

Criminal Code

been such programs as he mentioned, including crisis centres. I know that the Province of Manitoba had, and may still have, a good victims' assistance program. In the Yukon we have had a victims' assistance program separate from the courts.

In my study, 80 per cent of victims of crime saw the police in a favourable light. People felt that the police had been helpful. However, as my colleague mentions, the police can go only so far. My colleague is quite right that there is a need for a second organization which provides assistance, even in such basic things as helping those people to find their way around the court-house. In some instances the Crown may help out with that, but in the larger courts they do not. Even in the smaller court systems in my own constituency there is simply not the time to do that.

Victims' assistance would show that the state does care. It need not be expensive. It could include things like telephone hot lines to which people can call to ask for advice about what they should do and where counselling is available. Studies have indicated that even victims of property theft, which may not seem as serious to some of us, can be very traumatic, especially if it has been in your own home. They may be afraid for years every time they walk over the doorstep. I have heard people say many times that that is a very traumatic experience.

We could provide assistance in resolving the emotional effect on them personally, with administration, and with the technical details of how they go through the system and what information they are allowed to have. People just do not know these things and many prosecutors do not have the time to spend a number of hours with them. That is where an imbalance comes in. The defence lawyer is being paid by his or her client and can take the time to explain all the procedures and exactly what is going to happen. The experience of many victims has been that no one has been able to take the time to explain to them what is happening.

In the victims' assistance programs which I have seen, whether run by governmental organizations such as in the Province of Manitoba and in the Yukon Territory, or by voluntary organizations like the Salvation Army and others, they have tried to do this. It has had a tremendously beneficial effect on individuals. Being so removed from it it is probably hard to comprehend how beneficial this is. Unless victims of crime feel that they are being treated fairly in our justice system they will have no respect for the system and, in my view, the system then begins to break down.

Therefore, I would certainly agree that victims' assistance programs which offer concrete counselling and assistance with the process must be in place, not only before the court trial but after the trial as well, because there are often things arising from the trial in which they need to be involved. We are dealing with a group of people who have, through no fault of their own, been involved in a crime.

In addition to the victims' assistance programs, which my colleague mentioned, there is the area of prevention about which I did not have the opportunity to speak. It goes hand in

hand with victims' assistance because, obviously, we want to prevent more crimes. In my discussions with the police I learned that they are often able to counsel people briefly—and I think a victims' assistance group could do it more fully—on how to prevent a crime. Many crimes are repeat crimes and many victims have been the victims of many crimes. Counselling services in transition homes for battered women and in rape crisis centres often focus very much on that kind of counselling.

I am sure we would all agree that crime prevention is important and should be a major focus. Every year there is a Crime Prevention Week during which all police departments emphasize crime prevention. However, it must be done all through the year, and I think that working with victims can facilitate that.

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Speaker, I have a brief question. I enjoyed the Hon. Member's comments made from a different perspective. They were very interesting. Could she comment on the area of adult victims of child sex abuse? Can they get help which may stop them from committing similar types of crimes?

Ms. McLaughlin: Mr. Speaker, this is also an area in which I have had considerable experience. This is a large area, and 10 to 15 years ago the issue of adult victims of sexual abuse and child victims of sexual abuse was not a topic that was even discussed. There is now a move by many adult victims to start self-help groups. There is certainly a need for funding to assist them to do that and to get professional counselling. It has a profound and long-lasting effect, as my colleague says, not only on them but on those with whom they deal in their own families and others.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Edwards): I regret that the time for questions and comments has expired. Is the House ready for the question? The Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon) on debate.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to be able to speak on a Bill of significant importance to my constituency and to millions of people across the country. We as a Party have supported this legislation from its introduction in the House in November, 1987. It has been given a fairly thorough going over in committee. Various amendments were made to it before it was brought back to the House at the end of March. We certainly intend to support the Bill.

However, those of us who come from parts of the country which have experienced serious difficulties with problems of crime across our border—

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I enjoy seeing you in the Chair today, Sir. We are wrapping up debate on the very important justice Bill before us. However, it is unprecedented that we are debating a justice Bill when the Justice Committee is travelling. In other words, the members