, society's protection prevails. The required