

*Government Orders*

I want to congratulate my colleague from Scarborough West on one of his amendments relating to escorted temporary absences. In the bill, an inmate may seek an escorted temporary absence for medical, humanitarian and personal developmental reasons. My colleague rightly felt that personal development was too ambiguous a reason and moved an amendment which classified this last reason as personal development for rehabilitative reasons.

As my colleague also noted, there is an absence of legislation dealing with the rehabilitation of inmates. We are not helping those inmates who are within the prison walls. Much of the rehabilitation for inmates is done by sociologists and psychiatrists and other professionals.

There is another area in which the public wants action. It wants serious programs for inmates that will prepare those inmates for reintegration back into society after serving time in jail. That is an example of constructive results from programs on which you spend money.

In the past, parole devices such as escorted temporary absences and day parole were used to bring inmates back into society on a gradual basis. I can see there is some merit in that but I cannot ignore the danger signals.

• (1220)

I want to read into the record the information I have from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1990. In that year there were 234,836 reported cases of violent offences in Canada. These offences ranged from aggravated sexual assault to assault with a weapon, to discharging a firearm with intent of harm. Approximately 100,000 persons were charged.

In 1990 there were 1,000 reported cases of abduction in Canada. Roughly 100 persons were charged. There were 28,000 cases of robbery, with about 14,000 of those incidents involving firearms.

What I am saying, and this is my own belief, is that for violent crimes, inmates should have no access to day parole or escorted temporary absences and certainly never, under any circumstances, unescorted temporary absences.

I have introduced a private members' bill, Bill C-330, which is coming up for second reading debate in this highest court of the land very shortly. For violent offences, my bill would totally prohibit day parole or escorted and unescorted temporary absences for inmates unless for rehabilitative, medical or humanitarian reasons.

The one important caveat would be that for these

reasons I just mentioned, permission would have to be sought from the Governor in Council, the federal cabinet. If dangerous offenders such as murderers desire a temporary, escorted absence, they would have to make that appeal to the ministers across the floor. They would decide whether to give permission.

This would be accountable responsibility and would remove that decision-making process from the National Parole Board and the corrections commissioner. Canadians are telling me in my constituency of Hamilton West—and I am sure in constituencies across this land that they demand accountability. Another aspect of that—bill which will shortly come to the floor of the House is that for first degree, premeditated murderers, life in prison would mean just that: life. There would be no chance for parole.

The bill before us today, Bill C-36, does not address any of that. It still allows for a judicial review after 15 years and eligibility for parole after 25 years. It is called the "faint hope" clause. It would be faint hope for the premeditated first degree murderer.

People say to err is human and after time in jail the person would be allowed the faint hope of returning to the outside world. My constituents are telling me that for the victims of that murder, the victims of that first degree premeditated, violent act and for their families, there is no faint hope.

Bill C-36 does not deal with that. I am reminded of the parable of the prodigal son. It is the story of the lost son who returns and is spurned by his brother because of the lavish feast set for his return. After bitterly disappointing his family for many years, the son who had been there for his dad demanded an answer. His father tells him that there will be more joy in heaven upon the redemption of one sinner than upon the 99 who need no redemption.

For those convicted criminals who have not committed what I see as the most serious crime of murder, these individuals must always be given the opportunity to redeem themselves and reintegrate themselves into society. There is no question of that. But for those who have committed first degree premeditated murder the redemption for them, I believe, is not to be found within society but within themselves.