

higher. So, honourable senators, these figures prove, if proof is needed, that crime prevention is good business from a dollar and cents point of view, apart from its beneficial effects on the individuals who otherwise might commit crime.

With these facts in mind, it is apparent the committee was inquiring into a matter of grave concern to society and any recommendations it could make would be of practical benefit.

Now, in order to understand just what the committee wanted to do we need to look at its terms of reference. These are not long and I will read them:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Health, Welfare and Science be authorized to inquire into and report upon such experiences in prenatal life and early childhood as may cause personality disorders or criminal behaviour in later life and to consider and recommend such remedial and preventative measures relating thereto as may be reasonably expected to lead to a reduction in the incidence of crime and violence in society.

So it is apparent the inquiry was to be a very ambitious project which could have far reaching results.

It was decided the inquiry would be conducted by a small subcommittee known as the Subcommittee on Childhood Experiences as Causes of Criminal Behaviour. From the foreword it is apparent the committee wanted a study in depth. Let me read a paragraph:

What are the influences in the life of a young child which will so affect the course of his development that he will grow up to be aggressive, antisocial or a violent criminal? How is he influenced by the environment in which he lives? Is there some inherited vulnerability to criminal behaviour? Are the reasons basically social, or are they psychological, emotional or physical? Whatever the reasons may be, what can be done to alter the anticipated development of such a child? These were some of the questions which the Committee asked during the enquiry.

Honourable senators, specifically the subcommittee explored these early childhood experiences which might be the causes of criminal behaviour in the future, and it concluded what steps might be taken to change such harmful circumstances in early life. The committee has given us a vast amount of interesting information and its report will, I expect, become a standard reference work on this subject.

The report shows the inquiry was divided into two parts, though, of course, the two parts are interrelated. One part was the inquiry into experiences in prenatal and early childhood which might later cause personality disorders or criminal behaviour; the second part was to make recommendations as to what might be done to, at least, reduce the incidence of crime and violence in our society. The study has shown the great importance of the prenatal period and the influence on the development of the child by outside factors such as malnutrition or poor nutrition and the use of drugs, alcohol or tobacco on the part of the mother prior to the birth of the child.

Apparently, even emotional stress or anxiety can affect the unborn child.

It is rather surprising to learn from the report that the unborn child is influenced so early and to such an extent by matters which affect the mother. It shows, I think, that the unborn child is a living human being which can be influenced just as a child already born can be influenced by the factors studied by the committee. I expect, honourable senators, that the report, as it deals with prenatal influences, will strengthen the belief of those who oppose abortion, because I think it is obvious what is being killed by abortion is not just a piece of tissue but a living human being who is developing and preparing to be born.

● (1520)

After reviewing all the evidence, the committee became absolutely convinced there is no such thing as a natural born criminal. It is environmental factors of one kind or another which cause people to turn to crime or make crime appear attractive. Some are influenced by poverty, and some by poor health, lack of education, a lack of decent housing and the like. And it is surprising to learn the extent which these influences have on early life—the first three years of life, in fact. It is surprising how these factors or influences, which occur in the first three years of life, can shape the physical, moral and mental development of the future adult. The report deals with these factors in some detail and I will not speak of them now.

If I might make a slight criticism of that section dealing with the influence of poverty, I wonder if there is not an undesirable influence extended by what might be called “near poverty.” The young child might well be influenced by the strains and stresses in a home where there is a constant nervous pressure to make ends meet from a financial point of view.

I think also more information and more explanation should be given on paragraph 143 on page 51. This states in part that low-rental complexes or subsidized housing lead to a concentration of multi-problem families. While I expect that is so in some cases—and indeed I have heard of such cases—I do not expect it is widespread and I do not believe it to be a problem difficult of solution. Certainly, I would not want the impression to be given that low-rental subsidized housing is not a good thing. I believe it is an excellent plan and a practical answer to a very pressing need. It provides good, decent housing to people with low incomes. And even if it has, or can have, some undesirable side effects, the good it does and the fine results it obtains far outweigh any undesirable side effects.

Honourable senators, from reading the report it is apparent that the committee, through and by the subcommittee, did make an in-depth study of how personality disorders or criminal behaviour may well be influenced by prenatal and early childhood experiences. Indeed, it proved that point beyond any doubt. It proved that some of these influences were emotional privation, child abuse, violence in the home and on the streets, violence seen on television and the like. If from its early years a child lives in a home where there is a very casual attitude