

Supply

Mr. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton): Mr. Speaker, I found the discourse by the member for Wild Rose extremely interesting.

In a sense I thought it was an overview given by *Reader's Digest*. It was very anecdotal. At one point he mentioned two examples, two anecdotes, one being the very tragic case of the lady who was raped. He made the observation and the conclusion that in most cases the rights of the accused are greater than those of the victim.

I would like to ask the member what empirical data he has for this. This is one example given. He jumps to a very broad conclusion.

He also made the observation of the very tragic case of the young girl who was murdered. He then made the conclusion that there is no one to act for the wife or the mother in this case. I want to ask him in a very open ended way, who does the crown act for if it does not act in this case for the mother of this child?

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I believe the crown acts for the state. If we take it down to an individual case, we have a different ball game. When we talk individually we talk about (a) one person, the criminal, and (b) person number two, the victim.

I referred to a conflict where a person was a rape victim, requested an HIV test and that request was denied to protect the rights of the criminal. I can give lots of examples. I have a whole briefcase full of them. That is difficult to do in 10 minutes. If every member of this Parliament has been paying attention to what is going on out there, I am sure they can find case after case.

• (1320)

Another examples is a fellow by the name of Thompson—no relation. When in prison he stated that he was going to kill his estranged wife when he got out. He was going to eliminate her and others associated with her. He stated that over and over. The victim, the lady in question, requested the authorities to please not let him out as he meant it. Nothing was done about her request. They simply followed the line of the rule: He was up for parole and was eligible because he had been a good boy and he really did not mean it. However, we will request that he stays in Toronto and does not go out to the west coast.

Big deal. He got to the west coast and he accomplished his mission. Three people are dead because nobody listened to the potential victim.

That is not asking too much. I am sure the hon. member will agree that if we ignore the wishes of the victims as we have in the past and only concentrate on the straight legal legislation, we are doing a disservice to our people.

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on the motion put before this House by the hon. member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley.

The hon. member has put forward the motion that this government should be condemned for its inaction with regard to the reform of the criminal justice system. Specifically the motion accuses this government of allowing the rights of criminals to take precedence over the rights of victims.

The hon. member is quite right. In the five short months that this government has been in power it could have done much more than it has done to take action on criminal justice issues. We could have taken the easy road and won cheap popularity by pandering to those who want change without proper consideration of the consequences. We could have acted precipitously rather than proceeding deliberately and systematically.

We rejected this type of approach in favour of a broad and reasoned strategy to reform our criminal justice system. In short, this government honoured the pledge it made to Canadians in its electoral platform to work for a fair, balanced and humane justice system.

[Translation]

Finally, a key component of our election platform, better known as the red book, is a program designed to ensure safety in public and private places. We propose a comprehensive approach, namely a twofold initiative which recognizes the need for measures against violent crimes and high-risk criminals, while also emphasizing the importance of crime prevention.

The project is well under way in all these important areas. It is obvious, however, that some members are not aware of the work being done, or of the reasons why we concentrate our efforts on these particular areas.

I want to provide members with some information to enable them to better understand what the government is doing, and why it is doing it. Let us first look at the important issue of crime prevention. It is no surprise that the costs associated with crime in our country are enormous, both human and financial costs.

We know that the United States is the only nation in the Western world which has a higher rate of incarceration than Canada. In 1991, the costs related to our police, courts and correctional services reached a staggering \$8 billion. We know that the human costs of crime and fear of crime, including the consequences of victimization for communities, are also very high.

The facts speak for themselves and we must adopt a comprehensive approach against crime in our society, one which recognizes the traditional role of our established organizations but also takes into account our social policies.