

Crime Victims Assistance Act

● (1810)

Mr. Scott Fennell (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege, and it gives me great pleasure to speak on this subject today.

In 1981 a young girl lost her life. A young man was allowed out on mandatory supervision. Her father came to me and asked me what he should do. We spent a great deal of time together over the next few months trying to find out if the local police department had been notified that the young man who had committed the crime had been released from prison. Unfortunately, due to a strike in an office somewhere between Kingston and Oshawa, the local police department was not notified of this.

The victim's father, Don Sullivan, was a very distraught man at that time. Don has had the courage, dedication and leadership to help bring this Bill to the House for second reading. Don has done a great deal for humanity and a great deal for Canadians. He had to suffer throughout the terrible period of the trial when he could not receive information and did not know if the young man who had killed his daughter was in or out of jail. He received absolutely no co-operation from enforcement officers.

Don Sullivan created Victims of Violence as a result of a phone call he received one night from a mother who had experienced the same kind of tragedy. The two of them started it all at a kitchen table in Scarborough.

In 1982, Don Sullivan came to me for help. He never asked for a hand-out. He never wanted a grant to help him try to represent the victims. Once he started doing this, many people began coming to him. He had long-distance telephone call expenses. He had lost his job as a taxi driver. He was unemployed for a short period of time and then took on a job with the Harbour Commission police force in Toronto.

In coming to me for help, Don only asked that his organization be permitted to try to raise money through donations that could be tax deductible. He wanted to get a tax number from Ottawa. I ran into roadblocks that I could not have imagined when trying to provide this man with a tax number to permit him to raise funds to pay for his long-distance telephone calls, his postage and the information he was sending to other suffering people across the country.

I would like to tell the House of one other thing that occurred in order to prove the importance of victims rights. The husband of a lady who lives about three miles from me. One night tried to stop a vehicle one night. The occupants were stealing some tires that were chained to a tree in a rural area. The vehicle with the people who were trying to steal the tires drove off, dragged the man down the road and killed him. To this day no one knows who was in that vehicle. The wife of the man who was killed has suffered through hell since that time. She was never kept informed of what the police were trying to do to resolve the crime. She was never told anything. She was kept in the dark.

Finally, I went to see Don and told him that I had a problem. I asked if he could help me. Don called this lady and went to see her. That is the kind of person he is. He did this

totally voluntarily. After he had seen her, she called me to tell me that she now felt she had someone with whom she could communicate. She realized that there was a group of people who had suffered the way she had.

Victims of crimes are ill treated and kept in the dark. We give all the protections that exist under the Bill of Rights to the murderers, the robbers and those who do wrong. However, we fail to look after those important members of our society who suffer, the victims. I suppose even I do not know how tough it is to experience a loss such as that suffered by Don Sullivan. However, I lived with his experience for some time.

Don has proved to be quite a force across the country. He has spent his own money. Organizations like Canadian Pacific Airlines have assisted him as he has travelled across the country. However, the only people who have not listened to Don Sullivan are those in the Government of Canada. I say hurrah to the Conservative Government. I am not being partisan, I am simply being supportive of Don Sullivan. The Conservative Government has taken this Bill seriously and is moving it to the Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs so that we, on behalf of those people who have suffered, can deal with the issue of bringing into force victims' rights, and do for those people that which is absolutely essential in this day and age.

I must say that the former Solicitor General, the Hon. Member for Central Nova (Mr. MacKay), acted exceptionally. He visited Mr. Sullivan, listened to him and told him that he had to do something about this. Then he started doing something. I understand that the Department has been in touch with Don since then. However, the critical action is in the form of this Bill, and I would like to pay my sincere and heartfelt thanks to the Hon. Member for Halifax West for bringing it before the House. I myself have been trying to draft a similar Bill. I am not a lawyer, but along with my assistant we have been working on it in an attempt to make its provisions very thorough. Perhaps she will be able to have some input and offer information that will be required for the deliberations of the Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

I also commend the Hon. Member for Burnaby who has been very active and supportive of victims over the years. As well, I would like to make particular mention of the Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Kilgour) who was very helpful in supporting me in the creation of the western arm of Victims of Violence. The Hon. Member was able to go with Don Sullivan to help the organization establish a branch in western Canada.

A great many people have been touched by Victims of Violence. A great many people have become more complete human beings through their understanding of the message Victims of Violence is trying to get across. I hope the next time I rise to discuss this Bill in the House, it will have been finalized and will be acceptable to all the victims who have suffered over the last many years.

Mr. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to address the House this evening on the