

Criminal Code

To establish a government agency for this purpose will not solve the problem because a social worker, psychiatrist, sociologist, or whoever, has never lived the experience of having a loved one killed. The Bill adapts itself to the problem. Even though we have the Constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the law, there is little to look after the poor guy who is really hurt. The criminal is fully protected and receives his just dues under the law, but the Bill addresses those people who suffer because of the crime.

The Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, the Hon. Member for Surrey-White Rock-North Delta and I have received various letters which refer to the advantages of listening to Don Sullivan on the radio and talking to the people in his group. One letter referred to the fact that it would be beneficial for the average citizen to listen to the comments of Mr. Sullivan. The last sentence of one letter read, "Keep up the great work, Scott; we are all behind you 100 per cent". This makes it worth-while.

As I indicated earlier, I really wanted to speak on this Bill because I feel for these people. I have two daughters, three sons and a wife. I am lucky that nothing has happened to them. I know how I would feel, and I can relate to how these other people must feel.

Just after the court proceedings, Don Sullivan wrote a letter to me in which he said this:

I went to these proceedings with the thought of vengeance for my daughter and my family and was looking for the courts to give it to me. But, as the trial unfolded my thoughts started to change to wanting justice to be done, which is a big difference. Then, to my grief and dismay, I started to hear that my daughter died needlessly, in fact, she died because of our system.

This is really what it is all about. It is difficult to understand until one is exposed to the suffering of these victims.

Since I have been a Member of the House of Commons there have been four such cases in my riding. I am in a very peaceful, safe community where these kinds of things do not happen. I am not in the centre of the City of Toronto. I am on the outskirts of a city, in a farming community, a dormitory community. It is the trauma that these people go through. I have seen all of them.

• (1710)

The first one was a great shock to me. During the second election, a man ran up to me on the street and asked me directly "Mr. Fennell, are you for or against capital punishment?" We discussed it. The next thing I knew, I was at his funeral. I saw his wife and children there. It was hard to realize that they were left alone with nobody to talk to other than family. They had nobody who had the same experience.

It is for this reason that I think this Bill should go to committee. The Bill is not perfect, as I do not think any Bill brought forward by this Government is perfect. However, it should be allowed to go to committee. I plead with the other side to permit this to happen. This is a very important start. We are not in any rush for this Bill to be brought forward, but we want something done for those who suffer so dramatically by the loss of a loved one.

There is another point I would like to deal with. The Minister of Justice has written to us and stated his tremendous personal interest. His problem is that he wants to set up a task force. Unfortunately, the victims of violence will be excluded from all the hearings on the Bill in the Senate at the present time. How do we know that those people will be heard? Will it only be the bureaucrats, the police and the lawyers who can contribute to this?

Unfortunately, I do not have faith. I want to know that these people can be heard. The only way I can be sure is if this matter is allowed to go to committee to be thoroughly reviewed and discussed. When witnesses are brought in, Members of Parliament will get the feeling of what these people go through.

I appreciate the support we have from our friends in the NDP, in particular the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson). There have been only a few people who supported the Bill. I appreciate the support, as does Don Sullivan. I am sure that every Member wants to stand up and express the feeling that we have expressed in the House.

I plead with the Opposition—I mean the Government. I feel it is the Opposition in this case. I appeal to the opposition, who happens to be the Government today, not to talk this Bill out, but, instead, move it to committee because this is a worthwhile subject. It takes care of many people who are hurting. Since 1978, the number of these people has multiplied 300 per cent.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk on this Bill. I feel it is very important for the citizens of this country. It is important to every family in this country because it could happen to anybody. Once again I plead with the Government for this Bill to go to committee.

Mr. Garnet M. Bloomfield (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, the Bill introduced by the Hon. Member for Edmonton Strathcona (Mr. Kilgour), Bill C-682, proposes to amend the Criminal Code to provide assistance to victims of crime. I note with interest that several of the provisions are almost identical to those in the United States Victim-Witness Protection Act, 1982.

I know that the Minister of Justice (Mr. MacGuigan) shares the Hon. Member's interest in providing assistance to victims of crime. In fact, the Minister indicated his concern to the Hon. Member for Edmonton Strathcona on April 26 when he appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

Many suggest that the victim has been a forgotten person in the criminal justice process. The system places many demands on the victim, especially when appearing as a witness in a trial. However, it seems that at the same time the emotional, physical and financial needs of the victim-witness are not adequately dealt with by the system. He may suffer loss of wages, transportation difficulties, lack of information about the investigation or the prosecution, or about the services which are available to him. Is it any wonder then that the