

# Langdon Campaign Bringing About Juvenile Delinquency Act Overhaul

In two letters to Halton riding MP Rud Whiting, Solicitor General George McIlwraith has confirmed that the federal government is ready to undertake a massive overhaul of the Juvenile Delinquency Act.

It is possible the changes to the Act will include setting a uniform age limit to juveniles across Canada, and making the limit age 17. The limit now varies from province to province and ranges from 16 in Ontario to 18 in at least one other province.

The Solicitor General's letters to the Halton MP came as a result of the recent stand by Judge Kenneth M. Langdon of Georgetown that the age limit for juveniles should be raised to 17 and that this limit ought to be made uniform throughout the country.

Following publication of Judge Langdon's stand, Whiting met with McIlwraith in an attempt to determine what changes the government was planning to the Juvenile Delinquency Act.

"As the result of this meeting I have received two official letters from Mr. McIlwraith in which he says the government is ready to make changes to the Act," Whiting said.

Many of the proposed changes will be based on recommendations contained in the Report on Juvenile Delinquency in Canada which was published in 1965 following two years of hearings and study by a special federal committee. The committee was set up under the Diefenbaker government.

## Age Limit

The committee's report, in part, recommends that the age limit for juveniles be 17 and that this limit be made uniform across Canada. The report says that this recommendation is made after "full consideration of all sides of the question."

Judge Langdon took a public stand on the issue when late in 1968 he refused to convict a 16 year old youth, on a criminal theft charge.

The judge, who is also judge of Halton's family and juvenile court in Georgetown was critical of the Ontario law which set the age limit for juveniles at 16, and he was also critical of the system which forced a 16 year old to appear in criminal court.

Judge Langdon said he favoured increasing the age limit.

## No Injuries In Rural Crashes

Two motor accidents on Georgetown's outskirts January 2 did an estimated \$900 damage to the four vehicles involved.

North Halton OPP said a collision at the intersection of the 6th Line of Esquesing and the Limehouse Sideroad did \$500 damage to a car operated by Marjory Morrison of Limehouse and minor damage to a truck driven by Randy Scott of the same village.

Earlier the same day, cars driven by William Brecken, of R.R. 3, Georgetown and Albert Marshall of Acton came together on the 7th Line of Esquesing near Stewarttown resulting in \$380.

Constable Corman investigated both mishaps. There were no injuries.



JUDGE KENNETH LANGDON

to age 17 and making it uniform right across Canada.

## No Conviction

The judge refused to convict the youth and released him on probation. He later took similar action in two other cases involving 16 year olds charged with criminal offenses.

Judge Langdon and the committee of Juvenile Delinquency argued that one of the strongest points for raising the juvenile age limit is to prevent the sentencing of 16 year old offenders to adult correctional institutions.

Commenting on Judge Langdon's action in the case, the solicitor general said in his first letter to Whiting: "One can certainly sympathize with the position of any court which finds itself constrained by the law to adopt a course of action that does not seem proper having regard to the nature of the offender and to the offense itself. I should not like to substitute my judgment for that of Judge Langdon by attempting to determine whether the course actually taken by him was the best that could be adopted."

Some sources argued the Halton judge had acted illegally in his handling of the case, although he drew support for his demands for changes in the Juvenile Delinquency Act from the Halton county law society.

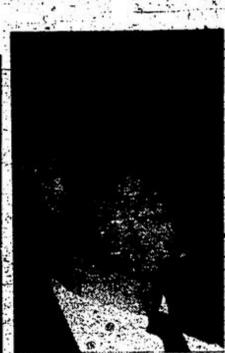
## Hold Talks

McIlwraith said in his second letter to Whiting that preliminary discussions have been held in private with the provinces concerning reforms to the Juvenile Delinquency Act.

The minister said certain changes of the Act cannot be carried out without provincial co-operation, and one such change is the setting of a uniform age limit across the nation.

He said the provinces have "pointed out the practical difficulties that would be imposed by suddenly raising the age limit from 16 to 17. They felt the added work load resulting from his action, if it were not properly phased in over a period of time, would cause intolerable burdens in the existing juvenile courts. We have had to give serious consideration to these provincial representations."

The Committee on Juvenile



RUD WHITING

Delinquency also noted in its report that certain problems would be caused by raising the age limit and making it uniform but the report said even considering these problems that action should be taken.

## Study Report

McIlwraith advised Whiting "The report of the Committee on Juvenile Delinquency has been studied most carefully by the federal government. In so far as it lies within federal competence, the forthcoming legislation will meet the general tenor of Judge Langdon's criticism. There are, however, a number of jurisdictional areas which lie within provincial responsibility and it is only the province in these cases that can meet this need."

Following the case, both On-

tario Attorney General Arthur Wishart and federal justice minister John Turner commented on the case, but each differed with the other whose jurisdiction the case came within. They gave no indication that action was underway to overhaul the Juvenile Delinquency Act. "We now have the government on record as committing itself to an overhaul of the Act very soon and I am sure the changes proposed will meet most of the criticisms aired in Halton riding," Whiting said.

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