

*Government Orders*

The bill starts down the right road. It does the right things. It tells us there is a program and there will be rules to the program. The program will have a dollar allocation. Currently the RCMP deals with that in its own programs because it has the budget.

• (1240)

This is the type of legislation the Canadian public wants. It wants to give the necessary resources to government agencies and to the criminal justice system for it to work. They want the resources to be targeted in a way that we alleviate as much as we can the criminal element from our streets while at the same time give protection and statutized, regularized program protection to those willing to come forward and confront elements in our society truly from the dark side of humanity.

I speak for the victims of crime who are potential witnesses to their victimization. I encourage the government and all members to continue to work, like the member for Scarborough West has worked, to identify to government and Parliament the types of programs through which we can come together and ensure the limited resources of government can be directed toward law enforcement and the criminal justice system. They should be directed in a fashion that allows us to attain the goal of safer streets and that those willing to participate to help us have safer streets are afforded the protection required.

**Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I knew my decision to yield the floor to my hon. friend from Dartmouth would be the correct one. His speech was peppered with his usual enthusiasm, a very interesting case study of why we need the program. I also thank all the speakers on the bill who mentioned my name in a positive light today. It is such a refreshing change and I really appreciate it.

I will talk about the history of witness protection and how I developed an interest in the subject to let Canadians know a bit about the need for a legislated witness protection program.

About three years ago when I was the official opposition critic for the solicitor general a gentleman came into my office. He was fearful, nervous, literally looking over his shoulder in apprehension. He was also very frustrated. He was a witness and an informant to a serious crime. He had in his view co-operated with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in an investigation. In his opinion he had been offered certain protection and certain financial incentives which would help him to relocate and get away from the wrath of those he had reported to the authorities.

Unfortunately because nothing was in writing or because there was no real mechanism provided, there was a dispute about what had been agreed on and how long the protection would be afforded. Suffice it to say he felt abandoned. He felt adrift. He felt at the mercy of those he had informed on.

It was a courageous thing for him to do. These were vicious people. He feared for his family, his wife and children, not just for himself; perhaps more for his wife and family than for himself.

I could see why he was in fear but why was he frustrated? He had gone to the RCMP and did not seem to get any redress there. He had gone to his local police department and did not get redress there. He had gone to the Ontario Provincial Police and did not get redress there. He went to his local member of Parliament. His local member of Parliament was unable to help, not because his local member of Parliament did not want to help but because we were now entering into the nether world of witness protection in Canada.

• (1245)

He went to the minister of the day who along with his officials begrudgingly admitted there was such a program but they were not about to talk about it. They were not about to discuss it. They were not about to give details and they certainly were not about to talk about his case.

In desperation he came to me, the official opposition critic for the solicitor general. That piqued my interest in the subject and I began to investigate. I found that since 1970 a federal witness protection program has been run by the U.S. marshall service in the United States. Prosecutors in the United States have said that the program was one of the most effective assets they utilized in law enforcement.

The population of the United States of America probably approaches 300 million people now. That U.S. witness protection program currently protects approximately 500 witnesses per year, which is not a very large number of witnesses considering the size of the population.

That says it is used in extreme circumstances for extreme cases. In a way that is good because there is only so much money. Generally speaking it has a fairly good success rate in solving crimes except the most dastardly kinds of crimes, the ones where people do not think twice about snuffing out a life in order that the person not be a witness in a proceeding against them.

I am talking about drug related offences. I am talking about organized crime. I am talking about gang warfare. The last thing those people are worried about is the value of a single human life. It is simply a matter of money. Nowadays one can get somebody to kill another for virtually a song. What a sad commentary in general on society.