

abused. The abuse can be in the form of physical battering, or it can be sexual or involve severe neglect. It can cause physical or psychological damage to the child, or most likely, both. The problem has been divided into the following categories: "(1) Infanticide; (2) the wasted and neglected child; (3) the beaten, burnt and sadistically injured; (4) the battered child".²⁶ In practice, there is considerable overlap between these groups. A further category, more extensive than generally realized, is the sexually abused child. Various terms have been used to describe child abuse such as 'maltreatment syndrome' and 'concealed parental violence', yet it has been pointed out that the characteristics of abusive parents are the same as those of criminals in general, particularly violent criminals: "What you and I euphemistically call child abuse is listed in the Criminal Code essentially under such headings as murder, manslaughter, intent to murder, wounding, grievous bodily harm and so forth."²⁷

97. The extent of the problem is not known. Many cases are never detected. Many of those noticed are not reported. It is therefore impossible to find accurate statistics of child abuse. One witness estimated the number of abused children in Canada to be somewhere between 5,000 and 9,000.²⁸ One research project estimated the incidence in Canada to be at the rate of 250 per million population.²⁹ Some of these children die as a result of the abuse. Some of them sustain brain damage or other impairments that will affect their future behaviour and their lives.

98. A recent Report of the Committee on Child Health Services to the Parliament of the United Kingdom had this to say about non-accidental injury to children: "7-8% die — the fourth commonest cause of death in the first five years — and... of those who survive 11% have residual brain damage and 5% visual impairment of varying degree."³⁰ In Canada the Social Service Programs Branch of the Department of National Health and Welfare has undertaken, in consultation with provincial and territorial governments, a study on child abuse. An interim document that was prepared for the study and that outlines key legislative issues relating to child abuse has been brought to our attention. We wish to commend Health and Welfare for initiating this study, particularly in view of the fact that no research dealing with child abuse on a national basis has previously been done in Canada.

99. Statistics on the extent of child abuse are, however, of questionable value as definitions of what constitutes abuse vary and judgments at the primary level of investigation must be based on subjective evaluations. It is obviously a vast and complicated problem with social, legal and moral ramifications.

100. Does child abuse constitute one of those experiences in early childhood that causes later violent or criminal behaviour? From the evidence available, the answer to this question is yes. It is clear that violence breeds violence.³¹