

Criminal Code

of the Justice Committee are travelling throughout Canada on justice business and the Government has brought a justice Bill before the House. There is no precedent for this. This has never happened before and, as a matter of fact, there was an understanding that it ought not to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Edwards): I regret to inform the Hon. Member that that is not a point of order. It may be a point of debate if the Hon. Member has the opportunity to participate in the debate. The Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor has the floor.

Mr. Langdon: Mr. Speaker, I am certain that my colleague will be able to find occasion to make that point in debate in the future.

• (1650)

From our perspective in Windsor, across from Detroit, which is one of the highest crime centres in North America, the principles in this Bill are important. They are important to many people in our city who have been victims of crime, sometimes from within our community and sometimes from those outside our community who cross our borders. Since this Bill recognizes the concerns of victims of crime, it gives a greater sense of security to those not directly involved in law enforcement that they will be able to look to some recompense and responsibility on the part of the Government and the community for the suffering which has been caused by crime.

I represent a mixed constituency of urban and rural sections. One might think that the problems of victims of crime would be most evident in the urban sections of my constituency. However, I have found, in our community meetings across Essex—Windsor and in discussions I have had with my constituents, that many of the small towns and villages within my constituency have also been subject to pressures from crime to which they often feel tremendous helplessness to respond. That is why I believe this Bill is welcome.

During the committee hearings witnesses made several suggestions for amendments. Unfortunately, these amendments were defeated because I think they would have made this Bill more beneficial to people in my constituency of Essex—Windsor.

For example, one amendment sought the provision of victim offender reconciliation programs. A number of witnesses before the committee and groups who submitted briefs recommended such a program.

It was also suggested that funds raised by victims' surcharges be directed to new programs and not simply go into general revenues. It was also suggested that funds be dispersed consistent with a statement of principles on victims that was recently agreed to by federal and provincial representatives of the Departments of Justice. Frankly, I believe this Bill would be much better if some of those amendments had been accepted.

There are three important aspects to dealing with crime in a community like Essex—Windsor. First, citizens and citizens' groups should be drawn into the process of assisting police and the community at large in dealing with crime. We have had a very active Crime Stoppers program, which has involved careful surveillance of different neighbourhoods that are subject to higher levels of crime than other parts of our community. There is also a system by which those who have information about a particular crime could make confidential reports to the police to help solve these particular crimes. That kind of public approach is an important step forward in dealing with a very serious problem in my community and others.

Other citizens in our community who are concerned about the problems of victims of crime have organized groups to deal with child abuse. Last year, an important conference was held in Essex—Windsor in which the various difficulties which afflict victims of child abuse were outlined, not just in the immediate instance of the abuse being suffered but in terms of the psychological damage that goes on far into the future.

Such child abuse is at the very heart of an attempt to respond to victims of crime in our society.

Finally, I want to speak about problems of public awareness and the difficulties that are brought to bear on victims of crime in our community. Public awareness must be pushed as vigorously and actively as possible in order to achieve a sense of community caring for those victims of crime and those who wish to reduce crime levels within our cities. May I call it five o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Edwards): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Harris: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Edwards): The Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. Harris) rises on a point of order.

Mr. Harris: Mr. Speaker, it was agreed that the Hon. Member for Essex-Windsor (Mr. Langdon) would be our last speaker on this matter. However, I want to put a comment on the record on behalf of the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) who called from Montreal.

• (1700)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Edwards): I think I would ask the Hon. Member to come immediately to his point of order.

Mr. Harris: Mr. Speaker, there is room for questions and comments at the end of the Hon. Member's speech. I would like to make a comment on the record before the question is called.