

*Government Orders*

not been then something is pretty screwy when it comes to the parole system or the penitentiary system in Canada. Yet the government makes it its first highlight as if something new is about to be introduced, that the protection of the public will now be the paramount consideration.

The second point the government highlights is the role of victims in the system. For a number of years I and my colleagues on this side of the House have pressed for more involvement by victims as well as for victims' rights. Victims simply did not have any rights in the criminal justice system. The system was too heavily weighted in favour of the offender. Finally the government is listening, but it has not listened completely.

The government has indicated that victims will be kept informed of an offender's prison and parole status. This is a good point. Information from victims can be considered at a parole hearing. We say it should be considered, not that there should be discretion, if a victim or the families of a victim want to be considered. Then the government says: "Victims can attend a parole hearing at the discretion of the parole board." We ask: "Why should it be at the discretion of the parole board?" At present, it is at the discretion, believe it not, of the offender. The person who is seeking parole, up until now, decides whether or not the victim or the families of the victim can appear before the parole board hearing.

The government says: "We will move a little in the direction of victims and will allow victims to appear or for their submissions to be considered at the discretion of the parole board". We on this side of the House say that the victim should have an absolute right to appear before parole board hearings to make submissions. We also say, and we will be moving amendments accordingly, the parole hearing process should be opened up to the public and to the media.

Right now, the parole system is a system which is behind the scenes. It is a private little affair between the parole board, the offender and a caseworker at a penitentiary. What we say, on this side of the House, is that the system should be open, just as a court case, a criminal trial, is open to the public. In order for there to be confidence in the system, the parole board hearings should be completely open and public so that anyone who wishes to attend can attend and that certain people, and in particular the victims of crimes and/or their

families, have the option to attend if they so wish to attend.

A few years ago, I had a call from a constituent who had been raped in her community. She went into the local grocery store to do some grocery shopping. She paid her bill, turned around and who was standing behind her in line but the person who raped her. He had been, just a few weeks earlier, released on parole. If there was an open system where the victim had a right to be represented at parole board hearings that would not have happened. If this person qualified for parole at all, the parole board, in this particular case, as a condition of parole, surely should have said: "You are not to go back into the community where you committed the crime". Surely that should have been a condition. If this woman would have had the opportunity to appear before the National Parole Board, she would have done, and she would have made those submissions

We also have the case of John Rallo who is now in a federal penitentiary. He murdered his wife and two children. He was convicted of three counts of first degree murder. He has served about 14 years of his term. A few months ago, he was seen in the Hamilton area. The parents of the murdered woman were told by others that this John Rallo character was in the community. He was released on day passes. The parents of the murder victim, the grandparents of the two children, did not have an opportunity to appear before the National Parole Board to say that this person ought not to be released. This person, John Rallo, still has not admitted to the crimes, still will not co-operate with the police to indicate where the body of one of the young children was stashed or buried, or whatever. Yet the person is released on day parole. Is it any wonder there is so little confidence in the criminal justice system? If parole board hearings were opened up, that would not happen in the future.

We will be moving amendments with regard to parole eligibility. We will be moving amendments with regard to comprehensive reform of the parole system and the abolition of mandatory supervision.

With regard to the specific provision of the government to delay parole eligibility to one-half of the sentence for those inmates who are violent offenders and serious drug offenders, the government proposes to leave this up to judges to determine. Right now, inmates are eligible for full parole after serving a third of their sentences. What the government says is: "For certain