

*Private Members' Business*

prison, after a few short years was let out to go golfing with unarmed guards.

The area where he assaulted most of the victims was in south Edmonton in 1985. My riding covers roughly one-third of south Edmonton. This is the middle portion of Edmonton. In addition to the six victims we met with, others contacted me and asked that something be done about it.

The response was Bill C-311 which was introduced on October 8. This bill, as I said, increases the portion of the term of imprisonment that inmates are required to serve. The bill also requires that the National Parole Board be required to consider, at the parole hearing of an inmate, any statement of a victim or witness of an offence committed by that inmate. This is very, very important because up to now, victims have generally been left out of the process.

At the end of the trial the focus of society's attention shifts to the accused. We try to rehabilitate the inmate. We offer counselling and a host of things. We try to give them job skills in prison. We could do much more there.

What I am saying in this bill is that we should pay particular attention to the needs of victims. A lot of them have psychological needs, material needs and needs in the process of administration of justice. They should be given an option of knowing when a prisoner is out on day parole and when they are released and whether that person has made any progress as of that date.

Also at the parole hearing, this bill is saying that the Parole Board should consider the trauma the victims have gone through and their needs because justice is a balancing act.

The bill also requires the notification, which I just mentioned, of when a prisoner is let out on day parole and full parole. These were covered generally in the government Bill C-36 which was passed by the House and is now in the Senate.

There is one thing that has not been covered. This bill has put forward an item for public debate and discussion. That is that a violent and dangerous offender who has been accused more than once, a serial offender, would

have sentences which would have to be served consecutively, rather than concurrently. This would reflect society's outrage. We are not saying this should be for all sentences, but for a particular segment, the sentences should be served consecutively.

I am hoping to hear what my opposition colleagues and the government have to say about that aspect of the bill.

I would like to read a couple of letters which I received last June from constituents who are very, very concerned about this just to give an indication to the House of why we brought this bill forward in urging the government to move on the area of parole reform. It did eventually move on parole reform. After I introduced my bill the hon. Solicitor General introduced a bill. The justice committee has held hearings all year and has gone through clause-by-clause study. It is now in the Senate. I would like to quote from a constituent who says: "Balancing the victim's rights with those of the offender are important in considering reforms to the Parole Act. Day passes and other privileges provide opportunities to rehabilitate offenders under controlled situations. Let's not over-react and stop providing these privileges". He then goes on to say: "But let's also keep in mind the anguish of the victims. Our greatest concern should probably be for them". I would agree wholeheartedly with that.

Another constituent wrote me. He said: "I have been viewing with alarm the actions of federal officials administering Parole Board regulations. I would look to our lawmakers in the House of Commons to enact or amend legislation to protect my family and society at large from lax treatments of criminals after they have been convicted and sentenced by the courts." I agree with that, as I am sure most members in the House would also agree.

This constituent went on to say: "I would appreciate it if you would advise me if you are willing and able to indicate some action and when appropriate changes might take place. In this matter, it appears to me that the bureaucrats should not be given discretionary authority which can in effect defeat the punitive and corrective power of the courts and also obviously make possible further criminal acts during the time of a criminal's escorted temporary absence".