

*Supply*

No one here should think that we are serving victims if we offer them only vengeance. Victims want more than to see the offender punished. That is where hon. members of the third party, in my respectful view, fall short in their approach to this problem. More is required than simply vengeance.

If ever there was eloquent evidence of that principle, it was offered by the family of one of the victims in the Bernardo tragedy. I believe it was the Mahaffey family. When asked about capital punishment, the Mahaffey family said: "That is not our objective. That is not what we are after. What we are after is to make sure that something positive comes of this awful tragedy. What we are after is to make sure that person is put away for life in prison. What we are after is to ensure that it never happens again". That is what victims want and it is toward that constructive objective that we must work together.

A few weeks ago I spoke outside on this magnificent Hill to a rally organized by a group of victims seeking changes in the criminal justice system. I undertook on that occasion to work with them in the name of justice for changes to our laws to achieve the objectives of which I have spoken today. I intend to keep that commitment.

*[Translation]*

I said earlier that I welcomed this opportunity to respond to the motion before the House today. The government is proud of its achievements because it has made a concerted effort to approach the problem of crime from various angles.

• (1720)

I am not suggesting that all has been said and done. But I do know that creating new crimes with increasingly stiffer sentences will not solve the problem. Finding the causes of crime is no easy matter. It involves a cause and effect analysis as wide-ranging and complex as human nature itself. However, to claim that we can solve the problem by getting rid of criminals as long as possible is simply to evade the issue.

*[English]*

The motion before the House today is somewhat of a surprise since it emanates from members of the third party. Sometimes the way they express themselves on such subjects, one would think that the members of the third party have a monopoly on righteousness when it comes to the position of victims.

Their position, I am afraid, is hardly that strong. I suggest that their presentation today of this resolution offers somewhat of an embarrassing contrast for the third party. Today, through their resolution and their arguments, they would have us believe that their priority is the rights of victims and the perspective of victims.

On Monday of this week a group of victims met here on the Hill. They made a very powerful, a very emotional and a very moving presentation in favour of Bill C-68, urging the Senate to adopt the government's proposals on gun control.

Those victims also have a point of view. The men and women who stood on the Hill on Monday in favour of Bill C-68 are victims too. They want Bill C-68 put in place because they know it is in the best interests of victims and the criminal justice system in this country.

It is the members of the third party who have fought so much against Bill C-68 in the past and continue to do so. Perhaps that is the best evidence of the flawed approach of the members of the third party toward the proposition in which today they pretend so strongly to believe.

**Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the speech of the justice minister.

A year ago Reformers brought up the same issue, asking the government to be a little more active in trying to protect victims and their rights. For years, the criminal justice system—as a lawyer, he would know this—has been geared toward the rights of the criminal. From the moment the offender is arrested to the moment of the expiration of the sentence, our system is built around the criminal. The victim has been generally ignored.

We brought this to the attention of the House. There has been some movement and very little improvement. We want to make more improvement.

If Parliament is intent on protecting society, it should and will have to recognize and codify victims' rights. As a party we have pushed four issues: official standing in court cases and parole hearings, which the minister has not invoked; mandatory victim impact statements and victim compensation, where there is an opportunity to draw from the criminal himself or herself some compensation, and to recognize that the rights of the victim outweigh the rights of the criminal.

Our charter of rights and freedoms in some ways give criminals privileges that are unheard of. We talked a year ago about the 46-year old woman, mother of three children, who was raped by a convict on day parole. The victim tried to get a Quebec court to compel her attacker to take a blood test for HIV but the court ruled against her, saying that the blood test would compromise the rights of the accused rapist.

Protecting the rights of the accused at the expense of the victim of a crime is a crime in itself. Today, we have the Bernardo and the Homolka situation. We have two prisons that are connected by a tunnel—