

Government Orders

The bill raises some issues about victims and the treatment of victims. We all know that the victims of crimes have very legitimate concerns and worries. They have not been listened to. Their concerns have not received a response. They have basically been forgotten by the criminal justice system. They have demanded leadership. They have demanded that their views, their concerns and their emotional problems be addressed. They do demand harsher penalties because at the moment that is all they can get from this government.

What we need is a concerted approach to deal with criminal activity, not the approach that this bill presents.

Just in my closing minutes, we have to ask ourselves, bearing in mind the concerns that Canadians have with criminal activity and the level of crime in Canada, whether or not this bill will make Canada a safer place, whether or not it will reduce criminal activity, and whether or not it solves any of the problems that Canada is facing with regard to criminal activity.

Clearly this bill will not. Clearly the witnesses at the committee pointed out that it would not do so. Why would this bill be introduced? Why would we be introducing a bill at this time which will not deal with our crime problems in Canada? It will not attack the root causes of criminal activity in Canada such as poverty, desperation and loss of hope which this government has compounded by cutting funding to provinces, downloading to the provinces so that they do not have the funds to address these concerns either. Why would the government do this?

Presumably it is to show Canadians that this government is getting tough on crime by responding to that need for harsher penalties rather than addressing the core issues. It is a hoax on Canadians to address the issue in this way. We should be addressing the issue at its core. We should be trying to solve the problem, not trying to perpetuate the concerns and the demand for harsher penalties without dealing with the core problems of poverty, social unrest and despair.

This bill will not help address the concerns of Canadians about crime. It will not help the case of victims. It will not begin to address the serious concerns we face in this area today.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to follow the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing since he is my twin for the Voyageurs Program. I know that our students are going to enjoy the twinning. The students from Parkdale—High Park will be visiting Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing and his students will be visiting Parkdale—High Park where they will see that we are a just society and that we have a real community feeling. I compliment him on his remarks.

I always look at the purpose of any new bill. The purpose of this bill is "to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society". Is that not beautiful?

Now let us look at the reality. The purpose goes on to say:

—assisting the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community as law abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and in the community.

I want to come back to the word "community". I looked at the definitions in the bill and they define what an institution is, what a day parolee is, what service is, what a visitor is, and what an offender is. But nowhere in the bill is community defined.

One of the main purposes of this bill is to reintegrate ex-offenders into the community. Whose community? My community of Parkdale—High Park? When a serious offender has murdered a whole family or a serial killer is from another city, is it fair that my community of Parkdale—High Park has to rehabilitate that person?

There is no legislation federally, provincially or municipally to protect society, to protect innocent people who go to work daily, who send their children to school daily. There is an oversaturation of group homes, correctional homes, rehabilitation homes or whatever we want to call them. Parkdale has become a dumping ground. The people of Parkdale—High Park are not putting up with it any more. They are telling that through me to the rest of Canada.

I stress again, let us define community. We can have two or three correctional homes within blocks of each other. There is no federal legislation to limit the number of rehabilitation homes that we can have in one com-