

Adjournment Debate

I would like to take the House quickly through the life of Allen George Foster from 1971 to December 27, 1987. In 1971, Foster then 20 years old, was living with a young woman in British Columbia. For reasons not known to me or probably anyone else, he decided to rape his girlfriend's 18 year old cousin, beat her to death, wrap her in chains, and throw her body into Okanagan Lake. For this crime he received a life sentence but was granted unescorted temporary absences in 1979, only seven years after the conviction.

In May 1980 the National Parole Board allowed Foster to leave custody on day parole, which meant that he had to report in only at night. One and a half years later, in October 1981, he was granted full parole. Over the years he was watched and psychiatric tests were taken, but despite these precautions he was charged in April 1986 with performing an indecent act and breaking and entering.

• (1820)

Two months later he was convicted for the indecent act and sentenced to 21 days in jail. He remained there until August of the same year. In July, 1986, he was granted day parole and in December of that year he was granted full parole. Over the next year he was closely supervised. Then, again for reasons unknown to anyone, he murdered these three innocent people in Chilliwack. The two young girls, best friends, honour students and athletes were not even born when Foster committed his first act of murder back in 1971. Unfortunately, their destinies were tied in with Foster's even then.

This case is not unique. Another convicted killer out on parole on mandatory supervision from Sumas Centre in Abbotsford did not return to the centre on September 5, 1987. He broke into an unoccupied home and stole food and household items in order to survive and then stole a vehicle belonging to the home owners. He also took a large knife. This knife was to be used by the convict just four days later to terrorize completely a Matsqui husband and wife.

The details of this crime are almost too disgusting to be repeated but will show us in even greater detail why we must do something now to tighten our parole laws. After breaking into the home while the couple was in bed, he sexually assaulted both husband and wife in front of each other, all the while threatening them with the knife. After sexually assaulting the couple, the man made them go into the kitchen and forced the wife to make him a meal. He then demanded, at gun point, that the couple give him liquor, food and other items and made them load their own car for his escape. He then drove away. This entire scene lasted three hours but will live on in the minds of this couple for the rest of their lives. The same prisoner when apprehended three hours later told the detectives "I didn't want to come out. They made me come out. I can't even make it in a backyard, let alone society or the community".

It is up to the parole system to protect society from these criminals, and I am not satisfied that this is being done. I have

written to the chairman of the Justice and Solicitor General Committee to ask that when the committee visits British Columbia it have hearings on sentencing and the parole system and that the committee visits the municipalities about which I am speaking, and Fraser Valley East. I am pleased that representatives of the three municipalities have written to the Solicitor General, as have many of the citizens. I know they will welcome the opportunity to put their cases before the committee. I am encouraging the committee to come this spring when it visits British Columbia so that people can be heard and their concerns written into the register.

Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada): Madam Speaker, first I would like to express my shock and horror at the tragic death of a young mother, her daughter and a young friend in British Columbia last year. Both as Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General and as a father, I sympathize deeply with the families of these victims.

The alleged perpetrator of these crimes had been convicted of homicide 16 years earlier and was on parole at the time of these brutal murders. Two weeks later he took his own life while under psychiatric observation. We therefore may never know his full role in these crimes nor what could have motivated him.

A police investigation into the matter is now under way and the circumstances surrounding the crime will soon be examined by a coroner's inquest. Officials of the Solicitor General's ministry have been and will continue to offer whatever assistance they can to the police and coroner. In the meantime, it would be inappropriate to speculate on the findings of those inquiries.

The parolee in question was paroled after serving over 10 years of a life sentence for his earlier conviction. He had been on parole for over six years. He was seen weekly by his parole supervisor and received regular psychotherapy from two therapists. He had received psychological and psychiatric treatment throughout his sentence, including three years in the psychiatric treatment centre. By all accounts he was doing well, and at each stage of his sentence when decisions were made with regard to his very gradual release into the community, psychiatric and/or psychological opinions were considered by the parole board.

None of this can compensate for the loss of three innocent lives. The Minister will continue to examine the facts as they become known to ensure that this was the case, to learn what we can from this tragedy and to take whatever corrective action is indicated.

Our parole system must continue to help inmates to make the transition back to the community in a law-abiding fashion. At the same time the degree of risk must remain the key element in making such decisions. The harsh reality is that