

*Government Orders*

it clear in this bill where that cannot be done, where the protection of the public is paramount.

Both opposition parties do not want to see that in there. I can say that that position is at odds with what Canadians want and what Canadians have been telling us about the Young Offenders Act. I hope that this House has the good sense to turn down both these motions.

**Mr. George S. Rideout (Moncton):** Mr. Speaker, I think that as we take a look at this legislation and the very progressive amendments which have been put forward by the opposition parties, we realize that what is at issue here is not the goal, but the methodology. Quite frankly, the government's methodology is to take young people and transfer them into the adult system and let them be treated by the adult system.

I listened to the parliamentary secretary who made the point about somebody who commits a premeditated murder. He doesn't get the same penalties under the young offenders legislation, but if he goes into the adult system he would get a life sentence. This could be anywhere from 20 to 25 years, if you wish. You are taking somebody who is 15, 16 or 17, and then putting them back out on the street after 20 years. What you have then is a 35 year old person who has been abused by the system for 20 years and he or she is probably going to recommit.

I think what we are saying is that we want to try to find a different method. We feel that the basic approach is one of keeping youth out of the adult system. In that system, you are in effect saying that there is a failure. We are abrogating our responsibilities by putting them in the adult system and leaving them for the maximum period of time that we can get.

We realize on this side that there is a problem. I just have to quote the recent statistics that were in the media. Violence by youths rose by 34 per cent over four years:

The number of youths in court charged with violent crimes has increased a staggering 34 per cent in the past four years, Statistics Canada reports.

The figures released yesterday show that violence-related cases among youths aged 12 to 17, including homicides, robberies and sexual assaults, are up from 1986-87, when statistics were first collected.

It went on to point out that the report showed that more than 60,000 youth court cases were heard in

Canada in 1990-91. In 9,013 of these, the principle charge was of a violent offence, in most cases assault, followed by possession or use of weapons and then robbery. There is no question that we have a problem. It is in the way of trying to find the solution to that problem that we differ with the government.

What this legislation does is make it easier for youths to transfer and end up in the adult system. More than likely we are going to destroy youths by putting them in that system.

At the same time, in trying to find the right balance, we agree that there should be increases in sentences. We believe that there are problems in the legislation, that they have not worked properly and that some youths look at being caught under the youth offender situation as a joke. You can talk to police officers who will tell you that you can almost set your watch as far as break and enters are concerned. This is because there are gangs of youths who get involved in break and enters, they get a light sentence of six months or something like that in a community home and they are back on the streets causing the same problems again.

We acknowledge that is a problem and that is why we on this side have suggested keeping them in the youth system, but increasing the penalties. Let the youths realize that they are going to pay for the crimes that they commit and that payment is going to be in time, their time. At the same time we believe there has to be a commitment to rehabilitation and, for want of a better word, to treatment for these individuals. We have to structure the system so that we are trying to salvage the youth in our communities rather than sending them off to university by sending them off to prison. That to us is not effective. It will create a situation in 10, 15 or 20 years where we will have some very highly trained criminals who have spent years and years in the adult system so that they are so-called university trained criminals. They will be very good at it when they are back out on the street.

• (1550)

We on this side are looking for is a solution to the problem. Youth have to pay for their crimes, but at the same time when we look at the causes of youth resorting to crime we as society have an obligation to them to make sure that they are not penalized by the system and