of getting these principles up front. Funds should be dispersed in a manner consistent with the following principles: First, victims should be treated with courtesy, compassion and with respect for their dignity and privacy and should suffer the minimum of necessary inconvenience from their involvement with the criminal justice system. I have already told Members about my experience as a Crown Attorney and as a defence counsel. Looking back, I think that while we had a fair system, we could have improved the way in which we treated victims and witnesses. That is the "people" part of the justice system, and it is something worth looking at.

Second, victims should receive, through formal and informal procedures, prompt and fair redress for the harm which they have suffered.

Third, information regarding remedies and the mechanisms to obtain them should be made available to victims promptly. It is useless to have this legislation if no one knows about it or how to take advantage of it. Fourth, information should be made available to victims about their participation in criminal proceedings and the scheduling, progress and ultimate disposition of the proceedings. Many people who are victims or witnesses will ask what happened. They are told the Crown stayed the charge or the accused pleaded guilty and the original charge was dropped and they were charged with another charge. Victims would not even know about that. They are not even considered important in the system.

Fifth, the views and concerns of victims should be ascertained and the appropriate assistance provided throughout the criminal process. If the Crown would just consult with the victim where the accused intends to plead guilty and there will be a sentence, that is a help to a victim of a crime, because they will feel they are part of the justice process and are receiving justice for the wrong done to them.

Sixth, where the personal interests of the victim are affected, the views and concerns of the victim should be brought to the attention of the court, where appropriate and consistent with criminal law and procedure. In other words, it should not be just the judge and prosecutor. If possible, the victim should get a chance to express his or her opinion to the judge before sentencing.

Seventh, measures should be taken, when necessary, to ensure the safety of victims and their families and to protect them from intimidation and retaliation. I think that speaks for itself.

Eighth, enhanced training should be made available to sensitize criminal justice personnel to the needs and concerns of victims, and guidelines developed, where appropriate, for this purpose. Again, that is humanizing the system of justice.

Ninth, victims should be informed of the availability of health and social services and other relevant assistance so that they might continue to receive the necessary medical, psychological and social assistance through existing programs and services. I recall the programs for women who have suffered violent assault such as rapes.

Ten, victims should report the crime and co-operate with law enforcement authorities. So there is an obligation on behalf of the victim.

Those are some important amendments that could have been included in the Bill. By and large, as I said, we in the New Democratic Party support the Bill. We have said that on a number of occasions. I will just conclude by saying that some two thousand and five years ago, the great Athenian, the Greek legislator Solon, said that there can be no justice until those of us who are unaffected by crime become as indignant as those who are. For too long victims have been forgotten by those in the criminal justice system. This has to stop. This legislation is long overdue and I am pleased to support it in principle.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, it is also with pleasure that I rise to speak in support of this legislation. As the preceding speaker, the Hon. Member for Vancouver—Kingsway (Mr. Waddell), I have experience in the criminal justice system, not as a Crown prosecutor, but as a defence counsel, for a number of years. One thing, I suppose, is obvious to anyone involved in the criminal justice system, and that is that in the course of events there are essentially two players or two sides. On the one hand there is the Crown prosecutor and the law officers of the Crown who represent Her Majesty the Queen and whose purpose is to prosecute offences. The concerns of the Crown attorney are to ensure that the proof is available, that he or she has sufficient evidence to present to the court so that it is aware of all the legal implications, and that witnesses are available at a particular time.

All of those things go together in ensuring that all of the evidence is put before the court in such a way as to convince the court beyond a reasonable doubt that a crime has been committed and it has been committed by the person against whom the charge is laid.

Quite often in a very busy court system, although this is less true at the higher levels of courts, but certainly at the provincial court level where 95 per cent or more of the crimes in this country are tried, there is a very great crush in terms of numbers of offences, numbers of accused and numbers of witnesses involved. I think it is clear to anyone who has practised law that the prosecution side of the justice system is taken by someone not representing the victim, but the justice system, Her Majesty the Queen. On the other side of the equation is the accused and the representative of the accused. The job of the representative is to ensure that the individual who is accused is given a proper defence. A person ought not be be convicted of any crime unless it can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt that a crime was committed and that it was committed by that particular accused. That is the adversarial system that has grown up over the last 700 or 800 years from the British justice system we inherited, and I hope improved on, in this country.